

Numbers 9 - 16, Section 2 of 3.

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Numbers 9.

And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, Let the children of Israel also keep the Passover at his appointed season. In the fourteenth day of this month, at even, ye shall keep it in his appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it. And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, that they should keep the Passover. And they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, at even, in the wilderness of Sinai: according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel." Verses 1-5.

There are three distinct positions in which we find this great redemption-feast celebrated, namely, in Egypt (Ex. 12); in the wilderness (Num. 9); in the land of Canaan. (Joshua 5) Redemption lies at the foundation of everything connected with the history of God's people. Are they to be delivered from the bondage, the death, and the darkness of Egypt? It is by redemption. Are they to be borne along through all the difficulties and dangers of the desert? It is on the ground of redemption. Are they to walk across the ruins of the frowning walls of Jericho, and plant their feet upon the necks of the kings of Canaan? It is in virtue of redemption.

Thus the blood of the paschal lamb met the Israel of God and the deep degradation of the land of Egypt, and delivered them out of it. It met them in the dreary desert, and carried them through it. It met them on their entrance into the land of Canaan, and established them in it.

In a word, then, the blood of the lamb met the people in Egypt; it accompanied them through the desert; and planted them in Canaan. It was the blessed basis of all the divine actings in them, with them, and for them. Was it a question of the judgement of God against Egypt? The blood of the lamb screened them from it. Was it a question of the numberless and nameless wants of the wilderness? The blood of the lamb secured a full provision for them. Was it a question of the dreaded power of the seven nations of Canaan? The blood of the lamb was the sure and certain pledge of complete and glorious victory. The moment we behold Jehovah coming forth to act on behalf of His people, on the ground of the blood of the lamb, all is infallibly secured, from first to last. The whole of that mysterious and marvellous journey, from the brick kilns of Egypt to the vine clad hills and honeyed plains of Palestine, served but to illustrate and set forth the varied virtues of the blood of the lamb.

However, the chapter which now lies open before us presents the Passover entirely from a wilderness standpoint; and this will account to the reader for the introduction of the following circumstance: "There were certain men which were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the Passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day."

Here was a practical difficulty — something abnormal, as we say — something not anticipated, and therefore the question was submitted to Moses and Aaron. "They came before Moses" — the exponent of the claims of God; "and before Aaron" — the exponent of the provisions of the grace of God. There seems something distinct and emphatic in the way in which both these functionaries are referred to. The two elements of which they are the expression would be deemed essential in the solving of such a difficulty as that which here presented itself.

"And those men said unto him, We are defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore are we kept

back, that we may not offer an offering of the Lord in his appointed season among the children of Israel?" There was the plain confession as to the defilement; and the question raised was this: were they to be deprived of the holy privilege of coming before the Lord in His appointed way? Was there no resource, no provision for such a case?

A deeply interesting question surely, but one for which no answer had as yet been provided. We have no such case anticipated in the original institution, in Exodus 12; although we have there a very full statement of all the rites and all the ceremonies of the feast. It was reserved for the wilderness to evolve this new point. It was in the actual walk of the people — in the real practical details of desert life, that the difficulty presented itself for which a solution had to be provided. Hence it is that the record of this entire affair is appropriately given in Numbers, the book of the wilderness.

"And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the Lord will command concerning you." Lovely attitude! Moses had no answer to give; but he knew who had, and he waited on him. This was the very best and wisest thing for Moses to do. He did not pretend to be able to give an answer. He was not ashamed to say, "*I do not know.*" With all his wisdom and knowledge, he did not hesitate to show his ignorance. This is true knowledge — true wisdom. It might be humiliating to one in Moses' position to appear before the congregation or any members of it, in the light of one ignorant on any question. He who had led the people out of Egypt, he who had conducted them through the Red Sea, he who had conversed with Jehovah, and received his commission from the great "I am;" could it be possible that he was unable to meet a difficulty arising out of such a simple case as that which was now before him? Was it indeed true that such an one as Moses was ignorant as to the right course, in reference to men defiled by a dead body?

How few there are who, though not occupying such a lofty position as Moses, would not have attempted a reply of some sort to such a query. But Moses was the meekest man in all the earth. He knew better than to presume to speak when he had nothing to say. Would that we more faithfully followed his example in this matter! It would save us from many a sad exhibition, from many a blunder, from many a false attempt. Moreover it would tend to make us very much more real, more simple, more unaffected. We are oft-times so silly as to be ashamed to expose our ignorance. We foolishly imagine that our reputation for wisdom and intelligence is touched when we give utterance to that fine sentence, so expressive of true moral greatness, "I don't know." It is a total mistake. We always attach much more weight and importance to the words of a man who never pretends to Knowledge which he does not possess. But a man who is always ready to speak, in flippant self-confidence, we are never ready to hear. Oh! to walk, at all times, in the spirit of these lovely words, "Stand still, and I will hear what the Lord will command."

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body: or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the Passover unto the Lord. The fourteenth day of *the second month*, at even, they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs."

There are two grand foundation truths set forth in the Passover, namely, redemption, and the unity of God's people. These truths are unchangeable. Nothing can ever do away with them. Failure there may be, and unfaithfulness, in various forms; but those glorious truths of the eternal redemption and perfect unity of God's people remain in all their force and value. Hence that impressive ordinance which so vividly shadowed forth those truths was of perpetual obligation. Circumstances were not to interfere with it. Death or distance was not to interrupt it. "If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet shall he keep the Passover unto the

Lord." So imperative indeed was it upon every member of the congregation to celebrate this feast, that a special provision is made in Numbers 9 for those who were not up to the mark of keeping it according to the due order. Such persons were to observe it "On the fourteenth day of the second month." This was the provision of grace for all cases of unavoidable defilement or distance.

If the reader will turn to 2 Chronicles. 30 he will see that Hezekiah, and the congregation in his day, availed themselves of this gracious provision. "And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the *second* month, a very great congregation..... Then they killed the Passover on the fourteenth day of the second month." Ver. 13, 15

The grace of God can meet us in our greatest possible weakness, if only that weakness be felt and confessed.* But let not this most precious and comfortable truth lead us to trifle with sin or defilement. Though grace permitted the second month, instead of the first, it did not, on that account, allow any laxity as to the rites and ceremonies of the feast. "The unleavened bread and bitter herbs" were always to have their place; none of the sacrifice was to remain till the morning, nor was a single bone of it to be broken. God cannot allow any lowering of the standard of truth or holiness. Man, through weakness, failure, or the power of circumstances, might be behind the time; but he must not be below the mark. Grace permitted the former; holiness forbids the latter; and if any one had presumed upon the grace to dispense with the holiness, he would have been cut off from the congregation.

{*The reader will note with interest and profit, the contrast between the acting of Hezekiah, in 2 Chronicles 30, and the acting of Jeroboam, in 1 Kings 12: 32. The former availed himself of the provisions of divine grace; the latter followed his own device. The second month was permitted of God; the eighth month was invented by man. Divine provisions meeting man's need, and human inventions opposing God's word, are totally different things.}

Has this no voice for us! Assuredly it has. we must ever remember, as we pass along through the pages of this marvellous Book of Numbers, that the things which happened unto Israel are our types, and that it is, at once, our duty and our privilege to hang over these types and seek to understand the holy lessons which they are designed of God to teach.

What then are we to learn from the regulations with respect to the Passover, in the second month! Why was Israel so specially enjoined not to omit a single rite or ceremony on that particular occasion? Why is it that, in this ninth chapter of Numbers, the directions for the second month are much more minute than those for the first? It is not surely that the ordinance was more important in the one case than in the other, for its importance, in God's judgement, was ever the same. Neither is it that there was a shade of difference in the order, in either case, for that, too, was ever the same. Still the fact must strike the reader who ponders the chapter before us, that where reference is made to the celebration of the Passover in the first month, we simply read the words, "according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it." But, on the other hand, when reference is made to the second month, we have a most minute statement of what those rites and ceremonies were: "They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it." Compare verse 3 with 11, 12.

What, we ask, does this plain fact teach us? We believe it teaches us, most distinctly, that we are never to lower the standard, in the things of God, because of failure and weakness on the part of God's people; but rather, on that very account, to take special pains to hold the standard up, in all its divine integrity. No doubt, there should be the deep sense of failure — the deeper the better; but God's truth is not to be surrendered. We can always reckon, with confidence, upon the resources of divine grace,

while seeking to maintain, with unwavering decision, the standard of divine truth.

Let us seek to keep this ever in the remembrance of the thoughts of our hearts. We are in danger, on the one hand, of forgetting the fact that failure has come in — yes, gross failure, unfaithfulness, and sin. And, on the other hand, we are in danger of forgetting, in view of that failure, the unfailing faithfulness of God, in spite of everything. The professing Church has failed, and become a perfect ruin; and not only so, but we ourselves have individually failed and helped on the ruin. We should feel all this — feel it deeply — feel it constantly. We should ever bear upon our spirits before our God the deep and heart-subduing consciousness of how sadly and how shamefully we have behaved ourselves in the house of God. It would be adding immensely to our failure were we ever to forget that we have failed. The most profound humility and the deepest brokenness of spirit become us in the remembrance of all this; and these inward feelings and exercises will surely express themselves in a lowly walk and carriage in the midst of the scene in which we move.

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." (2 Tim. 2: 19) Here is the resource of the faithful, in view of the ruins of Christendom. God never fails, never changes, and we have simply to depart from iniquity, and cling to Him. we are to do what is right, and follow it diligently, and leave results to Him.

We would earnestly beg of the reader to give the foregoing line of thought his entire attention. We want him to pause, for a few moments, and prayerfully consider the whole subject. We are convinced that a due consideration of it, in its two sides, would greatly help us to pick our steps amid the surrounding ruins. The remembrance of the Church's condition, and of our own personal unfaithfulness, would keep us humble; while, at the same time, the apprehension of God's unchanging standard, and of His unswerving faithfulness, would detach us from the evil around, and keep us steady in the path of separation. Both together would effectually preserve us from empty pretension, on the one hand, and from laxity and indifference, on the other. We have ever to keep before our souls the humbling fact that we have failed, and yet to hold fast that grand truth that God is faithful.

These are, pre-eminently, lessons for the wilderness — lessons for this very day — lessons for us. They are suggested, very forcibly, by the inspired record of the Passover in the second month — a record peculiar to the Book of Numbers — the great wilderness book. It is in the wilderness that human failure comes so fully out; and in the wilderness the infinite resources of divine grace are displayed. But once more, let us reiterate the statement and may it be engraved, in characters deep and broad, on our hearts — the richest provisions of divine grace and mercy afford no warrant whatever for lowering the standard of divine truth. If any had pleaded defilement or distance as an excuse for not keeping the Passover, or for keeping it otherwise than as God had enjoined, he would, most assuredly, have been cut off from the congregation. And so with us, if we consent to surrender any truth of God, because failure has come in — if we, in sheer unbelief of heart, give up God's standard, and abandon God's ground — if we draw a plea from the condition of things around us to shake off the authority of God's truth over the conscience, or its formative influence upon our conduct and character — it is very evident that our communion is suspended.*

{*Let it be noted here once for all, that the cutting off of any one from the congregation of Israel, answers to the suspension of a believer's communion because of unjudged sin.}

We would gladly pursue this great practical line of truth somewhat further, but we must forbear, and close this part of our subject by quoting for our reader the remainder of this wilderness record concerning the Passover.

"But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the Passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin. And if a stranger shall sojourn among you, and will keep the Passover unto the Lord; according to the ordinance of the Passover, and according to the manner thereof, so shall he do: ye shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger, and for him that was born in the land." Verses 13, 14.

The wilful neglect of the Passover would argue, on the part of the Israelite, a total want of appreciation of the benefits and blessings coming out of his redemption and deliverance from the land of Egypt. The more deeply any one entered into the divine reality of that which had been accomplished on that memorable night, in the which the congregation of Israel found refuge and repose beneath the shelter of the blood, the more earnestly would he long for the return of "the fourteenth day of the first month," that he might have an opportunity of commemorating that glorious occasion; and if there was anything preventing his enjoying the ordinance in "the first month" the more gladly and thankfully would he avail himself of "the second." But the man who could be satisfied to go on from year to year, without keeping the Passover, only proved that his heart was far away from the God of Israel. It were worse than vain for any one to speak of loving the God of his fathers, and of enjoying the blessings of redemption, while the very ordinance which God had appointed to set forth that redemption lay neglected from year to year.

And may we not, to a certain extent, apply all this to ourselves, in reference to the matter of the Lord's supper? Doubtless we may, and that with very much profit. There is this connection between the Passover and the Lord's supper, that the former was the type, the latter the memorial, of the death of Christ.

Thus we read in 1 Corinthians 5. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." This sentence establishes the connection. The Passover was the memorial of Israel's redemption from the bondage of Egypt; and the Lord's supper is the memorial of the Church's redemption from the heavier and darker bondage of sin and Satan. Hence, as every true and faithful Israelite would surely be found keeping the Passover, in the appointed season, according to all the rites and ceremonies thereof, so will every true and faithful Christian be found celebrating the Lord's supper, in its appointed season, and according to all the principles laid down in the New Testament respecting it. If an Israelite had neglected the Passover, even on one single occasion, he would have been cut off from the congregation. Such neglect was not to be tolerated in the assembly of old. It was instantly visited with the divine displeasure.

And, may we not ask in the face of this solemn fact, Is it nothing now — is it a matter of no moment for Christians to neglect, from week to week, and month to month, the supper of their Lord? Are we to suppose that the One who, in Numbers 9, declared that the neglecter of the Passover should be cut off, takes no account of the neglecter of the Lord's table? We cannot believe it for a moment. For, albeit it is not a question of being cut off from the Church of God, the body of Christ, are we, on that account, to be negligent? Far be the thought. Yea, rather should it have the blessed effect of stirring us up to greater diligence in the celebration of that most precious feast wherein "we do show the Lord's death till he come."

To a pious Israelite there was nothing like the Passover, because it was the memorial of his redemption. And, to a pious Christian, there is nothing like the Lord's supper, because it is the memorial of his redemption and of the death of his Lord. Of all the exercises in which the Christian can engage, there is nothing more precious, nothing more expressive, nothing that brings Christ more touchingly or solemnly before his heart, than the Lord's supper. He may sing about the Lord's death, he may pray

about it, he may read about it, he may hear about it; but it is only in the supper that he "shows" it forth. "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Luke 22: 19, 20

Here we have the feast instituted; and, when we turn to the Acts of the Apostles, we read that, "upon the first day of the week, the disciples came together to break bread." Acts 20: 7.

Here we have the feast *celebrated*; and, lastly, when we turn to the Epistles, we read, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one loaf, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one loaf." (1 Cor. 10: 16, 17) And again, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26.

Here we have the feast *expounded*. And may we not say that, in the institution, the celebration, and the exposition, we have a threefold cord, not easily broken, to bind our souls to this most precious feast?

How is it, then, that in the face of all this holy authority, any of God's people should be found neglecting the Lord's table? Or, looking at it in another aspect, how is it that any of Christ's members can be satisfied to go on for weeks, and months, and some all their days, without ever remembering their Lord in the way of His own direct and positive appointment? We are aware that some professing Christians regard this subject in the light of a return to Jewish ordinances, and as a coming down from the high ground of the Church. They look upon the Lord's supper and baptism as inward spiritual mysteries; and they consider that we are departing from true spirituality in insisting upon the literal observance of these ordinances.

To all this we very simply reply that God is wiser than we are. If the Lord Christ instituted the supper; if God the Holy Ghost led the early Church to celebrate it; and if He has also expounded it unto us, who are we that we should set up Our ideas in opposition to God? No doubt, the Lord's supper should be an inward spiritual mystery to all who partake of it; but it is also an outward, literal, tangible thing. There is literal bread, and literal wine — literal eating, and literal drinking. If any deny this, they may, with equal force, deny that there are literal people gathered together. We have no right to explain away scripture after such a fashion. It is our happy and holy duty to submit to scripture, to bow down, absolutely and implicitly, to its divine authority.

Nor is it merely a question of subjection to the authority of scripture. It is that, most assuredly, as we have abundantly proved by quotation after quotation from the divine word; and that alone is simply sufficient for every pious mind. But there is more than this. There is such a thing as the response of love in the heart of the Christian, answering to the love of the heart of Christ. Is not this something? Ought we not to seek, in some small degree, to meet the love of such a heart? If our blessed and adorable Lord has, in very deed, appointed the bread and the wine, in the supper, as memorials of His broken body and shed blood; if He has ordained that we should eat of that bread and drink of that cup, in remembrance of Him, ought we not, in the power of responsive affection, to meet the desire of His loving heart? Surely no earnest Christian will question this. It ought ever to be the very joy of our

hearts to gather round the table of our loving Lord, and remember Him in the way of His appointment — to show forth His death till He come. It is only marvellous to think that He should seek a place in the remembrance of such hearts as ours; but so it is; and it would be sad indeed if we, on any ground, and for any reason whatsoever, should neglect that very feast with which He has linked His precious name.

This, of course, would not be the place to enter upon anything like an elaborate exposition of the ordinance of the Lord's supper. We have sought to do this elsewhere. What we specially desire here is, to urge upon the Christian reader the immense importance and deep interest of the ordinance as viewed on the double ground of subjection to the authority of scripture, and responsive love to Christ Himself. And, furthermore, we are anxious to impress all who may read these lines with a sense of the seriousness of neglecting to eat the Lord's supper, according to the scriptures. We may depend upon it, it is dangerous ground for any to attempt to set aside this positive institution of our Lord and Master. It argues a wrong condition of soul altogether. It proves that the conscience is not subject to the authority of the word, and that the heart is not in true sympathy with the affections of Christ. Let us therefore see to it that we are honestly endeavouring to discharge our holy responsibilities to the table of the Lord — that we forbear not to keep the feast — that we celebrate it according to the order laid down by God the Holy Ghost.

Thus much as to the Passover in the wilderness, and the impressive lessons which it conveys to our souls.

We shall now dwell for a few moments on the closing paragraph of our chapter, which is as truly characteristic as any portion of the book. In it we are called to contemplate a numerous host of men, women, and children, travelling through a trackless wilderness, "where there was no way" — passing over a dreary waste, a vast sandy desert, without compass or human guide.

What a thought! What a spectacle! There were those millions of people moving along without any knowledge of the route by which they were to travel, as wholly dependent upon God for guidance as for food and all beside; a thoroughly helpless pilgrim host. They could form no plans for the morrow. when encamped, they knew not when they were to march; and when on the march, they knew not when or where they were to halt.

Theirs was a life of daily and hourly dependence. They had to look up for guidance. Their movements were controlled by the wheels of Jehovah's chariot.

This truly was a wondrous spectacle. Let us read the record of it, and drink into our souls its heavenly teaching.

"And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony: and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning. *So it was alway*: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. at the commandment of the Lord the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle, they rested in their tents. And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord, and journeyed not. And so it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the Lord they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the Lord they journeyed. And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed; whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they

journeyed. Or whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not; but when it was taken up, they journeyed. At the commandment of the Lord they rested in the tents, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed: they kept the charge of the Lord, at the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses." Verses 15-23

A more lovely picture of absolute dependence upon, and subjection to, divine guidance it were impossible to conceive than that presented in the foregoing paragraph. There was not a footprint or a landmark throughout that "great and terrible wilderness." It was therefore useless to look for any guidance from those who had gone before. They were wholly cast upon God for every step of the way. They were in a position of constant waiting upon Him. This, to an unsubdued mind — an unbroken will — would be intolerable; but to a soul knowing, loving, confiding, and delighting in God, nothing could be more deeply blessed.

Here lies the real gist of the whole matter. Is God known, loved, and trusted? If He be, the heart will delight in the most absolute dependence upon Him. If not, such dependence would be perfectly insufferable. The unrenewed man loves to think Himself independent — loves to fancy himself free — loves to believe that he may do what he likes, go where he likes, say what he likes. Alas! it is the merest delusion. Man is not free. He is the slave of Satan. It is now well nigh six thousand years since he sold himself into the hands of that great spiritual slave holder who has held him ever since, and who holds him still. Yes, Satan holds the natural man — the unconverted, unrepentant man in terrible bondage. He has him bound hand and foot with chains and fetters which are not seen in their true character because of the gilding wherewith he has so artfully covered them. Satan rules man by means of his lusts, his passions, and his pleasures. He forms lusts in the heart, and then gratifies them with the things that are in the world, and man vainly imagines himself free because he can gratify his desires. But it is a melancholy delusion; and, sooner or later, it will be found to be such. There is no freedom save that with which Christ makes His people free. He it is who says, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." And again, "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." John 8.

Here is true liberty. It is the liberty which the new nature finds in walking in the Spirit, and doing those things that are pleasing in the sight of God. "The service of the Lord is perfect freedom." But this service, in all its departments, involves the most simple dependence upon the living God. Thus it was with the only true and perfect Servant that ever trod this earth. He was ever dependent. Every movement, every act, every word — all He did, and all He left undone — was the fruit of the most absolute dependence upon, and subjection to, God. He moved when God would have Him move, and stood still when God would have Him stand. He spoke when God would have Him speak, and was silent when God would have Him silent.

Such was Jesus when He lived in this world; and we, as partakers of His nature — His life, and having His Spirit dwelling in us are called to walk in His steps, and live a life of simple dependence upon God, from day to day. Of this life of dependence, in one special phase of it, we have a graphic and beautiful type at the close of our chapter. The Israel of God — the camp in the desert — that pilgrim host followed the movement of the cloud. They had to look up for guidance. This is man's proper work. He was made to turn his countenance upward, in contrast with the brute, who is formed to look downward.* Israel could form no plans. They could never say, "To-morrow we shall go to such a place." They were entirely dependent upon the movement of the cloud. Thus it was with Israel, and thus it should be with us. We are passing through a trackless desert — a moral wilderness. There is absolutely no way. We should not know how to walk, or where to go, were it not for that one most precious, most deep, most comprehensive sentence which fell from the lips of our blessed Lord, "*I am*

the way." Here is divine infallible guidance. We are to follow Him. "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8) This is living guidance. It is not acting according to the letter of certain rules and regulations; it is following a living Christ; walking as He walked; doing as He did; imitating His example in all things. This is Christian movement — Christian action. It is keeping the eye fixed upon Jesus, and having the features, traits, and lineaments of His character imprinted on our new nature, and reflected back or reproduced in our daily life and ways.

{*The Greek word for man (*anthropos*) signifies to turn the face upwards.}

Now this will, assuredly, involve the surrender of our own will, our own plans, our own management altogether. We must follow the cloud; we must wait ever wait *only* upon God. We cannot say, "We shall go here or there, do this or that, to-morrow, or next week." All our movements must be placed under the regulating power of that one commanding sentence — often alas! lightly penned and uttered by us — "*If the Lord will.*"

Oh! that we better understood all this! Would that we knew more perfectly the meaning of divine guidance! How often do we vainly imagine, and confidently assert, that the cloud is moving in that very direction which suits the bent of our inclination. We want to do a certain thing, or make a certain movement, and we seek to persuade ourselves that our will is the will of God. Thus, instead of being divinely guided, we are self-deceived. Our will is unbroken, and hence we cannot be guided aright, for the real secret of being rightly guided — guided of God — is to have our own will thoroughly subdued. "The meek will he guide in judgement; and the meek will He teach His way." And again, "I will guide thee with mine eye." But let us ponder the admonition, "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee." (Psalm 32) If the countenance be turned upwards to catch the movement of the divine "eye," we shall not need the "bit and bridle." But here is precisely the point in which we so sadly fail. We do not live sufficiently near to God to discern the movement of His eye. The will is at work. We want to have our own way, and hence we are left to reap the bitter fruits thereof. Thus it was with Jonah. he was told to go to Nineveh but he wanted to go to Tarshish; and circumstances seemed to favour; providence seemed to point in the direction of his will. But alas! he had to find his place in the belly of the whale, yea, in "the belly of hell" itself, where "the weeds were wrapped about his head." It was there he learnt the bitterness of following his own will. He had to be taught in the depths of the ocean the true meaning of the "bit and bridle," because he would not follow the gentler guidance of the eye.

But our God is so gracious, so tender, so patient! He will teach and He will guide His poor feeble erring children. He spares no pains with us. He occupies Himself continually about us, in order that we may be kept from our own ways, which are full of thorns and briars, and walk in His ways, which are pleasantness and peace.

There is nothing in all this world more deeply blessed than to lead a life of habitual dependence upon God; to hang upon Him, moment by moment, to wait on Him and cling to Him for everything. To have all our springs in Him. It is the true secret of peace, and of holy independence of the creature. The soul that can really say, "*All my springs are in thee*" is lifted above all creature confidences, human hopes, and earthly expectations. It is not that God does not use the creature, in a thousand ways, to minister to us. We do not at all mean this. He does use the creature; but if we lean upon the creature instead of leaning upon Him, we shall very speedily get leanness and barrenness into our souls. There is a vast difference between God's using the creature to bless us, and our leaning on the creature to the exclusion of Him. In the one case, we are blessed and He is glorified; in the other, we are disappointed

and He is dishonoured.

It is well that the soul should deeply and seriously consider this distinction. We believe it is constantly overlooked. We imagine, oft-times, that we are leaning upon, and looking to, God, when, in reality, if we would only look honestly at the roots of things, and judge ourselves in the immediate presence of God, we should find an appalling amount of the leaven of creature confidence. How often do we speak of living by faith, and of trusting only in God, when, at the same time, if we would only look down into the depths of our hearts, we should find there a large measure of dependence upon circumstances, reference to second causes, and the like.

Christian reader, let us look well to this. Let us see to it that our eye is fixed upon the living God alone, and not upon man whose breath is in his nostrils. Let us wait on Him — wait patiently — wait constantly. If we are at a loss for anything, let our direct and simple reference be to Him. Are we at a loss to know our way, to know whither we should turn, what step we should take? let us remember that He has said, "I am the way;" let us follow Him. He will make all clear, bright, and certain. There can be no darkness, no perplexity, no uncertainty, if we are following Him; for He has said, and we are bound to believe, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness." Hence, therefore, if we are in darkness, it is certain that we are not following Him. No darkness can ever settle down upon that blessed path along which God leads those who, with a single eye, seek to follow Jesus.

But some one, whose eye scans these lines, may say, or at least may feel disposed to say, "Well, after all, I am in perplexity as to my path. I really do not know which way to turn or what step to take." If this be the language of the reader, we would simply ask him this one question, "art thou following Jesus? If so, thou canst not be in perplexity. Art thou following the cloud? If so, thy way is as plain as God can make it." Here lies the root of the whole matter. Perplexity or uncertainty is very often the fruit of the working of the will. We are bent upon doing something which God does not want us to do at all — upon going somewhere that God does not want us to go. We pray about it, and get no answer. We pray again and again, and get no answer. How is this? Why the simple fact is that God wants us to be quiet — to stand still — to remain just where we are. Wherefore, instead of racking our brain and harassing our souls about what we ought to do, let us do nothing, but simply wait on God.

This is the secret of peace and calm elevation. If an Israelite, in the desert, had taken it into his head to make some movement, independent of Jehovah; if he took it upon Him to move when the cloud was at rest, or to halt while the cloud was moving, we can easily see what the result would have been. And so it will ever be with us. If we move when we ought to rest, or rest when we ought to move, we shall not have the divine presence with us. "At the commandment of the Lord they rested in the tents, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed." they were kept in constant waiting upon God, the most blessed position that any one can occupy; But it must be occupied ere its blessedness can be tasted. It is a reality to be known, not a mere theory to be talked of. May it be ours to prove it all our journey through!

Numbers 10

"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 camp. 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 priest, 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." Verses 1-10.

We have quoted the entire of this interesting passage for the reader, in order that he may have before him, in the veritable language of inspiration, the lovely institution of "The silver trumpets." It comes in, with striking fitness, immediately after the instruction respecting the movement of the cloud, and is bound up, in a very marked way, with the entire history of Israel, not only in the past but also in the future. The sound of the trumpet was familiar to every circumcised ear. It was the communication of the mind of God, in a form distinct and simple enough to be understood by every member of the congregation, however distant he might be from the source whence the testimony emanated. God took care that each one in that vast assembly, however far away, should hear the silvery tones of the trumpet of testimony.

Each trumpet was to be made of *one* piece, and they fulfilled a double purpose. In other words, the source of the testimony was one, however the object and practical result might vary. Every movement in the camp was to be the result of the sound of the trumpet. Was the congregation to be gathered in festive joy and worship? It was by a certain sound of the trumpet. Were the tribes to be gathered in hostile array? It was by a blast of the trumpet. In a word, the solemn assembly, and the warlike host; the instruments of music and the weapons of war — all — all was regulated by the silver trumpet. Any movement, whether festive, religious, or hostile, that was not the result of that familiar sound, could be but the fruit of a restless and unsubdued will, which Jehovah could, by no means, sanction. The pilgrim host in the wilderness was as dependent upon the sound of the trumpet as upon the movement of the cloud. The testimony of God, communicated in that particular manner, was to govern every movement throughout the many thousands of Israel.

Moreover, it pertained to the sons of Aaron, the priests, to blow with the trumpets, for the mind of God can only be known and communicated in priestly nearness and communion. It was the high and holy privilege of the priestly family to cluster round the sanctuary of God, there to catch the first movement of the cloud, and communicate the same to the most distant parts of the camp. They were responsible to give a certain sound, and every member of the militant host was equally responsible to yield a ready and an implicit obedience. It would have been at once positive rebellion for any to attempt to move without the word of command, or to refuse to move when once that word was given. All had to wait upon the divine testimony, and walk in the light thereof the very moment it was given. To move without the testimony would be *to move in the dark*; to refuse to move, when the testimony was given, would be *to remain in the dark*.

This is most simple and deeply practical. We can have no difficulty in seeing its force and application, in the case of the congregation in the wilderness. But let us remember that all this was a type; and, further, that it is written for our learning. We are solemnly bound, therefore, to look into it; we are imperatively called upon to seek to gather up and treasure up the great practical instruction contained in the singularly beautiful ordinance of the silver trumpet. Nothing could be more seasonable for the present moment. It teaches a lesson to which the Christian reader should give his most profound attention. It sets forth, in the most distinct manner possible, that God's people are to be absolutely

dependent upon, and wholly subject to, divine testimony, in all their movements. A child may read this in the type before us. The congregation in the wilderness dared not assemble for any festive or religious object until they heard the sound of the trumpet; nor could the men of war buckle on their armour, till summoned forth by the signal of alarm to meet the uncircumcised foe. They worshipped and they fought, they journeyed and they halted, in simple obedience to the trumpet call. It was not, by any means, a question of their likings or dislikings, their thoughts, their opinions, or their judgement. It was simply and entirely a question of implicit obedience. Their every movement was dependent upon the testimony of God, as given by the priests from the sanctuary. The song of the worshipper and the shout of the warrior were each the simple fruit of the testimony of God.

How beautiful! How striking! How instructive! And, let us add, how deeply practical! Why do we dwell upon it? Because we firmly believe it contains a needed lesson for the day in which our lot is cast. If there is one feature more characteristic than another of the present hour, it is insubjection to divine authority-positive resistance of the truth when it demands unqualified obedience and self-surrender. It is all well enough so long as it is truth setting forth, with divine fullness and clearness, our pardon, our acceptance, our life, our righteousness, our eternal security in Christ. This will be listened to, and delighted in. But the very moment it becomes a question of the claims and authority of that blessed one who gave His life to save us from the flames of hell, and introduce us to the everlasting joys of heaven, all manner of difficulties are started; all sorts of reasonings and questions are raised; clouds of prejudice gather round the soul, and darken the understanding, the sharp edge of truth is blunted or turned aside, in a thousand ways. There is no *waiting* for the sound of the trumpet; and when it sounds, with a blast as clear as God himself can give, there is no response to the summons. We move when we ought to be still; and we halt when we ought to be moving.

Reader, what must be the result of this? Either no progress at all, or progress in a wrong direction, which is worse than none. it is utterly impossible that we can advance in the divine life, unless we yield ourselves, without reserve, to the word of the Lord. Saved we may be, through the rich aboundings of divine mercy, and through the atoning virtues of a Saviour's blood; But shall we rest satisfied with being saved by Christ, and not seek, in some feeble measure, to walk with him, and live for Him? Shall we accept of salvation through the work which He has wrought, not long after deeper intimacy of communion with Himself, and more complete subjection to His authority in all things? How would it have been with Israel in the wilderness, had they refused attention to the sound of the trumpet? We can see it at a glance. If, for example, they had presumed, at any time, to assemble for a festive or religious object, without the divinely appointed summons; what would have been the result? Or, further, had they taken it upon themselves to move forward on their journey, or go forth to war, ere the trumpet had sounded an alarm; How would it have been? Or, finally, had they refused to move, when called by the sound of the trumpet, either to the solemn assembly, the onward march, or to the battle, how would they have fared?

The answer is as plain as a sunbeam. Let us ponder it. It has a lesson for us. Let us apply our hearts to it. the silver trumpet settled and ordered every movement for Israel of old. The testimony of God ought to settle and order everything for the Church now. That silver trumpet was blown by the priests of old. That testimony of God is known in priestly communion now. A Christian has no right to move or act apart from divine testimony. He must wait upon the word of his Lord. Till he gets that, he must stand still. When he has gotten it, he must *go forward*. God can and does communicate His mind to His militant people now, just as distinctly as He did to His people of old. True, it is not now by the sound of a trumpet, or the movement of a cloud; but by His word and Spirit. It is not by anything that strikes the senses that our Father guides us; But by that which acts on the heart, the conscience, and the

understanding. It is not by that which is natural, but by that which is spiritual, that He communicates His mind.

But let us be well assured of this, that our God can and does give our hearts full certainty both as to what we should do, and what we should not do; as to where we should go, and where we should not go. It seems strange to be obliged to insist upon this — passing strange that any Christian should doubt, much less deny it. And yet so it is. We are often in doubt and perplexity; and some there are who are ready to deny that there can be any such thing as certainty as to the details of daily life and action. This surely is wrong. Cannot an earthly father communicate his mind to his child as to the most minute particulars of his conduct? Who will deny this? And cannot our Father communicate His mind to us, as to all our ways, from day to day Unquestionably He can; and let not the Christian reader be robbed of the holy privilege of knowing his Father's mind in reference to every circumstance of his daily life.

Are we to suppose, for a moment, that the Church of God is worse off, in the matter of guidance, than the camp in the desert? Impossible. How is it, then, that one often finds Christians at a loss as to their movements? It must be owing to the lack of a circumcised ear to hear the sound of the silver trumpet, and of a subject will to yield a response to the sound. It may, however, be said that we are not to expect to hear a voice from heaven telling us to do this or that, or to go hither or thither; nor yet to find a literal text of scripture to guide us in the minor matters of our every day history. How, for example, is one to know whether he ought to visit a certain town, and remain there a certain time? We reply, If the ear is circumcised, you will assuredly hear the silver trumpet. Till that sounds, never stir: when it sounds, never tarry. This will make all so clear, so simple, so safe, so certain. It is the grand cure for doubt, hesitancy, and vacillation. It will save us from the necessity of running for advice to this one and that one, as to how we should act, or where we should go. and, furthermore, it will teach us that it is none of our business to attempt to control the actions or movements of others. Let each one have his ear open, and his heart subject, and then, assuredly, he will possess all the certainty that God can give him, as to his every act and movement, from day to day. Our ever gracious God can give clearness and decision as to everything. If he does not give it, no one can. If He does, no one need.

Thus much as to the beautiful institution of the silver trumpet, which we shall not pursue further now, though, as we have noticed above, it is not confined, in its application to Israel in the wilderness, but is bound up with their entire history right onward to the end. Thus we have the feast of trumpets; the trumpet of the jubilee; the blowing of trumpets over their sacrifices, upon which we do not now dwell, as our immediate object is to help the reader to seize the grand idea presented in the opening paragraph of our chapter. May the Holy Spirit impress upon our hearts the needed lesson of "the silver trumpets!"

We have now travelled, in our meditations on this precious book, the moment in the which the camp is called to move forward. All is duly ordered, according to that grand regulator — "The commandment of the Lord." Each man according to his pedigree, and each tribe according to the standard thereof, is in the divinely appointed place. The Levites are at their posts, each with his own clearly defined work to do. Full provision is made for the cleansing of the camp from every species of defilement; and not only so, but the lofty standard of personal holiness is unfurled, and the fruits of active benevolence are presented. Then we have the golden candlestick and its seven lamps, giving forth their pure and precious light. We have the pillar of fire and of cloud; and, finally, the double testimony of the silver trumpet. In short, nothing is lacking to the pilgrim host. A vigilant eye, a powerful hand, and a loving heart have provided for every possible contingency, so that the whole congregation in the wilderness, and each member in particular, might be "thoroughly furnished."

This is only what we might expect. If God undertakes to provide for any one, or for any people, the provision, must of necessity, be perfect. It is wholly impossible that God could omit any one thing needful. He knows all things, and can do all things. Nothing can escape His vigilant eye; nothing is beyond His omnipotent hand. Hence, therefore, all those who can truly say, "The Lord is my Shepherd," may add, without hesitancy or reserve, "I shall not want." the soul that is, in truth and reality, leaning on the arm of the living God can never — shall never — want any good thing. The poor foolish heart may imagine a thousand wants; but God knows what we really want, and He will provide for ALL.

Thus, then, the camp is ready to move; but, strange to say, there is a departure from the order laid down in the opening of the book. The ark of the covenant, instead of reposing in the bosom of the camp, goes in the very front. In other words, Jehovah, instead of remaining in the centre of the congregation to be waited upon there, actually condescends, in His marvellous, inimitable grace, to do the work of an avant-courier, for His people.

But let us see what it is that leads to this touching display of grace. "And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you; come thou with us and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. And he said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred. and he said, Leave us not, I pray thee, forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes."

Now, if we did not know something of our own hearts, and the tendency thereof to lean on the creature! rather than upon the living God, we might well marvel at the above. We might feel disposed to enquire, What could Moses possibly want with Hobab's eyes? Was not Jehovah sufficient? Did not He know the wilderness? Would He suffer them to go astray? What of [the cloud and the silver trumpet? were not they better than Hobab's eyes? why, then, did Moses seek for human aid? Alas! alas! We can but too well understand the reason. We all know, to our sorrow and loss, the tendency of the heart to lean upon something that our eyes can see. We do not like to occupy the ground of absolute dependence upon God for every step of the journey. we find it hard to lean upon an unseen arm. A Hobab that we can see inspires as with more confidence than the living God whom we cannot see. We move on with comfort and satisfaction when we possess the countenance and help of some poor failing mortal; but we hesitate, falter, and quail when called to move on in naked faith in God.

These statements may seem strong; but the question is, are they true? Is there a Christian who reads these lines that will not freely own that it is even so? We are all prone to lean upon an arm of in flesh, and that, too, in the face of a thousand and one examples of the folly of so doing. We have proved, times without number, the vanity of All creature confidences, and yet we *will* confide in the creature. On the other hand, we have, again and again, proved the reality of leaning upon the word and upon the arm of the living God. We have found that He has never failed us, never disappointed us, nay, that He has always done exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think; and yet we are ever ready to distrust Him, ever ready to lean upon any broken reed, and betake ourselves to any broken cistern.

Thus it is with us; But, blessed be God, His grace abounds toward us, as it did toward Israel, on the occasion to which we are now referring. If Moses will look to Hobab for guidance, Jehovah will teach His Servant that He Himself is all-sufficient as a guide. "and they departed from the mount of the Lord three days' journey; and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, *to search out a resting place for them.*

What rich, what precious grace! In place of their finding a resting-place for Him, He would find a

resting place for them. What a thought! The mighty God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, going through the wilderness to look out for a suitable camping ground for a people who were ready, at every turn in their path, to murmur and rebel against Him!

Such is our God, ever "patient, gracious, powerful, holy" — ever rising, in the magnificence of His grace above all our unbelief and failure, and proving Himself superior, in His love, to all the barriers which our unfaithfulness would erect. He, most assuredly, proved to Moses and to Israel, that He was far better as a guide than ten thousand Hobabs. We are not told in this place, whether Hobab went or not. He certainly refused the first appeal, and perhaps the second likewise. But we are told that the Lord went with them. "The cloud of the Lord was upon them by day, when they went out of the camp." Blessed shelter in the wilderness! Blessed, unfailing resource, in everything! He went before His people to search them out a resting place, and when He had found a spot suited to their need, He halted with them, and spread His sheltering wing over them, to protect them from every foe. "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, He instructed him, He kept will as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." (Deut. 32: 10-12.) "He spread a Cloud for a covering, and fire to give light in the night." Psalm 105: 39.

Thus, then, all was provided for, according to the wisdom, power, and goodness of God. Nothing was, or could be, lacking, inasmuch as God Himself was there. "And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel."

Numbers 11

Hitherto we have been occupied, in our study of this book, with God's mode of ordering and providing for His people in the wilderness. We have travelled over the first ten chapters and seen in them the illustration of the wisdom, goodness, and forethought of Jehovah, the God of Israel.

But, now, we reach a point at which dark clouds gather round us. Up to this, God and His actings have been before us; But, now, we are called to contemplate man and his miserable ways. This is ever sad and humiliating. man is the same everywhere. In Eden, in the restored earth, in the wilderness, in the land of Canaan, in the Church, in the Millennium, man is proved to be a total failure. the very moment he moves, he breaks down. Thus, in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 God is seen acting as Creator; everything is done and ordered in divine perfection, and man is placed in the scene to enjoy the fruit of divine wisdom, goodness, and power. But in Genesis 3 all is changed. The moment man acts, it is to disobey and bring in ruin and desolation. So after the deluge, when the earth had passed through that deep and dreadful baptism, and when man again takes his place therein, he exposes himself, and proves that, so far from being able to subdue and govern the earth, he cannot even govern himself. (Gen. 9) Hardly had Israel been brought out of Egypt, when they made the golden calf. No sooner had the priesthood been set up, than the sons of Korah offered strange fire. Directly Saul was made king, he proved wilful and disobedient.

So also when we turn to the pages of the New Testament, we find the same thing. No sooner is the Church set up and adorned with Pentecostal gifts, than we hear the sad accents of murmuring and discontent. In short, man's history, from first to Last, here, there, and everywhere, is marked with failure. There is not so much as a single exception from Eden down to the close of the millennial day.

It is well to consider this solemn and weighty fact, and to give it a deep place in the heart. It is eminently calculated to correct all false notions as to man's real character and condition. It is well to

bear in mind that the awful sentence which struck terror into the heart of the voluptuous king of Babylon has, in point of fact, been passed upon the entire human race, and to" each individual son and daughter of fallen Adam, namely, "*Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting.*" Has the reader fully accepted this sentence against himself? This is a serious inquiry. We feel imperatively called to press it home. Say, reader, art thou one of Wisdom's children? Dost thou justify God and condemn thyself? Hast thou taken thy place as a self-destroyed, guilty, hell-deserving sinner? If so, Christ is for thee. He died to put away sin, and to bear your many sins. Only trust him and all He is and has is thine. He is thy wisdom, thy righteousness, thy sanctification, and thy redemption. All who simply and heartily believe in Jesus have passed clean off the old ground of guilt and condemnation, and are seen by God on the new ground of eternal life and divine righteousness. They are accepted in the risen and victorious Christ. As he is, so are we in this world." 1 John 4: 17.

We would earnestly entreat the reader not to rest until this most momentous question is clearly and thoroughly settled in the light of God's own word and presence. we pray that God the Holy Ghost may deeply exercise the heart and conscience of the unconverted and undecided reader, and lead such to the Saviour's feet.

We shall now proceed with our chapter.

"And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord; and the Lord heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire was quenched. And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the Lord burnt among them. And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? we remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic. But now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes."

Here the poor human heart lets itself thoroughly out. Its tastes and its tendencies are made manifest. The people sigh after the land of Egypt, and cast back wistful looks-after its fruits and its fleshpots. They do not say anything about the lash of the taskmaster, and the toil of the brick-kilns. There is total silence as to these things. Nothing is remembered now, save those resources by which Egypt had ministered to the lusts of nature. How often is this the case with us! When once the heart loses its freshness in the divine life — when heavenly things begin to lose their savour — when first love declines — when Christ ceases to be a satisfying and altogether precious portion for the soul — when the word of God and prayer lose their charm and become heavy, dull, and mechanical; then the eye wanders back toward the world, the heart follows the eye, and the feet follow the heart. We forget, at such moments, what the world was to us when we were in it and of it. We forget what toil and slavery, what misery and degradation, we found in the service of sin and of Satan, and think only of the gratification and ease, the freedom from those painful exercises, conflicts, and anxieties which attend upon the wilderness path of God's people.

All this is most sad, and should lead the soul into the most profound self-judgement. It is terrible when those who have set out to follow the Lord begin to grow weary of the way and of God's provision. How dreadful must those words have sounded in the ear of Jehovah, "But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes." Ah! Israel, what more didst thou need? Was not that heavenly food enough for thee! Couldst thou not live upon that which the hand of thy God had provided for thee?

Do we count ourselves free to ask such questions? Do we always find *our* heavenly manna

sufficient for us? What means the enquiry inquiry raised by professing Christians as to the right or wrong of such and such worldly pursuits and pleasures? Have we not even heard from the lips of persons making the very highest profession such words as these, "How are we to fill up the day! We cannot be always thinking about Christ and heavenly things. We must have some little recreation." Is not this somewhat akin to Israel's language in Numbers 11? Yes truly; and as is the language, so is the acting. We prove, alas! that Christ is not enough for the heart, by the palpable fact of our betaking ourselves to other things. How often, for example, does the Bible lie neglected for hours, while the light and worthless literature of the world is greedily devoured. What mean the well-thumbed newspaper and the almost dust-covered Bible? Do not these things tell a tale? Is not this despising the manna, and sighing after, nay, devouring, the leeks and onions?

We specially call the attention of young Christians to that which is now before us. We are deeply impressed with a sense of their danger of falling into the very sin of Israel as recorded in our chapter. No doubt we are all in danger; but the young amongst us are peculiarly so. Those of us who are advanced in life are not so likely to be drawn away by the frivolous pursuits of the world — by its concerts, its flower shows, its pleasure parties, its vain songs and light literature. But the young *will* have a dash of the world. They long to taste it for themselves. They do not find Christ an all sufficient portion for the heart. They want recreation.

Alas! alas! what a thought! How sad to hear a Christian say, "I want some recreation. How can I fill up the day? I cannot be always thinking of Jesus." we should like to ask all who speak thus, How will you fill up eternity? Shall not Christ be sufficient to fill up its countless ages? Shall you want recreation there? Will you sigh for light literature, vain songs, and frivolous pursuits there?

It will, perhaps, be said, "we shall be different then." in what respect? We have the divine nature — we have the Holy Ghost — we have Christ for our portion — we belong to Heaven we are brought to God. "But we have an evil nature in us." Well, are we to cater for that? Is it for that we crave recreation? must we try to help our wretched flesh — our corrupt nature — to fill up the day? Nay, we are called to deny it, to mortify it, to reckon it dead. This is Christian recreation. This is the mode in which the saint is called to fill up His day. How is it possible for us to grow in the divine life if we are only making provision for the flesh? Egypt's food cannot nourish the new nature; and the great question for us is this, which do we really mean to nourish and cherish — the new or the old? It must be obvious that the divine nature cannot possibly feed upon newspapers, vain songs, and light literature; and Hence, if we give ourselves, in any measure, to these" latter, our souls must wither and droop.

May we have grace to think of these things — to think seriously. May we so walk in the Spirit that Christ may ever be a satisfying portion for our hearts. Had Israel, in the wilderness, walked with God, they never could have said, "Our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all beside this manna before our eyes."

That manna would have been quite enough for them. And so with us. If we really walk with God, in this wilderness world, our souls shall be satisfied with the portion which He gives, and that portion is heavenly Christ. Can He ever fail to satisfy? Does He not satisfy the heart of God? Does He not fill all heaven with His glory? Is He not the theme of angels' song, and the object of their adoring homage and wondering worship? Is He not the one grand subject of everlasting counsels and purposes? Doth not the history of His ways overlap, eternity?

What answer have we to give to all these queries? what but a hearty, unreserved, unhesitating, YES? Well, then, is not this blessed One, in the deep mystery of His Person, in the moral glory of His ways, in the brightness and blessedness of His character, is not He enough for our hearts! Do we want

anything beside? Must we get the newspaper or some light magazine to fill up the vacuum in our souls? Must we turn from Christ to a flower show or a concert?

Alas! that we should have to write thus. It is most sad but it is most needful; and we here put this question most pointedly to the leader, Dost thou really find Christ insufficient to satisfy thy heart? Hast thou cravings which He does not fully meet? If so, thou art in a very alarming condition of soul, and it behoves thee to look at once, and to look closely, into this solemn matter. Get down on thy face before God, in honest self-judgment. Pour out thy heart to Him. Tell Him all. Own to Him how thou hast fallen and wandered — as surely thou must have done when God's Christ is not enough for thee. Have it all out in secret with thy God, and take no rest until thou art fully and blessedly restored to communion with Himself — to heart fellowship with Him about the Son of His love.

But we must return to our chapter, and in so doing we call the readers attention to an expression full of weighty admonition for us: "And the *mixed multitude* that was among them fell a lusting; and the children of Israel also wept again." There is nothing more damaging to the cause of Christ or to the souls of His people than association with men of *mixed* principles. It is very much more dangerous than having to do with open and avowed enemies. Satan knows this well, and hence his constant effort to lead the Lord's people to link themselves with those who are only half and half; or, on the other hand, to introduce spurious materials—false professors, into the midst of those who are seeking, in any measure, to pursue a path of separation from the world. We have repeated allusions to this special character of evil, in the New Testament. We have it both prophetically in the Gospels, and historically in the: Acts and in the Epistles. Thus we have the tares and the leaven in Matthew 13. Then in the Acts we find persons attaching themselves to the assembly who were like the "mixed multitude" of Numbers 11. And, finally, we have apostolic reference to spurious materials introduced by the enemy for the purpose of corrupting the testimony and subverting the souls of God's people. Thus the apostle Paul speaks of "false brethren unawares brought in." (Gal. 2: 4) Jude also speaks of "certain men crept in unawares." Verse 4.

From all this we learn the urgent need of vigilance on the part of God's people; and not only of vigilance, but also of absolute dependence upon the Lord, who alone can preserve them from the entrance in of false materials, and keep them free from all contact with men of mixed principles and doubtful character. "the mixed multitude" is sure to "fall a lusting," and the people of God are in imminent danger of being drawn away from their proper simplicity, and of growing weary of the heavenly manna — their proper food. What is needed is, plain decision for Christ; thorough devotedness to Him and to His cause. Where a company of believers are enabled to go on in whole-heartedness for Christ and in marked separation from this present world, there is not so much danger of persons of equivocal character seeking a place among them; though doubtless Satan will always seek to mar the testimony by the introduction of hypocrites. Such persons do obtain an entrance, and then by their evil ways bring reproach on the Lord's name. Satan knew full well what he was doing, when he led the mixed multitude to attach themselves to the congregation of Israel. It was not all at once that the effect of this admixture was made manifest. The people had come forth with a high hand; they had passed through the Red Sea, and raised the song of victory on its banks. All looked bright and promising; but "the mixed multitude" were there, notwithstanding, and the effect of their presence was very speedily made apparent.

Thus it is ever, in the history of God's people. We may notice, in those great spiritual movements which have taken place from age to age, certain elements of decay which, at the first, were hidden from view by the flowing tide of grace and *energy*; but when that tide began to ebb, then those elements made their appearance.

This is very serious, and calls for much holy watchfulness. It applies to individuals just as forcibly as to the people of God collectively. In our early moments, our young days, when zeal and freshness characterised us, the spring tide of grace rose so blessedly that many things were allowed to escape unjudged, which were, in reality, seeds flung into the ground by the enemy's hand, and which, in due season, are sure to germinate and fructify. Hence it follows that both assemblies of Christians and individual Christians should ever be on the watch tower — ever keeping jealous guard lest the enemy gain an advantage in this matter. Where the heart is true to Christ, all is sure to come right in the end. Our God is so gracious, He takes care of us and preserves us from a thousand snares. May we learn to trust him and to praise Him!

But we have further lessons to draw from the weighty section which lies open before us. Not only have we to contemplate failure on the part of the congregation of Israel; but even Moses himself is seen faltering and almost sinking beneath the weight of his responsibility. "And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto, all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat; I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness." Verses 11-15.

This is truly wonderful language. It is not that we would think for a moment of dwelling upon the failures and infirmities of so dear and so devoted a servant as Moses. Far be the thought. It would ill become us to comment upon the actings or the sayings of one of whom the Holy Ghost has declared that "he was faithful in all his house." (Heb. 3: 2) Moses, like all the Old Testament saints, has taken his place amongst the "Spirits Of just men made perfect," and every inspired Allusion to him throughout the pages of the New Testament tends only to put honour upon him, and to set him forth as a most precious vessel.

But still we are bound to ponder the inspired history now before us — history penned by Moses himself. True it is — blessedly true — that the defects and failures of God's people, in Old Testament times, are not commented upon in the New Testament; yet are they recorded, with faithful accuracy, in the Old; and wherefore? Is it not for our learning? Unquestionably. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Romans 15: 4.

What then are we to learn from the remarkable outburst of feeling recorded in Numbers 11: 11-15? We learn this at least, that it is the wilderness that really brings out what is in the very best of us. It is there we prove what is in our hearts. and, inasmuch as the Book of Numbers is, emphatically, the book of the wilderness, it is just there we might expect to find all sorts of failure and infirmity fully unfolded. the Spirit of God faithfully chronicles everything. He gives us men as they are; and even though it be a Moses that "speaks unadvisedly with his lips," that very unadvised speaking is recorded for our admonition and instruction. Moses "was a man subject to like passions as we are;" and it is very evident that, in the portion of his history now before us, his heart sinks under the tremendous weight of his responsibilities.

It will, perhaps, be said, "No wonder his heart should sink." No wonder, surely, for his burden was far too heavy for human shoulders. But the question is, was it too heavy for divine shoulders? Was it really the case that Moses was called to bear the burden alone? Was not the living God with him?

And was not He sufficient? What did it matter whether God were pleased to act by one man or by ten thousand? All the power, all the wisdom, all the grace, was in Him. He is the fountain of all blessedness, and, in the judgement of which, it makes not one whit of difference as to the channel, or whether there is one channel, or a thousand and one.

This is a fine moral principle for all the servants of Christ. It is most needful for all such to remember that whenever the Lord places a man in a position of responsibility, He will both fit him for it and maintain him in it. It is, of course, another thing altogether if a man *will* rush unsend into any field of work, or any post of difficulty or danger. In such a case, we may assuredly look for a thorough break down, sooner or later. But when God calls a man to a certain position, He will endow him with the needed grace to occupy it. He never sends any one a warfare at his own charges; and therefore all we have to do is to draw upon Him for all we need. This holds good in every case. We can never fail if we only cling to the living God. We can never run dry, if we are drawing from the fountain. Our tiny springs will soon dry up; but our Lord Jesus Christ declares that, "He that believeth in me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

This is a grand lesson for the wilderness. We cannot get on without it. Had Moses fully understood it, he never would have given utterance to such words as these: "'Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people?" He would have fixed his eye only upon God. He would have known that he was but an instrument in the hands of God, whose resources were illimitable. assuredly, Moses could not supply that vast assembly with food even for a single day; but Jehovah could supply the need of every living thing, and supply it for ever.

Do we really believe this? Does it not sometimes appear as though we doubted it? Do we not sometimes feel as though *we* were to supply instead of God? And then is it any marvel if we quail, and falter, and sink? Well indeed might Moses say, "I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me." There was only one heart that could bear with such a company, namely, the heart of that blessed One, who, when they were toiling amid the brick-kilns of Egypt, had come down to deliver them, and who, having redeemed them out of the hand of the enemy, had taken up His abode in their midst. He was able to bear them, and He alone. His loving heart and mighty hand were alone adequate to the task; and if Moses had been in the full power of this great truth, He would not and could not have said, "If thou deal thus with me, kill me, I play thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight and let we not see my wretchedness."

This surely was a dark moment in the history of this illustrious servant of God. It reminds us somewhat of the prophet Elijah, when he flung himself at the base of the juniper tree and entreated the Lord to take away his life. How wonderful to see those two men together on the mount of transfiguration! It proves, in a very marked way, that God's thoughts are not as ours, nor His ways as ours. He had something better in store for Moses and Elijah than anything that they contemplated. Blessed be His name, He rebukes our fears by the riches of His grace, and when our poor hearts would anticipate death and wretchedness, He gives life, victory, and glory.

However, we cannot but see, that, in shrinking from a position of weighty responsibility, Moses was really giving up a place of high dignity and holy privilege. This seems most evident from the following passage. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, *that they may stand there with thee*. And I will come down and talk with thee there; and *I will take of the spirit which is upon thee and will put it upon them*; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone." Verses 16, 17.

Was there any additional power gained by the introduction of seventy men? Not spiritual power certainly, inasmuch as it was only the spirit that was upon Moses, after all. True, there were seventy men instead of one; but the multiplication of men was no increase of spiritual power. It saved Moses trouble, but it lost him dignity. He was henceforth to be a joint instrument instead of the sole one. It may be said that Moses — blessed servant as he was! — did not want dignity for himself, but rather sought a shady, retired, humble path. No doubt; but this does not touch the question before us. Moses, as we shall see presently, was the meekest man upon the face of the earth; nor do we mean even to hint that any mere man would have done better under the circumstances. But then we must seek to bear away with us the great practical lesson which our chapter so impressively teaches. The very best of men fail; and it seems exceedingly plain that Moses, in the eleventh chapter of Numbers, was not in the calm elevation of faith. He appears, for the moment, to have lost that even balance of soul which is the sure result of finding one's centre in the living God. We gather this, not merely from the fact of his tottering beneath the weight of his responsibility; but let us ponder the following paragraph.

"And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt: therefore the Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; but even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the Lord which is among you, and have wept before him, Saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt? And Moses said, The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them? And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word will come to pass unto thee or not." Verses 18-23.

In all this we see the working of that spirit of unbelief which ever tends to limit the Holy One of Israel. Could not the Almighty God, the Possessor of heaven and earth, the Creator of the ends of the earth — could not fail provide flesh for six hundred thousand footmen? Alas! it is just here we all so sadly fail. We do not enter, as we ought, into the reality of having to do with the living God. Faith brings God into the scene, and therefore it knows absolutely nothing of difficulties; yea, it laughs at impossibilities. In the judgement of faith, God is the grand answer to every question — the grand solution of every difficulty. It refers all to Him; and hence, it matters not in the least to faith, whether it be six hundred thousand or six hundred millions; it knows that God is all-sufficient. It finds all its resources in Him. Unbelief says, "*How* can such and such things be?" It is full of "*Hows*"; but faith has one great answer to ten thousand "*hows*," and that answer is — God.

"And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the Lord, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle. And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, *and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventh elders*; and it came to pass, that when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, And did not cease."

The true secret of all ministry is spiritual power. It is not man's genius, or man's intellect, or man's energy; but simply the power of the Spirit of God. This was true in the days of Moses, and it is true now. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." (Zech. 4: 6) It is well for all ministers to bear this ever in mind. It will sustain the heart and give constant freshness to their ministry. A ministry which flows from abiding dependence upon the Holy Ghost can never become barren. If a man is drawing upon his own resources, he will soon run dry. It matters not what his powers may be, or how extensive his reading, or how vast his stores of information; if the Holy Ghost

be not the spring and power of his ministry, it must, sooner or later, lose its freshness and its effectiveness.

How important therefore that all who minister, whether in the gospel or in the Church of God, should lean continually and exclusively on the power of the Holy Ghost! He knows what souls need, and He can supply it. But He must be trusted and used. It will not do to lean partly on self and partly on the Spirit of God. If there be anything of self-confidence, it will soon be made apparent. We must really get at the bottom of all that belongs to self, if we are to be the vessels of the Holy Ghost.

It is not — need we say it? — that there should not be holy diligence and earnestness in the study of God's word, and in the study too, of exercises, the trials, the conflicts, and the varied difficulties of souls. Quite the reverse. We feel persuaded that the more absolutely we lean, in self-emptiness, upon the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, the more diligently and earnestly we shall study both *the Book* and *the soul*. It would be a fatal mistake for a man to use professed dependence upon the Spirit as a plea for neglecting prayerful study and meditation. "Meditate upon these things; give thyself *wholly* to them; that thy profiting may appear to all." 1 Timothy 4: 15.

But, after all, let it ever be remembered that the holy Ghost is the ever living, never failing spring of ministry. It is He alone that can bring forth in divine freshness and fullness, the treasures of God's word, and apply them, in heavenly power, to the soul's present need. It is not a question of bringing forth new truth, but simply of unfolding the word itself, and bringing it to bear upon the moral and spiritual condition of the people of God. This is true ministry. A man may speak a hundred times on the same portion of scripture, to the same people, and, on each occasion, he may minister Christ, in spiritual freshness, to their souls. And, on the other hand, a man may rack his brain to find out new subjects, and new modes of handling old themes, and, all the while, there may not be one atom of Christ or of spiritual power in his ministry.

All this holds good in reference to the evangelist, as well as to the teacher or pastor. A man may be called to preach the gospel in the same place for years, and he may, at times, feel burdened by the thought of having to address the same audience, on the same theme, week after week, month after month, year after year. He may feel at a loss for something new, something fresh, some variety. He may wish to get away into some new sphere, where the subjects which are familiar to him will be new to the people. It will greatly help such to remember that the one grand theme of the evangelist is Christ. The power to handle that theme is the Holy Ghost; and the one to whom that theme is to be unfolded is the poor lost sinner. Now, Christ is ever new; the power of the Spirit is ever fresh; the soul's condition and destiny ever intensely interesting. Furthermore, it is well for the evangelist to bear in mind, on every fresh occasion of rising to preach, that those to whom he preaches are really ignorant of the gospel, and hence he should preach as though it were the very first time his audience had ever heard the message, and the first time he had ever delivered it. For, be it remembered, the preaching of the gospel, in the divine acceptation of the phrase, is not a barren statement of mere evangelical doctrine — a certain form of words enunciated over and over again in wearisome routine. Far from it. To preach the gospel is really to unfold the heart of God, the person and work of Christ; and all this by the present energy of the holy Ghost, from the exhaustless treasury of holy scripture.

May all preachers keep these things before the mind, and then it will not matter whether it be *one* preacher or *seventy*, one man in the same place for fifty years, or the same man in fifty different places in one year. the question is not at all as to new men or new places, but simply and entirely as to the power of the Holy Ghost unfolding Christ to the soul. Thus in the case of Moses, as recorded in our chapter, there was no increase of power. It was the spirit that was upon him given to the seventy elders.

God can act by one man just as well as by seventy; and if He does not act, seventy are no more than one. It is of the very utmost importance to keep God ever before the soul. This is the true secret of power and freshness whether for the evangelist, the teacher, or any one else. When a man can say, "all my springs are in God," he need not be troubled as to a sphere of work, or competency to fill it. But when this is not so, we can well understand why a man should sigh for a division of labour and responsibility. We may remember, at the opening of the book of Exodus, how unwilling Moses was to go into Egypt, in simple dependence upon God, and how readily he went in company with Aaron. Thus it is ever. We like something tangible, something that the eye can see, and the hand can handle. We find it hard to endure as seeing Him who is invisible. And yet the very props we lean upon often prove to be broken reeds that pierce the hand. Aaron proved to be a fruitful source of sorrow to Moses; and those whom we, in our folly, imagine to be indispensable coadjutors, frequently turn out the very reverse. O that we may all learn to lean, with an undivided heart, and unshaken confidence, upon the living God.

But we must draw this section to a close, and ere doing so, we shall just glance for a moment at the truly excellent spirit in which Moses meets the new circumstances in which he had placed himself. It is one thing to shrink from the weight of responsibility and care, and it is quite another thing to carry oneself with grace and genuine humility toward those who are called to share that weight with us. The two things are totally different, and we may often see the differences strikingly illustrated. In the scene now before us, Moses manifests that exquisite meekness which so specially characterised him. "But there remained two of the (seventy) men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp. And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them. and Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!"

This is perfectly beautiful. Moses was far removed from that wretched spirit of envy which would let no one speak but himself. He was prepared, by grace, to rejoice in any and every manifestation of true spiritual power, no matter where or through whom. He knew full well that there could be no right prophesying save by the power of the Spirit of God; and wherever that power was exhibited, who was he that he should seek to quench or hinder?

Would there were more of this excellent spirit! May we each cultivate it! May we have grace to rejoice unfeignedly in the testimony and service of all the Lord's people, even though we may not see eye to eye with them, and though our mode and our measure may vary. Nothing can be more contemptible than that petty spirit of envy and jealousy which will not permit a man to take an interest in any work but his own. We may rest assured that where the spirit of Christ is in action in the heart, there will be the ability to go out and embrace the wide field of our blessed Master's work and all His beloved workmen: there will be the hearty rejoicing in having the work done, no matter who is the doer of it. A man whose heart is full of Christ will be able to say — and to say it without affectation, "Provided the work is done — provided Christ is glorified — provided souls are saved — provided the Lord's flock is cared for and fed, it matters nothing to me who does the work."

This is the right spirit to cultivate, and it stands out in bright contrast with the narrowness and self-occupation which can only rejoice in work in which "*I, myself*" have a prominent place. May the Lord deliver us from all this, and enable us to cherish that temper of soul expressed by Moses when he said, "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them?"

The closing paragraph of our chapter shows us the people in the miserable and fatal enjoyment of that for which their hearts had lusted. "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul." They got what they longed for and found it death. They *would* have flesh; and with the flesh came the judgement of God. This is most solemn. May we heed the warning! The poor heart is full of vain desires and hateful lusts. the heavenly manna fails to satisfy. There must be Something else. God allows us to have it. But what then? Leanness — barrenness — judgement! O Lord, keep our hearts fixed on thyself alone and at all times! Be thou the ever satisfying portion of our souls, while we tread this desert, and till we see thy face in glory!

Numbers 12

The brief section of our book to which we now approach may be viewed in two distinct aspects; in the first place, it is typical or dispensational; and, in the second, moral or practical.

In the union of Moses with "the Ethiopian woman," we have a type of that great and marvellous mystery, the union of the Church with Christ her Head. This subject has come before us in our study of the Book of Exodus; but we see it here, in a peculiar light, as that which evokes the enmity of Aaron and Miriam. the sovereign actings of grace draw forth the opposition of those who stand upon the ground of natural relationship and fleshly privilege. We know, from the teaching of the New Testament, that the extension of grace to the Gentiles was that which ever elicited the fiercest and most terrible hatred of the Jews. They would not have it; they would not believe in it; nay, they would not even hear of it. There is a very remarkable allusion to this in the eleventh chapter of Romans, where the apostle, referring to the gentiles, says, "For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these [Jews] also now not believed in your mercy [or in mercy to you] that they also may obtain mercy." Verses 30, 31; see Greek.

This is precisely what we have typically presented in the history of Moses. He, first of all, presented himself to Israel, his brethren according to the flesh; but they, in unbelief, rejected him. They thrust him from them, and would not have him. This became, in the sovereignty of God, the occasion of mercy to the stranger, for it was during the period of Moses' rejection by Israel that he formed the mystic and typical union with a Gentile bride. Against this union Miriam and Aaron speak, in the chapter before us; and their opposition brings down the judgement of God. Miriam becomes leprous — a poor defiled thing — a proper subject of mercy, which flows out to her through the intercession of the very one against whom she had spoken.

The type is complete and most striking. The Jews have not believed in the glorious truth of mercy to the Gentiles, and therefore wrath has come upon them to the uttermost. But they will be brought in, by and by, on the ground of simple mercy, just as the Gentiles have come in. This is very humiliating to those who sought to stand on the ground of promise and national privilege; but thus it is in the dispensational wisdom of God, the very thought of which draws forth from the inspired apostle that magnificent doxology, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

Thus much as to the typical bearing of our chapter; Let us now look at it in its moral and practical bearing. "And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. and they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it. (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.) And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses,

and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out. And the Lord: came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord. will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed. And the cloud departed-from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous. Verses 1-10.

It is a most serious thing for any one to speak against the Lord's servant. We may rest assured that God will deal with it, sooner or later. In the case of Miriam, the divine judgement came down suddenly and solemnly. It was a grievous wrong, yea, it was positive rebellion, to speak against the one whom God had so markedly raised up and clothed with a divine commission; and who, moreover, in the very matter of which they complained, had acted in full consonance with the counsels of God, and furnished a type of that glorious mystery which was hidden in His eternal mind, even the union of Christ and the Church.

But, in any case, it is a fatal mistake to speak against the very feeblest and humblest of God's servants. If the servant does wrong — if he is in error, if he has failed in anything — the Lord Himself will deal with him; but let the fellow servants beware how they attempt to take the matter into their hands, lest they be found like Miriam, meddling to their own hurt.

It is very awful to hear, at times, the way in which people allow themselves to speak and write about Christ's servants. True, these latter may give occasion; they may have made mistakes, and manifested a wrong spirit and temper; but we must confess we feel it to be a very dreadful sin against Christ to speak evil of His dear servants. Surely we ought to feel the weight and solemnity of these words, "*Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak. against my servant?*"

May God give us grace to watch against this sore evil Let us see to it that we be not found doing that which is so offensive to Him, even speaking against those who are dear to His heart. There is not a single one of God's people in whom we cannot find some good thing, provided only we look for it in the right way. Let us be occupied *only* with the good; let us dwell upon that, and seek to strengthen and develop it, in every possible way. And, on the other hand, if we have not been able to discover the good thing in our brother and fellow-servant; if our eye has only detected the crooked thing; if we have not succeeded in finding the vital spark amid the ashes — the precious gem among the surrounding rubbish; if we have only seen what was of mere nature, why then let us, with a loving and delicate hand, draw the curtain of silence around our brother, or speak of him only at the throne of grace.

So also when we happen to be in company with those who indulge in the wicked practice of speaking against the Lord's people, if we cannot succeed in changing the current of the conversation, let us rise and leave the place, thus bearing testimony against that which is so hateful to Christ. Let us never sit by and listen to a backbiter. We may rest assured he is doing the work of the devil, and inflicting positive injury upon three distinct parties, namely, Himself, his hearer, and the subject of his censorious remarks.

There is something perfectly beautiful in the way. in which Moses carries himself, in the scene before us. Truly he proved himself a meek man, not only in the matter of Eldad and Medad, But also in the more trying matter of Miriam and Aaron. As to the former, instead of being jealous of those who

were called to share his dignity and responsibility, he rejoiced in their work, and prayed that all the Lord's people might taste the same holy privilege. and, as to the latter, instead of cherishing any feeling of resentment against his brother and sister, he was ready, al once, to take the place of intercession. "And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb. And Moses cried unto The Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee." Verses 11-13.

Here Moses breathes the spirit of His Master, and prays for those who had spoken so bitterly against him. 'This was victory — the victory of a meek man — the victory of grace. a man who knows his right place in the presence of God is able to rise above all evil speaking. He is not troubled by it, save for those who practice it. He can afford to forgive it. He is not touchy, tenacious, or self-occupied. He knows that no one can put him lower than He deserves to be; and, hence, if any speak against him, he can meekly bow his head and pass on, leaving himself and his cause in the hands of Him who judgeth righteously, and who will assuredly reward every man according to his works.

This is true dignity. May we understand it somewhat better, and then we shall not be so ready to take fire if any one thinks proper to speak disparagingly of us or of our work; nay, more, we shall be able to lift up our hearts in earnest prayer for them, and thus draw down blessing on them and on our own souls.

The few closing lines of our chapter confirm the typical or dispensational view which we have ventured to suggest. "And the Lord said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again. And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again. And afterward the people removed from Hazeroth and pitched in the wilderness of Paran." (Ver. 14-16.) We may regard Miriam, thus shut out of the camp, as a figure of the present condition of the nation of Israel, who, in consequence of their implacable opposition to the divine thought of mercy to the gentile, are set aside. But when the "seven days" have run their course, Israel shall be restored, on the ground of sovereign grace exercised toward them through the intercession of Christ.

Numbers 13

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them. And Moses by the commandment of the Lord sent them from the wilderness of Paran." Verses 1-3.

In order fully to understand the foregoing commandment, we must look at it in connection with a passage in the Book of Deuteronomy, where Moses, in going over the facts of Israel's marvellous history in the wilderness, reminds them of the following important and interesting circumstance: "And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the Lord our God commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-Barnea. and I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord our God doth give unto us. Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged. *And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, we will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come.*" Deut. 1: 19-22.

Now here we have the moral root of the fact stated in Numbers 13: 2. It is evident that the Lord

gave the commandment concerning the spies because of the moral condition of the people. Had they been governed by simple faith, they would have acted on those soul-stirring words of Moses, "Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: *go up and possess it*, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; *fear not, neither be discouraged*." There is not a single syllable about spies, in this splendid passage. What does faith want of spies, when it has the word and the presence of the living God? If Jehovah had given them a land, it must be worth having. And had He not? Yes, truly; and not only so, but He had borne testimony to the nature and character of that land in the following glowing words, "For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates, a land of oil olive and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass." Deut 8: 7-9.

Should not all this have sufficed for Israel? Ought they not to have been satisfied with the testimony of God? had not He spied out the land for them, and told them all about it? And was not this enough? What need of sending men to spy the land? Did not God know all about it! Was there a spot "from Dan to Beersheba" with which he was not perfectly acquainted? Had He not selected this land and allotted it, in His own eternal counsels, for the seed of Abraham His friend? Did He not know all about the difficulties? and was He not able to surmount them? Why, then, did they "*come near every one of them*, and say, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again!"

Ah! reader, these questions come right home to our hearts. they find us out, and make thoroughly manifest where we are. It is not for us to sit down and coolly animadvert upon the ways of Israel in the wilderness; to point out error here, and failure there? We must take all these things as types set before us for our admonition. They are beacons, erected by a friendly and faithful hand, to warn us off from the dangerous shoals, quicksands, and rocks which lie along our course, and threaten our safety. This, we may be sure, is the true way to read every page of Israel's history, if we would reap the profit which our God has designed for us in penning such a record.

But, it may be the reader is disposed to ask a question here. "Did not the Lord expressly command Moses to send spies. And if so, how was it wrong for Israel to send them? True, the Lord did command Moses to send the spies, in Numbers 13; but this was in consequence of the moral condition of the people, as set forth in Deuteronomy 1. We shall not understand the former unless we read it in the light of the latter. we learn, most distinctly, From Deuteronomy 1: 22, that the idea of sending the spies had its origin in the heart of Israel. God saw their moral condition, and He issued a command in full keeping therewith.

If the reader will turn to the opening pages of the first book of Samuel, he will find something similar in the matter of the appointment of a king. The Lord commanded Samuel to hearken to the voice of the people, and make them a king. (1 Sam. 8: 22) Was it that He approved of the plan? Most surely not; on the contrary, He declares plainly that it was a positive rejection of Himself. Why then command Samuel to appoint a king! The command was given in consequence of Israel's condition. They were growing weary of the position of entire dependence upon an unseen arm; and they longed for an arm of flesh. They desired to be like the nations around them, and to have a king who should go out before them, and fight their battles for them. Well, God gave them their request, and they were very speedily called to prove the worthlessness of their plan. Their king proved a most complete failure, and they had to learn that it was an evil and a bitter thing to forsake the living God and lean on a broken reed of their own selection.

Now, we see the same thing in the matter of the spies. There can be no question, in the mind of any spiritual person who studies the entire subject, as to the fact that the scheme of sending the spies was the fruit of unbelief. A simple heart that trusted God would never have thought of such a thing. What! are we to send poor mortals to spy out a land which God has graciously given to us, and which He has so fully and faithfully described? Far be the thought; nay, rather let us say, "It is enough; the land is the gift of God, and as such it must be good. His word is enough for our hearts; we want no spies; we seek for no mortal testimony to confirm the word of the living God. He has given; He has spoken; this is enough."

But alas! Israel was not in a condition to adopt such language. They would send spies. They wanted them, their hearts craved them: the desire for them lay in the very depths of the soul; Jehovah knew this, and hence He issued a commandment in direct reference to the moral state of the people.

The reader would do well to ponder this subject, in the light of scripture. He will need to compare Deuteronomy 1 with Numbers 13. It is possible he may find difficulty in judging of the true nature and moral roots of the act of sending the spies, from the fact that the thing was ultimately done in pursuance of "the commandment of the Lord." But we must ever remember that the fact of the Lord's commanding the thing to be done does not, by any means, prove that the people were right in seeking it. The giving of the law at Mount Sinai; the sending of the spies; and the appointment of a king, are all proofs of this. No doubt God overruled all these things for His own glory and for man's ultimate blessing; but still the law could not be viewed as the expression of the heart of God; the setting up of a king was a positive rejection of Himself; and we may say that the sending of men to spy out the land of promise proved, very distinctly, that the heart of Israel was not fully satisfied with Jehovah. The whole affair was the fruit of their weakness and unbelief, though acquiesced in by God because of their condition, and overruled by Him, in His infinite goodness and unerring wisdom, for the unfolding of His ways and the display of His glory. All this comes fully out as we pursue the history.

"And Moses sent them (the spies) to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain: and see the land what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; and what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds; and what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes. So they went up, and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, as men come to Hamath..... And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs. the place was called the brook Eshcol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence. And they returned from searching of the land after forty days. And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the Land. And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it." Numbers 13: 17-27.

Here, then, was the fullest confirmation of all that the Lord had said concerning the land — the testimony of twelve men as to the fact that the land flowed with milk and honey — the testimony of their own senses as to the character of the fruit of the land. Furthermore, there was the telling fact that twelve men had actually been in the land, had spent forty days in travelling up and down therein, had drunk of its springs and eaten of its fruits. And what, according to the judgement of faith, would have been the plain inference to be drawn from such a fact? Why, simply, that the same hand which had

conducted twelve men into the land could conduct the whole congregation.

But alas! the people were not governed by faith, but by dark and depressing unbelief; and even the spies themselves — the very men who had been sent for the purpose of assuring and confirming the congregation—even they, with two brilliant exceptions, were under the power of the same God-dishonouring spirit. In short, the whole scheme proved a failure. The issue only made manifest the true condition of the hearts of the people. Unbelief was dominant. The testimony was plain enough: "We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it." There was nothing whatever lacking on God's side of the question. The land was all that He had said, the spies themselves being witnesses; but let us hearken to what follows. "Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there." Verse 28.

There is always sure to be a "nevertheless" where man is concerned, and when unbelief is at work. The unbelieving spies saw the difficulties — great cities, high walls, tall giants. All these things they saw; but they did not see Jehovah at all. They looked at the things that were seen, rather than at the things that were unseen. Their eye was not fixed upon Him who is invisible. Doubtless, the cities were great; but God was greater. The walls were high; but God was higher. The giants were strong but God was stronger.

Thus it is that faith ever reasons. Faith reasons from God to the difficulties: it begins with Him. Unbelief, on the contrary, reasons from the difficulties to God: it begins with them. This makes all the difference. It is not that we are to be insensible to the difficulties; neither are we to be reckless. Neither insensibility nor yet recklessness is faith. There are some easy-going people who seem to get along through life! on the principle of taking things by the smooth handle. This is not faith. Faith looks the difficulties straight in the face; it is fully alive to the roughness of the handle. It is not ignorant, not indifferent — not reckless; but what? IT BRINGS IN THE LIVING GOD. It looks to Him; it leans on Him; it draws from Him. Here lies the grand secret of its power. It cherishes the calm and deep conviction that there never was a wall too high for the Almighty God — never a city too great — never a giant too strong. In short, faith is the only thing that gives God His proper place; and, as a consequence, is the only thing that lifts the soul completely above the influences of surrounding circumstances, be they what they may. Of this precious faith, Caleb was the exponent, when he said, "Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." These are the pure accents of that lively faith that glorifies God and makes nothing of circumstances.

But alas! the great majority of the spies were no more governed by this lively faith than the man who sent them; and hence, the one believer was talked down by the ten infidels. "The men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people." The language of infidelity was flatly opposed to the language of faith. The latter, looking at God, said, "We are *well* able." The former, looking at the difficulties, said, "We are not able." Thus it was and thus it is. The eyes of faith are ever covered by the living God, and therefore difficulties are not seen. The eyes of unbelief are covered with the circumstances, and therefore God is not seen. Faith brings in God, and therefore all is bright and easy. Unbelief always shuts God out, and therefore all is dark and difficult.

"And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." Not a word about God. He is entirely shut out. Had they thought of Him —

had they brought the giants into comparison with Him, then it would have made not one whit of difference as to whether they themselves were grasshoppers, or whether they were men. But, in point of fact they, by their shameful unbelief, reduced the God of Israel to the level of a grasshopper.

It is very remarkable, that whenever infidelity is at work, it will always be found characterised by this one fact, namely, it shuts out God. This will be found true in all ages, in all places, and under all circumstances. There is no exception. Infidelity can take account of human affairs,, it can reason upon them, and draw conclusions from them; but all its reasonings and all its conclusions are based upon the exclusion of God. The force of its arguments depends upon shutting Him out, and keeping Him out. Only introduce God, and all the reasonings of infidelity crumble into dust beneath your feet. Thus, in the scene before us, What is faith's reply to all the objections advanced by those ten unbelievers? Its one simple, all-satisfying reply, to which there can be no rejoinder, is — GOD!

Reader, do you know anything of the force and value of this most blessed answer! Do you know God? Does He fill the entire range of your soul's vision? Is He the answer to your every question? the solution of your every difficulty? Do you know the reality of walking, day by day, with the living God? Do you know the tranquillising power of leaning upon Him," through all the changes and chances of this mortal life?" If not, let me entreat of you not to go on for one hour in your present state. The way is open. God has revealed Himself in the face of Jesus Christ, as the relief, the resource, and the refuge of every needy soul. Look to Him now — even now," while he may be found; call upon him while he is near." "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;" and "He that believeth shall never be confounded."

But if, on the other hand, you do, through grace, know God as your Saviour — your Father, then seek to glorify Him in all your ways, by a childlike unquestioning confidence in all things. Let Him be a perfect covering for your eyes, under all circumstances, and thus, in spite of all difficulties, your soul shall be kept in perfect peace.

Numbers 14.

"And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night." Need we wonder? What else could be expected from a people who had nothing before their eyes but mighty giants, lofty walls, and great cities? What but tears and sighs could emanate from a congregation who saw themselves as grasshoppers in the presence of such insuperable difficulties, and having no sense of the divine power that could carry them victoriously through all? The whole assembly was abandoned to the absolute dominion of infidelity. They were surrounded by the dark and chilling clouds of unbelief. God was shut out. There was not so much as a single ray of light to illumine the darkness with which they had surrounded themselves. They were occupied with themselves and their difficulties instead of with God and His resources. What else therefore could they do but lift up the voice of weeping and lamentation?

What a contrast between this and the opening of Exodus 15! In the latter their eyes were only upon Jehovah, and therefore they could sing the song of victory. "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed; thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation. *The people shall hear and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina.*" Instead of this it was Israel that was afraid, and sorrow took hold upon them. "Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, *trembling shall take hold upon them:* all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. *Fear and dread shall fall upon them.* In short, it is the most complete reversing of the picture. The sorrow, the trembling, and the fear take hold upon Israel instead of their enemies. and why? Because the One who filled their vision in Exodus 15 is completely shut out in Numbers 14. This

makes all the difference. In the one case, faith is in the ascendant; in the other, infidelity. "By the greatness of *thine arm* they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over which thou hast purchased. thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in; in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever."

Oh! how do these triumphal accents contrast with the infidel cries and lamentations of Numbers 14! Not a syllable about sons of Anak, lofty walls, and grasshoppers, in Exodus 15. No, no; it is all Jehovah. It is His right hand, His mighty arm, His power, His inheritance, His habitation, His actions on behalf of His ransomed people. And then if the inhabitants of Canaan are referred to, they are only thought of as sorrowing, terror-stricken, trembling, and melting away.

But, on the other hand, when we come to Numbers 14 all is most sadly reversed. The sons of Anak rise into prominence. The towering walls, the giant cities with frowning bulwarks, fill the vision of the people, and we hear not a word about the Almighty Deliverer. There are the difficulties on the one side, and grasshoppers on the other; and one is constrained to cry out, "Can it be possible that the triumphal singers by the Red Sea have become the infidel weepers at Kadesh?"

Alas! it is so; and here we learn a deep and holy lesson. We must continually recur, as we pass along through these wilderness scenes, to those words which tell us that, "All these things happened unto Israel for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are met." (1 Cor. 10: 11; see Greek.) Are not we, too, like Israel, prone to look at the difficulties which surround us, rather than at that blessed One who has undertaken to carry us right through them all, and bring us safely into His own everlasting kingdom? Why is it we are sometimes cast down? Why do we mourn? Wherefore are the accents of discontent and impatience heard in our midst, rather than the songs of praise and thanksgiving? Simply because we allow circumstances to shut out God, instead of having God as a perfect covering for our eyes and a perfect object for our hearts.

And, further, let us enquire, wherefore is it that we so sadly fail to make good our position as heavenly men? — to take possession of that which belongs to us as Christians! — to plant the foot upon that spiritual and heavenly inheritance which Christ has purchased for us, and on which He has entered as our forerunner? What answer must be given to these inquiries? Just one word — *Unbelief*.

It is declared, concerning Israel, by the voice of inspiration, that, "they could not enter in [to Canaan because of unbelief." (Heb. 3) So is it with us. We fail to enter upon our heavenly inheritance — fail to take possession, practically, of our true and proper portion — fail to walk, day by day, as a heavenly people, having no place, no name, no portion in the earth — having nothing to do with this world save to pass through it as pilgrims and strangers, treading in the footsteps of Him who has gone before, and taken His place in the heavens. And why do we fail? Because of unbelief. Faith is not in energy, and therefore the things which are seen have more power over our hearts than the things which are unseen. Oh! may the Holy Spirit strengthen our faith, and energise our souls, and lead us upward and onward, so that we may not merely be found *talking* of heavenly life, but *living* it to the praise of Him who has, in His infinite grace, called us thereto.

(And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said Unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were. it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt."

There are two melancholy phases of unbelief exhibited in Israel's history in the wilderness; the

one at Horeb, the other at Kadesh. At Horeb they made a *calf*, and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." At Kadesh, they proposed to make a *captain* to lead them back into Egypt. The former of these is the *superstition* of unbelief; the latter, the wilful *independence* of unbelief; and, most surely, we need not marvel if these who thought that a calf had brought them out of Egypt should seek a captain to lead them back, The poor human mind is tossed like a ball from one to the other of those sore evils. There is no resource save that which faith finds in the living God. In Israel's case God was lost sight of. It was either a calf or a captain; either death in the wilderness, or return into Egypt. Caleb stands in bright contrast with all this. To him it was neither death in the wilderness, nor return into Egypt, but an abundant entrance into the promised land behind the impenetrable shield of Jehovah.

"And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: and they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against, the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not. But all the congregation bade stone them with stones."

And for what were they to be stoned? Was it for telling lies? was it for blasphemy or evil-doing? No; it was for their bold and earnest testimony to the truth. They had been sent to spy the Land, and to fulfil a true report concerning it. This they did; and for this "All the congregation bade stone them with stones." The people did not like the truth then any more than now. Truth is never popular. There is no place for it in this world, or in the human heart. Lies will be received; and error in every shape; but truth never. Joshua and Caleb had to encounter, in their day, what all true witnesses, in every age, have experienced and all must expect, namely, the opposition and hatred of the mass of their fellows. There were six hundred thousand voices raised against two men who simply told the truth, and trusted in God. Thus it has been; thus it is; and thus it will be until that glorious moment when "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

But oh! how important it is to be enabled, like Joshua and Caleb, to bear a full, clear, and uncompromising testimony to the truth of God! How important to maintain the truth as to the proper portion and inheritance of the saints! There is such a tendency to corrupt the truth — to fritter it away — to surrender it to lower the standard. Hence the urgent need of having the truth in divine power in the soul, of being able, in our little measure, to say, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." Caleb and Joshua had not only been in the land, but they had been with God about the land. They had looked at it all from faith's point of view. They knew the land was theirs, in the purpose of God; that it was worth having as the gift of God; and that they should yet possess it by the power of God. They were men full of faith, full of courage, full of power.

Blessed men! They were living in the light of the divine presence, while the whole congregation were wrapped in the dark shades of their own unbelief. What a contrast! This it is which ever marks the difference between even the people of God. You may constantly find persons of whom you can have no doubt as to their being children of God; but yet they never seem to rise to the height of divine revelation, as to their standing and portion as saints of God. They are always full of doubts and fears; always overcast with clouds; always at the dark side of things. They are looking at themselves, or at their circumstances, or at their difficulties. They are never bright and happy; never able to exhibit that joyful confidence and courage which become a Christian, and which bring glory to God.

Now all this is truly lamentable; it ought not to be; and we may rest assured there is some grave defect, something radically wrong. The Christian should always be peaceful and happy; always able to praise God, come what may. His joys do not flow from himself, or from the scene through which he is passing; they flow from the living God, and they are beyond the reach of every earthly influence. He can say, God, the spring of all my joys." This is the sweet privilege of the very feeblest child of God. But here is just where we so sadly fail and come short. We take our eyes off God, and fix them on ourselves, or on our circumstances, our grievances, or our difficulties; hence all is darkness and discontent, murmuring and complaining. This is not Christianity at all. It is unbelief — dark, deadly, God-dishonouring, heart-depressing unbelief. "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

Such is the language of a true spiritual Caleb — language addressed to one whose heart was feeling the pressure of the difficulties and dangers which surrounded Him. The Spirit of God fills the soul of the true believer with holy boldness. He gives moral elevation above the chilling and murky atmosphere around, and lifts the soul into the bright sunshine of that region "where storms and tempests never rise."

"And the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have showed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.

What a moment was this in the history of Moses! Here was what nature might well regard as a golden opportunity for him. Never before and never since have we any occasion in the which a mere man had such a door open before him. The enemy and his own heart might say, "Now's your time. You have here an offer of becoming the head and founder of a great and mighty nation — an offer made to you by Jehovah Himself. You have not sought it. It is put before you by the living God, and it would be the very height of folly on your part to reject it."

But, reader, Moses was not a self-seeker. He had drunk too deeply into the spirit of Christ to seek to be anything. He had no unholy ambition, no selfish aspirations. He desired only God's glory and His people's good; and in order to reach those ends, he was ready, through grace, to lay himself and his interests on the altar.

Hear his marvellous reply. Instead of jumping at the offer contained in the words, "I Will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they" — instead of eagerly grasping at the golden opportunity of laying the foundation of his personal fame and fortune — he sets himself completely aside, and replies in accents of the most noble disinterestedness: And Moses said unto the Lord, Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou, Lord, art among this people; that thou, Lord, art seen face to face; and that thy cloud standeth over them; and that thou goest before them, by daytime in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness." Verses 13-16.

Here Moses takes the very highest ground. He is wholly occupied about the Lord's glory. He cannot endure the thought that the lustre of that glory should be tarnished in the view of the nations of the uncircumcised. What though he should become a head and a founder? what though future millions should look back to him as their illustrious progenitor? this personal glory and greatness was only to be

purchased by the sacrifice of a single ray of divine glory, — what then Away with it all. Let the name of Moses be blotted out for Ever. He had said as much in the days of the *calf*; and he was ready to repeat it in the days of the *captain*. In the face of the superstition and independence of an unbelieving nation, the heart of Moses throbbed *only* for the glory of God. That must be guarded at all cost. Come what may — cost what it may, the glory of The Lord must be maintained. Moses felt it was impossible for anything to be right if the basis were not laid firmly down in the strict maintenance of the glory of the God of Israel. To think of himself made great at God's expense was perfectly insufferable to the heart of this blessed man of God. He could not endure that the name which he loved so well should be blasphemed among the nations, or that it should ever be said by any one, "The Lord was not able."

But there was another thing which lay near the disinterested heart of Moses. He thought of the people. He loved and cared for them. Jehovah's glory, no doubt, stood uppermost; but Israel's blessing stood next. "And now," he adds, "I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people from Egypt even until now." Verses 17-19.

This is uncommonly fine. The order, the tone, and the spirit of this entire appeal are most exquisite. There is, first and chiefest of all, a jealous care for the Lord's glory. This must be fenced round about on every side. But then it is on this very ground, mainly, the maintenance of the divine glory, that pardon is sought for the people. The two things are linked together in the most blessed say, in this intercession. "Let the *power* of my Lord be great." To what end? Judgement and destruction? Nay; "The Lord is *long-suffering*." What a thought! The power of God in long-suffering and pardon! How unspeakably precious! How intimate was Moses with the very heart and mind of God when he could speak in such a strain! and how does he stand in contrast with Elijah, on Mount Horeb, when he made intercession against Israel! We can have little question as to which of these two honoured men was most in harmony with the mind and spirit of Christ. "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy." These words were grateful to the ear of Jehovah, who delights in dispensing pardon. "And the Lord said, I have pardoned, according to thy word." And then He adds, "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."

Let the reader carefully note these two statements. They are absolute and unqualified. "I have pardoned." And, "All the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." Nothing could, by any possibility, touch these grand facts. The *pardon* is secured; and the *glory* shall yet shine forth over all the earth. No power of earth or hell, men or devils, can ever interfere with the divine integrity of these two precious statements. Israel shall rejoice in the plenary pardon of their God; and all the earth shall yet bask in the bright sunshine of his glory.

But then there is such a thing as government, as well as grace. This must never be forgotten; nor must these things ever be confounded. the whole book of God illustrates the distinction between grace and government; and no part of it, perhaps, more forcibly than the section which now lies open before us. Grace will pardon; and grace will fill the earth with the blessed beams of divine glory; but mark the appalling movement of the wheels of government as set forth in the following burning words:" Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it. But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the

land whereunto he went; and his seed shall possess it. (Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley.) To-morrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea." verses 22-25.

This is most solemn. Instead of confiding in God, and going boldly on into the land of promise, in simple dependence upon His omnipotent arm, they provoked him by their unbelief, despised the pleasant land, and were compelled to turn back again into that great and terrible wilderness. "The Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, doubtless ye shall not come into the land concerning which I swore to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even Forty years; and ye shall know my breach of promise. I the Lord have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me; in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die." (Verses 26-33)

Such, then, was the fruit of unbelief, and such the governmental dealings of God with a people that had provoked Him by their murmurings and hardness of heart.

It is of the utmost importance to note here that it was unbelief that kept Israel out of Canaan, on the occasion now before us. The inspired commentary in Hebrews 3 places this beyond all question. "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." It might, perhaps, be said that the time was not come for Israel's entrance upon the land of Canaan. The iniquity of the Amorites had not yet reached its culminating point. But this is not the reason why Israel refused to cross the Jordan. They knew nothing and thought nothing about the iniquity of the Amorites. Scripture is as plain as possible: "They could not enter in" — not because of the iniquity of the Amorites; not because the time was not come — but simply "because of unbelief." They ought to have entered. They were responsible to do so; and they were judged for not doing so. The way was open. the judgement of faith, as uttered By faithful Caleb, was clear and unhesitating: "Let us go up *at once* and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." They were as well able, at that moment, as they could ever be at any moment, inasmuch as the One who had given them the land was the spring of their ability to enter upon it and possess it.

It is well to see this; and to ponder it deeply. There is a certain style of speaking of the counsels, purposes, and decrees of God — of the enactments of His moral government; and of the times and seasons which he has put in His own power — which goes far to sweep away the very foundations of human responsibility. This must be carefully guarded against. We must ever bear in mind that man's responsibility rests on what is revealed, not on what is secret. Israel was responsible to go up at once and take possession of the land; and they were judged for not doing so. Their carcasses fell in the wilderness, because they had not faith to enter the land.

And does not this convey a solemn lesson to us? Most surely. How is it that we, as Christians, so fail in making good, practically, our heavenly portion? We are delivered from judgement by the *blood* of the Lamb; we are delivered from this present world by the *death* of Christ; But we do not, in spirit

and by faith, cross the Jordan, and take possession of our heavenly inheritance. It is generally believed that Jordan is a type of death, as the end of our natural life in this world. This, in one sense, is true. But how was it that when Israel did, at length cross the Jordan, they had to begin to fight? Assuredly, we shall not have any fighting when we actually get to heaven. The spirits of those who have departed in the faith of Christ are not fighting in heaven. They are not in conflict in any shape or form. They are at rest. They are waiting for the morning of the resurrection; but they wait in rest, not in conflict.

Hence, therefore, there is something more typified in Jordan than the end of an individual's life in this world. We must view it as the figure of the death of Christ, in one grand aspect; just as the Red Sea is a figure of it, in another; and the blood of the paschal lamb, in another. The blood of the lamb sheltered Israel from the judgement of God upon Egypt. The waters of the Red Sea delivered Israel from Egypt itself and all its power. But they had to cross the Jordan; they had to plant the sole of their foot upon the land of promise, and make good their place there in spite of every foe. They had to fight for every inch of Canaan.

And what is the meaning of this latter? Have we to fight for heaven? When a Christian falls asleep, and his Spirit goes to be with Christ in paradise, is there any question of fighting? Clearly not. What then are we to learn from the crossing of Jordan, and the wars of Canaan? Simply this, Jesus has died. He has passed away out of this world. He has not only died for our sins, but He has broken every link which connected us with this world; so that we are dead to the world, as well as dead to sin, and dead to the law. We have, in God's sight, and in the judgement of faith, as little to do with this world as a man lying dead on the floor. We are called to reckon ourselves dead to it all, and alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. We live in the power of the new life which we possess in union with Christ risen. We belong to heaven; and it is in making good our position as heavenly men that we have to fight with wicked spirits in the heavenlies — in the very sphere which belongs to us, and from which they have not yet been expelled. If we are satisfied to "walk as men" — to live as those who belong, to this world — to stop short of Jordan, If we are satisfied to live as dwellers upon the earth, if we do not aim at our proper heavenly portion and position, then we shall not know anything of the conflict of Ephesians 6: 12. It is seeking to live as heavenly men now on earth, that we shall enter into the meaning of that conflict which is the antitype of Israel's wars in Canaan. We shall not have to fight when we get to heaven, but if we want to live a heavenly life, on the earth, if we seek to carry ourselves as those who are dead to the world, and alive to Him who went down into Jordan's cold flood for us, then, assuredly, we must fight. Satan will leave no stone unturned to hinder our living in the power of our heavenly life; and hence the conflict. He will seek to make us walk as those who have an earthly standing, to be citizens of this world, to contend for our rights, to maintain our rank and dignity, to give the lie, practically, to that great foundation Christian truth, that we are dead and risen with and in Christ.

If the reader will turn for a moment to Ephesians 6. he will see how this interesting subject is presented by the inspired writer. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the *wiles* of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood (as Israel had to do in Canaan); but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Verses 10-13

Here we have proper Christian conduct. It is not here a question of the lusts of the flesh, or the fascinations of the world, though surely we have to watch against these, but "the wiles of the devil." Not his power, which is forever broken, but those subtle devices and snares by which he seeks to keep Christians from realising their heavenly position and inheritance.

Now, it is in carrying on this conflict, that we so signally fail. We do not aim at apprehending that for which we have been apprehended. Many of us are satisfied with knowing that we are delivered from judgement by the blood of the Lamb. We do not enter into the deep significance of the Red Sea and the river Jordan; we do not practically seize their spiritual import. We walk as men, the very thing for which the apostle blamed the Corinthians. We live and act as if we belonged to this world, whereas scripture teaches and our baptism expresses that we are dead to the world, even as Jesus is dead to it; and that we are risen in Him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead. Colossians 2: 12.

May the Holy Spirit lead our souls into the reality of these things. May He so present to us the precious fruits of that heavenly land which is ours in Christ, and so strengthen us with His own might in the inner man, that we may boldly cross the Jordan and plant the foot upon the spiritual Canaan. We live far below our privileges as Christians. We allow the things that are seen to rob us of the enjoyment of those things that are unseen. Oh! for a stronger faith, to take possession of all that God has freely given to us in Christ

We must now proceed with our history.

"And the men which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the Land, even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord. But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still." Verses 36-38.

It is wonderful to think that out of that vast assembly of six hundred thousand men, besides women and children, there were only two that had faith in the living God. We do not of course, speak of Moses, but merely of the congregation. The whole assembly, with two very brilliant exceptions indeed, was governed by a spirit of unbelief. They could not trust God to bring them into the land; nay, they thought He had brought them into the wilderness to die there; and surely we may say, they reaped according to their dark unbelief. The ten false witnesses died by the plague; and the many thousands who received their false witness were compelled to turn back into the wilderness, there to wander up and down for forty years, and then die and be buried.

But Joshua and Caleb stood on the blessed ground of faith in the living God — that faith which fills the soul with the most joyful confidence and courage. And of them we may say, they reaped according to their faith. God must always honour the faith which He has implanted in the soul. It is His own gift, and He cannot, we may say with reverence, but own it wherever it exists. Joshua and Caleb were enabled, in the simple power of faith, to withstand a tremendous tide of infidelity. They held fast their confidence in God in the face of every difficulty; and he signally honoured their faith in the end, for While the carcasses of their brethren were mouldering in the dust of the wilderness, their feet were treading the vine-clad hills and fertile valleys of the land of Canaan. The former declared that God had brought them forth to die in the wilderness; and they were taken at their word. The latter declared that God was able to bring them into the land, and they were taken at their word.

This is a most weighty principle, "According to your faith be it unto you." Let us remember this, God delights in faith. He loves to be trusted, and He delights to put honour on those who trust Him. On the contrary, unbelief is grievous to Him. It provokes and dishonours Him, and brings darkness and death over the soul. It is a most terrible sin to doubt the living God who cannot lie, and to harbour questions when He has spoken. The devil is the author of all doubtful questions. He delights in shaking the confidence of the soul, but he has no power whatever against a soul that simply confides in God. His fiery darts can never reach one who is hidden behind the shield of faith. And oh, how precious it is

to live a life of childlike trust in God. It makes the heart so happy, and fills the mouth with praise and thanksgiving. It chases away every cloud and mist, and brightens our path with the blessed beams of our Fathers countenance. On the other hand, unbelief fills the heart with all manner of questions, throws us in upon ourselves, darkens our path and makes us truly miserable. Caleb's heart was full with joyful confidence, while the hearts of his brethren were filled with bitter murmurings and complaints. Thus it must ever be, if we want to be happy, we must be occupied with God and His surroundings. If we want to be miserable, we have only to be occupied with self and its surroundings. Look, for a moment, at the first chapter of Luke. What was it that shut up Zacharias in dumb silence? It was unbelief. What was it that opened the hearts of Mary and Elizabeth? Faith. Here lay the difference. Zacharias might have joined those pious women in their songs of praise. Were it not that dark unbelief sealed his lips in melancholy silence. What a picture, What a lesson! Oh that we may learn to trust God more simply. May the doubtful mind be far from us. May it be ours, in the midst of an infidel scene, to be strong in faith giving glory to God.

The closing paragraph of our chapter teaches us another holy lesson — let us apply our hearts to it with all diligence. "And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly. And they rose early in the morning, and gat them up to the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised: for we have sinned. And Moses said, wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord? But it shall not prosper. Go not up, for the Lord is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. For the Amalekites, and the Canaanites are there before you. And ye shall fall by the sword; because ye are turned away from the Lord, therefore the Lord will not be with you. But they presumed to go up unto the hill top; nevertheless, the ark of the covenant of the Lord and Moses, departed not out of the camp. The Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto Hormah.

What a mass of contradictions is the human heart! When exhorted to go up, at once, in the energy of faith, and possess the land, they shrank back and refused to go. They fell down and wept when they ought to have conquered. In vain did the faithful Caleb assure them that the Lord would bring them in and plant them in the mountain of His inheritance — that He was able to do it. They would not go up, because they could not trust God. But now, instead of bowing their heads and accepting the governmental dealings of God, they would go up presumptuously, trusting in themselves.

But ah! how vain to move without the living God in their midst! Without Him, they could do nothing. And yet, when they might have had Him, they were afraid of the Amalekites; but now they presume to face those very people without Him. "Lo, we be here, and *will* go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised." This was more easily said than done. an Israelite without God was no match for an Amalekite; and it is very remarkable that, when Israel refused to act in the energy of faith, when they fell under the power of a God-dishonouring unbelief, Moses points out to them the very difficulties to which they themselves had referred. He tells them "*The Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you*"

This is full of instruction. They, by their unbelief, had shut out God; and therefore it was obviously a question between Israel and the Canaanites. Faith would have made it a question between God and the Canaanites. This was precisely the way in which Joshua and Caleb viewed the matter when they said, "If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, *neither fear ye the people of the land*, for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and *the Lord is with us: fear them not.*"

Here lay the grand secret. The Lord's pleasure with His people secures victory over every foe. But if he be not with them, they are as water poured upon the ground. the ten unbelieving spies had declared themselves to be as grasshoppers in the presence of the giants; and Moses, taking them at their word, tells them, as it were, that grasshoppers are no match for giants. If on the one hand, it be true that "according to your faith, so be it unto you;" it is also true, on the other hand, that according to your unbelief, so be it unto you.

But the people presumed. They affected to be something when they were nothing. And, oh! how miserable to presume to move in our own strength! What defeat and confusion! what exposure and contempt! what humbling and smashing to pieces! It must be so. They abandoned God in their unbelief; and He abandoned them in their vain-presumption. They would not go with Him in faith; and He would not go with them in their unbelief. "Nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not out of the camp." They went without God, and hence they fled before their enemies.

Thus it must ever be. It is of no possible use to affect strength, to put forth lofty pretensions, to presume to be anything. Assumption and affectation are worse than worthless. If God be not with us, we are as the vapour of the morning. But this must be learnt practically. We must be brought down to the very bottom of all that is in self, so as to prove its utter worthlessness. And truly it is the wilderness, with all its varied scenes, and its thousand and one exercises, that leads to this practical result. There we learn what flesh is. There nature comes fully out, in all its phases; sometimes full of cowardly unbelief; at other times, full of false confidence. at Kadesh, refusing to go up when told to go; at Hormah, persisting in going when told not. Thus it is that extremes meet in that evil nature which the writer and reader bear about, from day to day.

But there is one special lesson, beloved Christian reader, which we should seek to learn thoroughly, ere we take our departure from Hormah; and it is this: There is immense difficulty in walking humbly and patiently in the path which our own failure has rendered necessary for us. Israel's unbelief, in refusing to go up into the land, rendered it needful, in the governmental dealings of God, that they should turn about and wander in the wilderness for forty years. To this they were unwilling to submit. They kicked against it. They could not bow their necks to the necessary yoke.

How often is this the case with us! We fail; we take some false step; we get into trying circumstances in consequence; and, then, instead of meekly bowing down under the hand of God, and seeking to walk with Him, in humbleness and brokenness of spirit, we grow restive and rebellious; we quarrel with the circumstances instead of judging ourselves; and we seek, in self-will, to escape from the circumstances, instead of accepting them as the just and necessary consequence of our own conduct.

Again, it may happen that through weakness or failure, of one kind or another, we refuse to enter a position or path of spiritual privilege, and thereby we are thrown back in our course, and put upon a lower form in the school. Then, instead of carrying ourselves humbly, and submitting, in meekness and contrition, to the hand of God, we presume to force ourselves into the position, and affect to enjoy the privilege, and put forth pretensions to power, and it all issues in the most humiliating defeat and confusion.

These things demand our most profound consideration. It is a great thing to cultivate a lowly spirit, a heart content with a place of weakness and contempt. God resisteth the proud, but He giveth grace to the lowly. A pretentious spirit must, sooner or later, be brought down; and all hollow assumption of power must be exposed. If there be not faith to take possession of the promised land,

there is nothing for it but to tread the wilderness in meekness and lowliness.

And, blessed be God, we shall have Him with us in that wilderness journey, though we shall not and cannot have Him with us in our self-chosen path of pride and assumption. Jehovah refused to accompany Israel into the mountain of the Amorites; but He was ready to turn about, in patient grace, and accompany them through all their desert wanderings. If Israel would not enter Canaan with Jehovah, He would go back into the wilderness with Israel. Nothing can exceed the grace that shines in this. Had they been dealt with according to their deserts, they might, at least, have been left to wander alone through the desert. But, blessed for ever be His great name, He does not deal with us after our sins, or reward us according to our iniquities. His thoughts are not as our thoughts; nor are

His ways as our ways. Notwithstanding all the unbelief, the ingratitude, and the provocation exhibited by the people; notwithstanding that their return back into the desert was the fruit of their own conduct, yet did Jehovah, in condescending grace and patient love, turn back with them to be their travelling companion for forty long and dreary years in the wilderness.

Thus, if the wilderness proves what man is, it also proves what God is; and, further, it proves what faith is; for Joshua and Caleb had to return with the whole congregation of their unbelieving brethren, and remain for forty years out of their inheritance, though they themselves were quite prepared, through grace, to go up into the Land. This might seem a great hardship. Nature might judge it unreasonable that two men of faith should have to suffer on account of the unbelief of other people. But faith can afford to wait patiently. and besides, how could Joshua and Caleb complain of the protracted march, when they saw Jehovah about to share it with them? Impossible. They were prepared to wait for God's time; for faith is never in a hurry. The faith of the servants might well be sustained by the grace of the Master.

Numbers 15

The words with which our chapter opens are peculiarly striking, when taken in connection with the contents of chapter 14. There all seemed dark and hopeless. Moses had to say to the people, "*Go not up*", for the Lord is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies." And, again, the Lord had said to them, "as truly as I live, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you. Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness..... Doubtless *ye shall not come into the land* concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein..... As for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness."

Thus much as to chapter 14. But no sooner do we open the section now before us, than, just as though nothing had happened, and though all were as calm, as bright, and as certain as God could make it, we read such words as these, "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, *when ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you,*" &c. This is one of the most remarkable passages in the entire of this most wonderful book. Indeed there is not, in the whole compass of the book, a passage more thoroughly characteristic, not only of Numbers, but of the entire volume of God. When we read the solemn sentence, "Ye shall not come into the Land," what is the plain lesson which it reads out to us? The lesson, which we are so slow to learn, of man's utter worthlessness. "All flesh is grass."

And, on the other hand, when we read such words as these, "When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you," what is the precious lesson which they read out to us? This, assuredly, that salvation is of the Lord. In the one, we learn man's failure; in the other, God's faithfulness. If we look at man's side of the question, the sentence is, "Doubtless *ye shall not come into the land.*" But if we look at God's side of the question, we can reverse the matter, and say, "Doubtless *ye shall.*"

Thus it stands in the scene now before us; and thus it stands in the whole volume of inspiration, from beginning to end. Man fails; but God is faithful. Man forfeits everything; but God makes good all. "The things which are impossible with man are possible with God." Need we travel through the inspired canon in order to illustrate and prove this? Need we refer the reader to the history of Adam, in paradise? or the history of Noah, after the flood? or the history of Israel, in the wilderness? Israel, in the land? Israel, under the law? Israel, under the Levitical ceremonial? Shall we dwell upon the record of man's failure in the prophetic, priestly, and kingly office? Shall we point out the failure of the professing church as a responsible vessel on the earth? Has not man failed always and in everything? alas! it is so.

This is one side of the picture — the dark and humbling side. But, blessed be God, there is the bright and encouraging side also. If there is the "Doubtless ye shall not;" there is also the "Doubtless ye shall." and why? Because Christ has entered the scene, and in Him all is infallibly secured for the glory of God and the eternal blessing of man. It is God's eternal purpose to "Head up all things in Christ." There is not a single thing in which the first man has failed, that the second Man will not make good. All is set up on a new footing in Christ. He is the Head of the new creation; Heir of all the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, touching the land; Heir of all the promises made to David concerning the throne. the government shall be upon His shoulder. He shall bear the glory. He is the Prophet, Priest, and King. In a word, Christ makes good all that Adam lost, and brings in much more beside than Adam ever had. Hence, when we look at the first Adam and his doings, whenever and However viewed, the sentence is "Doubtless *ye shall not.*" Ye shall not remain in Paradise — ye shall not retain the government — ye shall not inherit the promises — ye shall not enter the land — ye shall not occupy the throne — ye shall not enter the kingdom.

But, on the other hand, when we look at the last Adam and His doings, wherever and However viewed, The entire category must be gloriously reversed; the "not" must be for ever taken from the sentence, for in Christ Jesus "all the promises of God are yea and Amen, to the glory of God by us." There is no "nay" in the matter when Christ is concerned. all is "yea" — all is divinely settled and established; and because it is so, God has set His seal to it, even the seal of His Spirit, which all Believers now possess. "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." 2 Cor. 1: 19-22.

Thus, then, the opening lines of Numbers 15 must be read in the light of the whole volume of God. It falls in with the entire history of the ways of God with man, in this world. Israel had forfeited all title to the land. They deserved nothing better than that their carcasses should fall in the wilderness. And yet such is the large and precious grace of God, that He could speak to them of their coming into the land, and instruct them as to their ways and works therein.

Nothing can be more blessed or more establishing than all this. God rises above all human failure and sin. It is utterly impossible that a single promise of God can fail of its accomplishment. Could it be that the conduct of Abraham's seed in the wilderness should frustrate God's eternal purpose, or hinder the fulfilment of the absolute and unconditional promise made to the fathers? Impossible; and, therefore, if the generation which came up out of Egypt refused to go into Canaan, Jehovah would, of the very stones, raise up a seed to Whom His promise should be made good. This will help to explain the opening sentence of our chapter, which comes in with such remarkable force and beauty after the humiliating scenes of chapter 14. In this latter, Israel's sun seems to go down amid dark and angry

clouds; But in the former, it rises with serene brightness, revealing and establishing that great truth that "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." God never repents of His call or His gift; and hence, though an unbelieving generation should murmur and rebel ten thousand times over, He will make good all that He has promised.

Here is the divine resting place of faith at all times — the sure and safe haven for the soul amid the wreck of all human schemes and undertakings. Everything goes to pieces in man's hands; but God in Christ remains. Let man be set up in business again and again, under the most favourable circumstances, and he is sure to become a bankrupt; but God has set up Christ in resurrection, and all who believe in Him are placed on a new footing altogether, they are taken into partnership with the risen and glorified Head, and there they stand for ever. That wondrous partnership can never be dissolved. All is secured on a basis that no power of earth or hell can ever touch.

Reader, say, Dost thou understand the application of all this to thyself? Hast thou discovered, in the light of God's presence, that thou art, in very deed, a bankrupt; that thou hast made shipwreck of everything; that thou hast not a single plea to urge? Hast thou been led to make a personal application of those two sentences upon which we have been dwelling, namely "Doubtless thou shalt not," and "Doubtless thou shalt"? Hast thou learnt the force of these words, "Thou hast destroyed thyself; But in me is thy help"? In one word, hast thou come to Jesus as a lost, guilty self-destroyed sinner, and found redemption, pardon, and peace in Him?

Do pause, dear friend, and seriously consider these things. We can never lose sight of the weighty fact that we have something more to do than to write "Notes on the Book of Numbers." We have to consider the soul of the reader. We have a most solemn responsibility to discharge to him or to her; and therefore it is that, from time to time, we feel constrained to turn, for a moment, from the page on which we are meditating, in order to make an appeal to the heart and conscience of the reader, and entreat him, most earnestly, that if he be as yet unconverted, undecided, he would lay aside this volume, and apply his heart seriously to the great question of his present condition and eternal destiny. In comparison with this, all other questions dwindle into utter insignificance. what are all the schemes and undertakings which begin, continue, and end in time, when compared with eternity and the salvation of your never-dying soul? They are as the small dust of the balance. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul" If you had the wealth of a Rothschild, the money king — if you stood on the loftiest pinnacle of literary fame or political ambition — if your name were adorned with all the honours which the universities of this world could bestow — if your brow were wreathed with the laurels and your breast covered with the medals of a hundred victories — what would it profit you? You must leave all — you must pass through the narrow arch of time into the boundless ocean of eternity. Men of princely wealth, men of literary fame, men who have ruled by their intellectual power the House of Lords and Commons — men who have held thousands hanging entranced upon their lips — men who have reached the very highest point of naval, military, and forensic distinction — have passed away into eternity; and the awful question as to such is, "Where is the soul?"

Beloved reader, we beseech thee, by the most weighty arguments that can possibly be urged upon the soul of men, not to turn away from this subject until thou hast come to a right conclusion. By God's great love — by the cross and passion of Christ — by the powerful testimony of God the Holy Ghost — by the awful solemnity of a never-ending eternity — by the unspeakable value of thy immortal soul — by all the joys of heaven — by all the horrors of hell — by these seven weighty arguments, we urge thee, this moment, to come to Jesus. Delay not! Argue not Reason not But come now, just as you are, with all your sins, with all your misery, with your misspent life, with your dreadful record of mercies slighted, advantages abused, opportunities neglected — come to Jesus who stands, with open arms and

loving heart, ready to receive you, and points to those wounds which attest the reality of His atoning death upon the cross, and tells you to put your trust in Him, and assures you you will never be confounded. May God's Spirit carry home this appeal to thy heart, this moment, and give thee no rest until thou art savingly converted to Christ, reconciled to God, and sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise!

We shall now return, for a moment, to our chapter.

Nothing can be more lovely than the picture here presented. We have vows and freewill offerings, sacrifices of righteousness, and the wine of the Kingdom, all based upon the sovereign grace which shines in the very first verse. It is a fair sample, a beautiful foreshadowing of the future condition of Israel. It reminds us of the marvellous visions which close the book of the prophet Ezekiel. The unbelief, the murmuring, the rebellion, are all over and all forgotten. God retires into His own eternal counsels, and from thence looks forward to the time when His people shall offer an offering in righteousness and pay their vows to Him, and the joy of His kingdom shall fill their hearts for ever. Verses 3-13.

But there is one very striking feature in this chapter, and that is the place which "the stranger" gets. It is most thoroughly characteristic. "And if a stranger sojourn with you, or whosoever be among you in your generations, and will offer an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord; as ye do, so he shall do. One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you *an ordinance for ever* in your generations: *as ye are, so shall The stranger be before the Lord.* One law and one manner shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you."

What a place for the stranger! What a lesson for Israel! What a standing testimony on the page of their favourite and boasted Moses! The stranger is placed on the very same platform with Israel "As ye are, so shall the stranger be," and this, too, "before the Lord." In Exodus 12: 48 we read, "And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it." But in Numbers 15 there is no allusion to circumcision at all. And why? Is it that such a point could ever be waived? No; but we believe the omission here is full of meaning. Israel had forfeited everything. The rebellious generation was to be set aside and cut off; but God's eternal purpose of grace must stand, and All His promises be fulfilled. All Israel shall be saved; they shall possess the land; they shall offer pure offerings, pay their vows, and taste the joy of the Kingdom. On what ground? On the ground of sovereign mercy. Well, it is on the selfsame ground that "the stranger" shall be brought in; and not only brought in, but "As ye are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord."

Will the Jew quarrel with this? Let him go and study Numbers 13 and 14. And when he has drunk into his inmost soul the wholesome lesson, then let him meditate on Numbers 15; and we feel assured he will not seek to push "the stranger" off the platform, for he will be ready to confess himself a debtor to mercy alone, and to acknowledge that the same mercy which has reached him can reach the stranger, and he will rejoice to go in company with that stranger to drink of the wells of salvation thrown open by the sovereign grace of the God of Jacob.

Are we not forcibly reminded, by the teaching of this part of our book, of that profound section of dispensational truth presented in Romans 9-11, particularly of its magnificent close? "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye [strangers] in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these also now not believed in your mercy (i.e., Mercy shown to the Gentiles, see Greek), that they also may obtain mercy [i.e., come in on

the ground of mercy like the stranger.] For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all [Jews and Gentiles — Israel and the stranger.] O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." Romans 11: 29-36.

In Numbers 15: 22-32, we have instructions as to sins of ignorance and presumptuous sins — a very grave and important distinction. For the former, simple provision is made, in the goodness and mercy of God. The *death* of Christ is presented, in this portion of the chapter, in its two grand aspects, namely, the burnt offering, and the sin offering; that is, its aspect to Godward, and its aspect to usward; and we have also all the preciousness, fragrance, and joy of His perfect *life* and service, as a man in this world, as typified by the meat offering and drink offering. In the burnt offering, we see atonement wrought according to the measure of Christ's devotedness to God, and of God's delight in Him. In the sin offering, we see atonement wrought according to the measure of the sinner's necessities and the hatefulness of sin in God's sight. The two offerings, taken together, present the atoning death of Christ in all its fullness. Then, in the meat offering, we have Christ's perfect life and the reality of His human nature, as manifested in all the details of His path and service in this world. While the drink offering typifies His complete surrender of Himself to God.

Into the rich and marvellous instruction conveyed in the different classes of sacrifices, presented in this passage, we do not attempt to enter now. The reader who desires to study the subject more fully, is referred to a little volume entitled "Notes on the Book of Leviticus." (Pages 1 - 140.) We merely state here, in the very Briefest manner, what we judge to be the main import of each offering; to go into details would only be to repeat what we have already written.

We would merely add that the claims of God demand that sins of ignorance should be taken cognisance of. We might feel disposed to say, or at least to think, that such sins ought to be passed over. But God does not think so. His holiness must not be reduced to the standard of our intelligence. *Grace* has made provision for sins of ignorance; but *holiness* demands that such sins should be judged and confessed. Every true heart will bless God for this. For what would become of us if the provisions of divine grace were not adequate to meet the claims of divine holiness? And adequate they most surely could not be, if they travelled not beyond the range of our intelligence.

And yet, while all this will, generally speaking, be fully admitted, it is often very sorrowful to hear professing Christians making excuses for ignorance, and justifying unfaithfulness and error on the ground of ignorance. But very often, in such cases, the question may, very cogently, be urged, why are we ignorant, in reference to any point of conduct, or the claims of Christ upon us? Suppose a question comes before us, demanding a positive judgement, and calling for a certain line of action; we plead ignorance. Is this right? Will it avail? Will it dispose of our responsibility! Will God allow us to shirk the question after such a fashion? Nay, reader, we may rest assured it will not do. Why are we ignorant? Have we put forth all our energies, have we adopted every available means, have we made every possible effort, to get at the root of the matter and reach a just conclusion? Let us bear in mind that the claims of truth and holiness demand all this of us; nor should we be satisfied with anything less. We cannot but admit that, were it a question involving, in any measure, *our own* interests, our name, our reputation, our property, we should leave no stone unturned in order to make ourselves fully acquainted with all the facts of the case. We should not long plead ignorance in such matters. If information were to be had, we should have it. We should do our very utmost to know all the ins and outs, the *pros* and *cons* of the question, so that we might form a sound judgement in the matter.

Is this not so, reader? Well, then, why should we plead ignorance when the claims of Christ are in question? Does it not prove that while we are quick, earnest, energetic, all alive, when *self* is concerned, we are indifferent, sluggish, slow-paced, when Christ is concerned? Alas! alas! this is the plain humbling truth. May we be humbled under a sense of it! May the Spirit of God make us more thoroughly in earnest in things which concern our Lord Jesus Christ. May self and its interests sink, and may Christ and His interests rise in our estimation, every day! And may we at least cordially own our holy responsibility to go diligently into every question in the which the glory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ may, even in the most remote degree, be involved, however we may fail practically in our research. Let us not dare to say, or think, or act, as though we thought that anything that concerns Him is a matter of indifference to us. God, in His mercy, forbid! Let us esteem All that merely concerns ourselves to be, comparatively, non-essential; but the claims of Christ to be of paramount authority.

We have said thus much on the subject of ignorance, in the sense of our responsibility, to the truth of God, and to the soul of the reader. We feel its immense practical importance. We believe we very often plead *ignorance*, when *indifference* would be the truer term to use. This is very sad. Surely if our God, in His infinite goodness, has made ample provision even for sins of ignorance, that is no reason why we should coolly shelter ourselves behind the plea of ignorance when there is the most abundant information within our reach, had we only the energy to make use of it.

We might not, perhaps, have dwelt at such length upon this point, were it not for the conviction which becomes, each day, more strengthened in the soul, that we have reached a serious moment in our history as Christians. We are not given to croaking. We have no sympathy whatever with it. We believe it is our privilege to be filled with the most joyful confidence, and to have our hearts and minds ever garrisoned by the peace of God that passeth all understanding. "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." 2 Timothy 1: 7.

But it is impossible to close our eyes to the startling fact that the claims of Christ — the value of truth — the authority of holy scripture, are being, more and more, set aside, each day, each week, each year. We believe we are approaching a moment in the which there will be toleration for anything and everything save the truth of God. It behoves us therefore to look well to it, that God's word has its own proper place in the heart; and that the conscience is governed, in all things, by its holy authority. A tender conscience is a most precious treasure to carry about with us, from day to day — a conscience that ever yields a true response to the action of the word of God — that bows down, without a question, to its plain statements. When the conscience is in this fine condition, there is always a regulating power wherewith to act upon one's practical course and character. Conscience may be compared to the regulator of a watch. It may happen that the hands of the watch get astray; but so long as the regulator has power over the spring, there is always the means of correcting the hands. If that power be gone, the entire watch must be taken to pieces. So with the conscience. So long as it continues true to the touch of scripture, as applied by the Holy Ghost, there is always a safe and sure regulating power; But if it becomes sluggish, hardened, or perverted, if it refuses to yield a true response to "Thus saith the Lord," there is little if any hope. It then becomes a case similar to that referred to in our chapter, "But the soul that doeth anything *presumptuously*, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, *the same reproacheth the Lord*; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. *Because he hath despised the word of the Lord*, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him." Verses 30, 31.

This is no sin of ignorance, but a presumptuous, wilful sin, for which nothing remained But the unmitigated judgement of God. "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." (1 Sam. 15: 13.) These are weighty words for a moment like the present, when man's will

is developing itself with such extraordinary force. It is deemed manly to assert our will; but scripture teaches the direct opposite. The two grand elements of human perfection — of perfect manhood — are these, namely, *dependence* and *obedience*. In proportion as any one departs from these, he departs from the true spirit and attitude of a man. Hence, when we turn our eyes to Him who was the perfect man — the man Christ Jesus, we see these two grand features perfectly adjusted and perfectly developed, from first to last. That blessed One was never, for a single moment, out of the attitude of perfect dependence and absolute obedience. To prove and illustrate this fact would take us through the entire gospel narrative. But take the scene of the temptation, and there you will find a sample of the whole of that blessed life. His one unvarying reply to the tempter was, "*It is written.*" No reasonings, no arguments, no questions. He lived by the word of God. He conquered Satan by holding fast the *only* true position of a man — dependence and obedience. He *could* depend upon God; and He *would* obey Him. What could Satan do in such a case? Absolutely nothing.

Well, then, this is our example. we, as having the life of Christ, are called to live in habitual dependence and obedience. This is walking in the Spirit. This is the safe and happy path of the Christian. Independence and disobedience go together. They are utterly unchristian and unmanly. We find these two things in the first man, as we find the two opposites in the Second. Adam in the garden sought to be independent, He was not content with being a man, and abiding in the only true place and spirit of a man, and he became disobedient. Here lies the secret of fallen humanity — these are the two elements which make up fallen manhood. Trace it where you will — before the flood, after the flood; without law, under the law; Heathen, Pagan, Jew, Turk, or nominal Christian; analyse it as closely as you please — and you will see that it resolves itself into these two component parts — independence and disobedience. And when you reach the close of man's history in this world, when you view him in that last sad sphere in which he is to figure, how do you see him? in what character does he appear? as "the wilful king," and the "lawless man."

May we have grace to ponder these things aright. Let us cultivate a lowly and an obedient spirit. God has said, "To this man will I look, even to him who is of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word." May these words sink down into our ears and into our hearts; and let the constant breathing of our souls be, "Keep back thy servant, O Lord, from presumptuous sins, and let them not have dominion over him."*

{*We would remind the young Christian reader, especially, that the true safeguard against sins of ignorance is the study of the word; and the true safeguard against presumptuous sins, is subjection to the word. We all need to bear these things in mind; but our younger brethren particularly. There is a strong tendency amongst young Christians to get into the current of this present age, and to drink in its spirit. Hence the independence, the strong will, the impatience of control, the disobedience to parents, the headiness, high-mindedness, and self-confidence, the pretentious style, the assumption, the setting up to be wiser than their elders — all these things so hateful in the sight of God, and so entirely opposed to the spirit of Christianity. We would most earnestly and lovingly entreat all our young friends to guard against these things, and to cultivate a lowly mind. Let them remember that "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the lowly."}

It only remains for us, ere closing this section, to notice the case of the sabbath-breaker and the institution of "the riband of blue."

"And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to

him. And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses." Verses 32-36.

This surely was a presumptuous sin — it was flying in the face of a most plain and positive commandment of God. It is this that specially marks a presumptuous sin, and leaves it utterly inexcusable. Ignorance cannot be pleaded in the face of a divine command.

But why, it may be asked, had they to put the man in ward? Because, although the commandment was explicit, yet the breach of it had not been anticipated, nor had any penalty been enacted. To speak after the manner of men, Jehovah had not contemplated such folly on man's part, as the interruption of His rest, and therefore He had not formally provided for such an occurrence. We need not say that God knows the end from the beginning; but in the matter now before us, He purposely left the case unnoticed until occasion required. But alas! occasion did require, for man is capable of anything. He has no heart for God's rest. To kindle a fire on the sabbath day was not only a positive breach of the law, but it evidenced the most complete alienation from the mind of the Lawgiver, inasmuch as it introduced into the day of *rest* that which is the apt symbol of *judgement*. Fire is emblematic of judgement, and as such it was wholly out of keeping with the repose of the sabbath. Nothing therefore remained but to visit the sabbath-breaker with judgement, for "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments, throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a riband of blue. And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart, and your own eyes that ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God. I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord your God." Verses 37-41.

The God of Israel would keep His people in continual remembrance of His holy commandments. Hence the beautiful institution of "the riband of *blue*" which was designed to be a heavenly memorial attached to the very borders of their garments, so that the word of God might ever be held fast in the remembrance of the thoughts of their hearts. Whenever an Israelite cast his eyes upon the blue riband, he was to think of Jehovah, and yield a hearty obedience to all His statutes.

Such was the great practical intention of "the riband of blue." But when we turn to Matthew 23: 5, we learn the sad use which man had made of the divine institution: "But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and *enlarge the borders of their garments*." Thus the very thing which had been instituted for the purpose of leading them to remember Jehovah, and to yield a lowly obedience to His precious word, was turned into an occasion of self-exaltation and religious pride. Instead of thinking of God, and His word, they thought of themselves, and of the place which they held in the estimation of their fellows. "*All their works they do to be seen of men*." Not a thought of God. The spirit of the original institution was completely lost, while the outward form was kept up for selfish ends. Can we not see something like this around us and among us? Let us think of it — think deeply and seriously. Let us see to it that we do not turn the heavenly memorial into an earthly badge, and that which ought to lead to lowly obedience into an occasion of self-exaltation.

Numbers 16

The chapter on which we have just been dwelling, is what may be called a digression from the history of Israel's wilderness life, except indeed the short paragraph respecting the Sabbath-breaker, It

looks forward into the future, when, spite of all their sin and folly, their murmuring and rebellion, Israel shall possess the land of Canaan, and offer sacrifices of righteousness and songs of praise to the God of their salvation. In it we have seen Jehovah rising far above all the unbelief and disobedience, the pride and wilfulness exhibited in Numbers 13 and Numbers 14, and looking on to the full and final accomplishment of His own eternal purpose, and the fulfilment of His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

But in chapter 16 the wilderness story is resumed — that sad and humbling story, so far as man is concerned; but a bright and blessed story of the exhaustless patience and boundless grace of God. These are the two grand lessons of the wilderness. We learn what man is, and we learn what God is. The two things lie side by side on the pages of the Book of Numbers. Thus in chapter 14 we have man and his ways. In chapter 15 we have God and His ways. And now, in the chapter which opens before us, we come back to man and his ways again. May we reap much deep and solid instruction from the double lesson!

"Now Korah, the son of Ishar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: and they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" Verses 1-3.

Here then we enter upon the solemn history of what the Holy Ghost, by the Apostle Jude, terms "The gainsaying of Core." The rebellion is attributed to Korah, inasmuch as he was the religious leader in it. He seems to have possessed sufficient influence to gather around him a large number of influential men" princes, famous men, and men of renown." In short, it was a very formidable and serious rebellion; and we shall do well to look closely at its source and moral features.

It is always a most critical moment in the history of an assembly when a spirit of disaffection displays itself; for, if it be not met in the right way, the most disastrous consequences are sure to follow. There are materials in every assembly capable of being acted upon, and it only needs some restless master spirit to arise, in order to work on such materials, and fan into a devouring flame the fire that has been smouldering in secret. There are hundreds and thousands ready to flock around the standard of revolt, when once it has been raised, who have neither the vigour nor the courage to raise it themselves. It is not every one that Satan will take up as an instrument in such work. It needs a shrewd, clever, energetic man — a man of moral power — one possessing influence over the minds of his fellows, and an iron will to carry forward his schemes. No doubt Satan infuses much of all these into the men whom he uses in his diabolical undertakings. At all events, we know, as a fact, that the great leaders in all rebellious movements are generally men of master minds, capable of swaying, according to their own will, the fickle multitude, which, like the ocean, is acted upon by every stormy mind that blows. Such men know how, in the first place, to stir the passions of the people; and, in the second place, how to wield them, when stirred. Their most potent agency — the leper with which they can most effectually raise the masses-is some question as to their liberty and their rights. If they can only succeed in persuading people that their liberty is curtailed, and their *rights* infringed, they are sure to gather a number of restless spirits around them, and do a vast deal of serious mischief.

Thus it was in the matter of Korah and his coadjutors. They sought to make it appear that Moses and Aaron were lording it over their brethren, and interfering with their rights and privileges as

members of a holy congregation, in which, according to their judgement, all were on a dead level, and one had as much right to be active as another.

"Ye take too much upon you." Such was their charge against "the meekest man in all the earth." But what had Moses taken upon him? Surely the most cursory glance back at the history of that dear and honoured servant would have been sufficient to convince any impartial person that, so far from taking dignity and responsibility upon him, he had shown himself only too ready to shrink from them when presented, and sink under them when imposed. Hence, therefore, any one who could think of accusing Moses of taking upon him, only proved himself totally ignorant of the man's real spirit and character. Assuredly the one who could say to Joshua, "Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His spirit upon them!" was not very likely to take much upon him.

But, on the other hand, if God calls one a man into prominence — if he qualifies him for work — if He fills and fits the vessel for special service — if He assigns a man his position — then of what possible use can it be for any one to quarrel with divine gift, and divine appointment? In truth, nothing can be more absurd. "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven." And therefore it must prove worse than useless for any one to assume to be or have anything, for all such assumption must prove hollow in the end. Men will, sooner or later, find their level; and nothing will stand but what is of God.

Korah and his company, therefore, were quarrelling with God and not with Moses and Aaron. These latter had been called of God to occupy a certain position, and to do a certain work, and woe be to them if they refused. It was not they who had aimed at the position or assumed the work; they were ordained of God. This ought to have settled the question; and it would have settled it for all save restless, self-occupied rebels, who sought to undermine the true servants of God in order to exalt themselves. This is always the way with the promoters of sedition or disaffection. Their real object is to make themselves somebody. They talk loudly and very plausibly about the common rights and privileges of God's people; But, in reality, they themselves are aiming at a position for which they are in no way qualified; and at privileges to which they have no right.

In point of fact, the matter is as simple as possible. Has God given a man his place to fill — his work to do? Who will question this? Well, then, let each one know his place and fill it — know his work and do it. It is the most senseless thing in the world for one to attempt to occupy another's post or do another's work. We were led to see this, very distinctly, when meditating on Numbers 3 and Numbers 4, It must ever hold good. Korah had his work; Moses had his. Why should one envy another? It would be quite as reasonable to charge the sun, moon, and stars with taking too much upon them, when they shine in their appointed spheres, as to charge any gifted servant of Christ therewith, when he seeks to discharge the responsibility which his gift, most surely, imposes upon him. These luminaries serve in the place assigned them by the hand of the almighty Creator; and so long as Christ's servants do the same, it is charging them falsely to say that they take too much upon them.

Now this principle is of immense importance, in every assembly, large or small — under all circumstances where Christians are called to work together. It is a mistake to suppose that all the members of the body of Christ are called to places of prominence; or that any member can select his place in the body. It is wholly and absolutely a matter of divine appointment.

This is the clear teaching of 1 Corinthians 12. "The body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole

body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But *now hath God set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased Him.*" Verses 14-18.

Here lies the true, the *only* true source of ministry in the Church of God — the body of Christ. "God hath set the members." It is not one man appointing another; still less is it a man appointing himself. It is divine appointment or nothing, yea, worse than nothing, a daring usurpation of divine rights.

Now, looking at the subject in the light of that marvellous illustration of 1 Corinthians 12 what sense would there be in the feet charging the hands, or the ears charging the eyes, with taking too much upon them? Would not the notion be preposterous in the extreme? True, those members occupy a prominent place in the body; but why do they? Because God has set them there, as it pleased him." And what are they doing in that prominent place? They are doing the work which God has given them to do. And to what end? The good of the whole body. There is not a single member, however obscure, that does not derive positive benefit from the duly discharged functions of the prominent member. And, on the other hand, the prominent member is a debtor to the duly discharged functions of the obscure one. Let the eyes lose their power of vision, and every member will feel it. Let there be functional derangement in the most trivial member, and the most honourable member will suffer.

Hence, therefore, it is not a question of taking upon us much or little, but of doing our appointed work, and filling our appointed place. It is by the effectual working of all the members, according to the measure of every part, that the edification of the whole body is promoted. If this great truth be not seized and carried out, edification, so far from being promoted, is most positively hindered, the Holy Ghost is quenched and grieved; the sovereign rights of Christ are denied; and God is dishonoured. Every Christian is responsible to act on this divine principle, and to testify against everything that practically denies it. The fact of the ruin of the professing Church is no reason whatever for abandoning the truth of God, or sanctioning any denial of it. The Christian is always solemnly bound to submit himself to the revealed mind of God. To plead circumstances as an excuse for doing wrong, or for neglecting any truth of God, is simply flying in the face of divine authority, and making God the Author of our disobedience.

But we cannot pursue this subject further. 'We have merely referred to it here in connection with our chapter, with which we must now proceed. It is undoubtedly a most solemn page of Israel's wilderness story.

Korah and his company were very speedily taught the folly and sin of their rebellious movement. They were awfully wrong in daring to set themselves up against the true servants of the living God. As to Moses, the man against whom they were gathered together, when he heard their seditious words, "he fell upon his face." This was a very good way to meet rebels. We have seen this beloved servant of God on his face when he ought to have been on his feet. (Ex. 14) But here it was about the best and safest thing he could do. There is never much use in contending with restless and disaffected people; better far leave them in the Lord's hands; for with Him, in reality, is their controversy. If God sets a man in a certain position, and gives him a certain work to do, and his fellows think proper to quarrel with him, simply on the score of his doing that work, and filling that position, then is their quarrel really with God, who knows how to settle it, and will do it in His own way. the assurance of this gives holy calmness and moral elevation to the Lord's servant, in moments when envious and turbulent spirits rise up against him. It is hardly possible for any one to occupy a prominent place of service, or to be pre-eminently used of God, without, at some time or another, having to encounter the attacks of certain radical and discontented men, who cannot bear to see any one more honoured than themselves. But the

true way to meet such is to take the place of utter prostration and nothingness, and allow the tide of disaffection to roll over one.

"And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face. And he spake unto Korah and all his company, saying, Even to-morrow *the Lord will show* [not Moses will show] who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him *whom He hath chosen* will he cause to come near unto him. This do; take you censers, Korah and all his company; and put fire therein, and put incense in them *before the Lord* tomorrow: and it shall be that the man whom *the Lord doth choose*, he shall be holy: ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi." Verses 4-7.

This was placing the matter in the proper hands. Moses gives great prominence to the sovereign rights of Jehovah. "The Lord will show" and "The Lord will choose." there is not a syllable about himself or Aaron. The whole question hinges upon the Lord's choice and the Lord's appointment. The two hundred and fifty rebels are brought face to face with the living God. They are summoned into His presence, with their censers in their hands, in order that the whole matter may be thoroughly gone into, and definitely settled before that grand tribunal from which there can be no appeal. It would, obviously, have been of no possible use for Moses and Aaron to attempt to give judgement, inasmuch as they were defendants in the cause. But Moses was blessedly willing to have all parties summoned into the divine presence, there to have their matters judged and determined.

This was true humility and true wisdom. It is always well, when people are seeking a place, to let them have it, to their hearts content; for most assuredly, the very place after which they have foolishly aspired will be the scene of their signal defeat and deplorable confusion. you may sometimes see men envying others in a certain sphere of service, and longing to occupy that sphere themselves. let them try it; and they are sure, in the end, to break down and retire covered with shame and confusion of face. The Lord will surely confound all such. There is no use in man trying to do it; and hence it is always best for such as may happen to be the objects of envious attack just to fall on their faces before God, and let Him settle the question with the malcontents. It is most sad when such scenes occur in the history of God's people; but they have occurred; they do occur; and they may occur again and again; and we feel assured that the very best plan is to let men of a restless, ambitious, disaffected spirit run to the full length of their tether, and then they are sure to be pulled up. It is, in point of fact, to leave them in the hands of God, who will most surely deal with them in His own perfect way.

"And Moses said unto *Korah*, hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he hath brought *thee* near unto him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and *seek ye the Priesthood also*? For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against Him?" Verses 8-11.

Here we are conducted to the very root of this terrible conspiracy. We see the man who originated it. and the object at which he aimed. Moses addresses Korah, and charges him with aiming at the priesthood. Let the reader carefully note this. It is important that he should have this point clearly before his mind, according to the teaching of scripture. He must see what Korah was — what his work was — and what the object of his restless ambition was. He must see all these things if he would understand the true force and meaning of Jude's expression, "The gainsaying of Core."

What then was Korah? He was a Levite, and, as such, he was entitled to minister and to teach: "They shall teach Jacob thy judgements, and Israel thy law." "The God of Israel hath brought you near to himself, to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to

minister unto them." Such was Korah, and such his sphere of work. at what did he aim? *At the priesthood.* "Seek ye the priesthood also?"

Now, to a cursory observer it might not have appeared that Korah was seeking anything For himself. He seemed to be contending for the rights of the whole assembly. But Moses, by the Spirit of God, unmasks the man, and shows that, under the plausible pretext of standing up for the common rights of the congregation, he was audaciously seeking the priesthood for himself. It is well to note this. It will most generally be found that loud talkers about the liberties, rights, and privileges of God's people are, in reality, seeking their own exaltation and advantage. Not content with doing their proper work, they are seeking an improper place. This is not always apparent; but God is sure to make it manifest sooner or later, for "by him actions are weighed." Nothing can be more worthless than seeking a place for oneself. It is sure to end in disappointment and confusion. The grand thing for each one is to be found filling his appointed place and doing his appointed work; and the more humbly, quietly, and unpretendingly, the better.

But Korah had not learnt this simple but wholesome principle. He was not content with his divinely appointed place and service, But aimed at something which did not belong to him at all. He aimed at being a priest. His sin was the sin of rebellion against God's high priest. This was "the gainsaying of Core."

It is important to seize this fact in Korah's history. It is not generally understood; and hence it is that his sin is charged, now-a-days, upon those who seek to exercise any gift which may have been bestowed upon them by the Head of the Church. But a moment's calm reflection upon the subject in the light of scripture would be quite sufficient to show how utterly baseless is such a charge. Take, for example, a man to whom Christ has manifestly given the gift of an evangelist. Are we to suppose him guilty of the sin of Korah because, in pursuance of the divine gift and the divine commission, he goes forth to preach the gospel? Should he preach? or should he not preach? Is the divine gift — the divine call — sufficient. Is he acting as a rebel when he preaches the gospel?

So also as regards a pastor or teacher. Is he guilty of the sin of Korah, because he exercises the special gift imparted to him by the Head of the Church? Does not Christ's gift make a man a minister? Is anything further necessary? is it not plain to any unprejudiced mind — to any one willing to be taught by scripture — that the possession of a divinely imparted gift makes a man a minister, without anything further whatsoever? And is it not equally plain that, though a man had everything else that could be had, and yet had no gift from the Head of the Church, he is no minister? We confess we do not see how these plain propositions can be called in question.

We are speaking, be it remembered, of special gifts of ministry in the Church. No doubt, every member in the body of Christ has some ministry to fulfil, some work to do. This is understood by every well-instructed Christian; and, moreover, it is clear that the edification of the body is carried on, not merely by some special prominent gifts, but by the effectual working of all the members in their respective places, as we read in the epistle to the Ephesians: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which *every joint supplieth* according to *The effectual working in the measure of every part*, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Eph. 4: 15, 16.

All this is as plain as scripture can make it. But, as to any special gifts, such as that of evangelist, pastor, prophet, or teacher, it must be received from Christ alone; and the possession of it makes a man a minister, without anything further. And, on the other hand, all the education and all the human authority under the sun could not make a man an evangelist, a pastor, or teacher, unless he has a *bona*

fide gift from the Head of the Church.

Thus much as to ministry in the Church of God. we trust enough has been said to prove to the reader that it is a very grave mistake indeed to charge men with the awful sin of Korah because they exercise those gifts which have been imparted to them by the great Head of the Church. In point of fact it would be a sin not to exercise them.

But there is a very material difference between ministry and priesthood. Korah did not aim at being a minister, for that he was. He aimed at being a priest, which he could not be. The priesthood was vested in Aaron and his family; and it was a daring usurpation for any one else, no matter who, to attempt to offer sacrifice, or discharge any other priestly function. Now, Aaron was a type of our great High Priest who is passed into the heavens — Jesus the Son of God. Heaven is the sphere of His ministry. "If he were on earth he should not be a priest." (Heb. 8: 4) "Our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood." There is no such thing as a priest on earth now, save in the sense in which all believers are priests. Thus we read in Peter, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood." (1 Peter 2: 9) Every Christian is a priest in this sense of the term. The very feeblest saint in the Church of God is as much a priest as Paul was. It is not a question of capacity or spiritual power, but simply of position. All believers are priests, and they are called to offer spiritual sacrifices, according to Hebrews 13: 15, 16: "By him therefore let us offer *the sacrifice of praise* to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. But to do good, and to communicate, forget not: for with *such sacrifices* God is well pleased."

This is the Christian priesthood. And let the reader note it carefully, that to aim at any other form of priesthood than this — to assume any other priestly function — to set up a certain priestly class — a sacerdotal *caste* — a number of men to act on behalf of their fellows — or discharge priestly service for them before God — this is, in principle, the sin of Korah. We only speak of the principle; not of persons. The germ of the sin is as distinct as possible. By and by there will be the full blown fruit.

The reader cannot possibly be too simple in apprehending this entire subject. It is, we may truly say, of capital importance, at this moment. Let him examine it only in the light of Holy Scripture. Tradition will not do. Ecclesiastical history will not do. It must be God's word alone. In the light of that word let the question be asked and answered, "Who are justly chargeable with the sin of Korah? Is it those who seek to exercise whatever gifts the Head of the Church has bestowed; or those who assume a priestly office and work which only belong to Christ Himself?" This is a very weighty and solemn question. may it be calmly pondered, in the divine presence; and may we seek grace to be faithful to Him who is not only our gracious Saviour but our sovereign Lord!

The remainder of our chapter presents a most solemn picture of divine judgement executed upon Korah and his company. The Lord very speedily settled the question raised by those rebellious men. The very record of it is appalling beyond expression. What must the fact have been? The earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the three principal movers in the rebellion; and the fire of the Lord went forth and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who undertook to offer incense.

"And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works; for *I have not done them of mine own mind*. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord." Verses 28-30.

Moses, in these words, makes it a question simply between Jehovah and the rebels. He can appeal

to God, and leave all in His hands. This is the true secret of moral power. A man who has nothing of his own to seek — no aim or object but the divine glory — can confidently wait the issue of things. But in order to this, the eye must be single, the heart upright, the purpose pure. It will not do to assume or affect anything. If God is going to judge, He most assuredly will expose all assumption and affectation. These things can have no place when the earth is opening her mouth, and the fire of the Lord is devouring all around. It is all very well to swagger, and boast, and speak great swelling words, when all is at rest. But when God enters the scene, in terrible judgement, the aspect of things is speedily changed.

"And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them; and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them; and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also." Verses 31-34

Truly, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints; and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about Him." "Our God is a consuming fire." How much better it would have been for Korah had he rested content with his Levite service which was of the very highest order. His work as a Kohathite was to carry some of the most precious vessels of the sanctuary but he aimed at the priesthood, and fell into the pit.

Nor was this all. Hardly had the ground closed over the rebels, when "there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense." It was a most terrific scene altogether — a signal and soul-subduing exhibition of divine judgement upon human pride and pretension. It is vain for man to exalt himself against God, for He resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble, What consummate folly for worms of the dust to lift themselves up against the almighty God! Poor man! He is more silly by far than the moth that rushes against the blaze that consumes it.

Oh! to walk humbly with our God! to be content with His will; to be satisfied to fill a very humble niche, and to do the most unpretending work! This is true dignity, and true happiness. If God gives as a crossing to sweep, let us sweep it, as under His eye, and to His praise. The grand and all-essential point is to be found doing the very work which he gives us to do, and occupying the very post to which He appoints us. Had Korah and his company learnt this, their piercing wail would never have terrified the hearts of their brethren. But, no; they would be something When they were nothing, and hence they went down into the pit. Pride and destruction are inseparably linked together in the moral government of God. This principle always holds good, however the measure may vary. Let us remember it. Let us seek to rise from the study of Numbers 16. with a deepened sense of the value of an humble and contrite spirit. We live at a moment in the which man is pushing himself upward and onward. "*Excelsior*" is a very popular motto just now. Let us look well to our mode of interpreting and applying it. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased." If we are to be governed by the rule of God's kingdom, we shall find that the only way to get up is to go down. The One who now occupies the very highest place in heaven is the One who voluntarily took the very lowest place on earth. See Philippians 2: 5-11.

Here is our example, as Christians; and here, too, the divine antidote against the pride and restless ambition of the men of this world. Nothing is more sad than to witness a pushing, bustling, forward, self-confident spirit and style in those who profess to be followers of Him who was meek and lowly in heart. It is such a flagrant contradiction of the spirit and precepts of Christianity, and is a sure

accompaniment of an unbroken condition of soul. It is utterly impossible for any one to indulge in a boastful, pretentious, self-confident spirit, if ever he has really measured himself in the presence of God. To be much alone with God is the sovereign remedy for pride and self-complacency. May we know the reality of this in the secret of our own souls! May the good Lord keep us truly humble, in all our ways, simply leaning on Himself, and very very little in our own eyes!

The closing paragraph of our chapter illustrates, in a most striking manner, the incorrigible evil of the natural heart. One might fondly hope that after the impressive scenes enacted in the presence of the congregation, deep and permanent lessons would be learnt. Having seen the earth open her mouth — having heard the heart-rending cry of the rebels as they descended into the pit — having seen the fire of the Lord coming forth and consuming, as in a moment, two hundred and fifty princes of the congregation — having witnessed such tokens of the divine judgement — such a display of divine power and majesty — one might suppose that the people would henceforth walk softly and humbly; and that the accents of discontent and rebellion would no more be heard in their tents.

Alas! alas! man is not to be so taught. The flesh is utterly incurable. This truth is taught in every section and on every page of the volume of God. Illustrated in the closing lines of Numbers 16. "On the morrow." Think of that! It was not in a year, or a month, or even a week after the appalling scenes on which we have been dwelling, "But, on the morrow, *all the congregation* (no longer a few daring spirits merely) murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord. And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared. And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation. And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment." Verses 41-45.

Here is another opportunity for Moses. the whole congregation is again threatened with immediate destruction. All seems hopeless. The divine long-suffering seems at an end, and the sword of judgement is about to fall on the whole assembly. But now it appears that in that very priesthood which the rebels had despised lies the only hope for the people; and that the very men whom they had charged with killing the Lord's people, were God's instruments in saving their lives. "And Moses and Aaron fell upon their faces. Had Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague had begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. and He stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed." Verses 46-48.

It is here made very apparent that nothing but priesthood — even that very priesthood which had been so despised — could avail for a rebellious and stiff-necked people. There is something unspeakably blessed in this closing paragraph. There stands Aaron, God's high priest, between the dead and the living, and from his censer a cloud of incense goes up before God — impressive type of One greater than Aaron, who having made a full and perfect atonement for the sins of His people, is ever before God in all the fragrance of His Person and work. Priesthood alone could bring the People through the wilderness. It was the rich and suited provision of divine grace. The people were indebted to intercession for their preservation from the just consequences of their rebellious murmurings. Had they been dealt with merely on the ground of justice, all that could be said was, "Let me alone that I may consume them in a moment."

This is the language of pure and inflexible justice. Immediate destruction is the work of justice. Full and final preservation is the glorious and vital characteristic work of divine Grace — grace reigning through righteousness. Had God dealt in mere justice with the people, His name would not have been declared, inasmuch as there is far more in His name than justice. There is love, mercy, goodness, Kindness, long-suffering, deep and unfailing compassion. But none of these things could be seen had the people been consumed in a moment, and hence the name of Jehovah would not have been declared or glorified. "For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain from thee, that I cut thee not off..... For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another." Isaiah 48: 9, 11.

How well it a for us that God acts towards us, and for us for the glory of His own name How wonderful too that His glory should most fully shine — yea, could only be seen in that vast plan which His own heart has devised, in which He is revealed as "A just God and a Saviour." Precious title for a poor lost sinner! In it is wrapped up all that such an one can possibly need for time and eternity. It meets him in the depth of his need, as a guilty hell-deserving one, bears him along through all the varied exigencies, trials, and sorrows of the wilderness; and, finally, conducts him to that bright and blessed world above, where sin and sorrow can never enter.