

**Now and Then;  
or, Time and Eternity.**

The Substance of a Lecture on Luke 12.

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*"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."* 2 Cor. 4: 18.

The principles of truth laid down in Luke 12 are of the most solemn and searching character. Their practical bearing is such as to render them, in a day like the present, of the very last importance. Worldly-mindedness and carnality cannot live in the light of the truth here set forth. They are withered up by the roots. If one were asked to give a brief and comprehensive title to this most precious section of inspiration, it might be entitled "Time in the light of Eternity." The Lord evidently designed to set His disciples in the light of that world where everything is the direct opposite of that which obtains here — to bring their hearts under the holy influence of unseen things, and their lives under the power and authority of heavenly principles. Such being the faithful purpose of the Divine Teacher, He lays the solid foundation for His superstructure of doctrine with these searching words, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy." There must be no undercurrent in the soul. The deep springs of thought must be laid bare. We must allow the pure beams of heaven's light to penetrate the most profound depths of our moral being. We must not have any discrepancy between the hidden judgement of the soul and the style of our phraseology: between the bent of the life, and the profession of the lips. In a word, we specially need the grace of "an honest and a good heart," in order to profit by this wondrous compendium of practical truth.

We are too apt to give an indifferent hearing or a cold assent to *home truth*. We do not like it. We prefer interesting speculations about the mere letter of scripture, points of doctrine, or questions of prophecy, because we can indulge these in immediate connection with all sorts of worldly-mindedness, covetous practices, and self-indulgence. But ponderous principles of truth, bearing down upon the conscience in all their magnitude and flesh-cutting power, who can bear, save those who, through grace, are seeking to purge themselves from "the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy?" This leaven is of a most specious character, takes various shapes, and is, therefore, most dangerous. Indeed, wherever it exists, there is a most positive and insurmountable barrier placed before the soul in its progress in experimental knowledge and practical holiness. If I do not expose my *whole soul* to the action of divine truth; if I am closing up some corner or crevice from the light thereof; if I am cherishing some secret reserve; if I am dishonestly seeking to accommodate the truth to my own standard of practice, or parry its keen edge from my conscience — then, assuredly, I am defiled by the leaven of hypocrisy; and my growth in likeness to Christ is a moral impossibility. Hence, therefore, it is imperative upon every disciple of Christ to search, and see that nothing of this abominable leaven is allowed in the secret chambers of his heart. Let us, by the grace of God, put and keep it far away, so that we may be able, on all occasions, to say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

{The meaning which is generally attached to hypocrisy is a false profession of religion. It assuredly means this; but it means much more. A tacit assent to principles which do not govern the conduct deserves the appellation of hypocrisy. Looking at the subject in this point of view, we may all find occasion of deep humiliation before the Lord. How often do we hearken to truth, and give an

apparently full assent thereto, and yet there is no exhibition of the power of it in the life; it does not govern the conduct. If this be not morally connected with the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, it is, at least, a serious evil, and entirely hostile to our progress in the divine life. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."}

But not only is hypocrisy utterly subversive of spiritual progress, it also entirely fails in attaining the object which it proposes to itself; "for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known." Every man will find his level; and every thought will be brought to light. What the truth would do *now*, the judgement-seat will do *then*. Every grade and shade of hypocrisy will be unmasked by the light which shall shine forth from the judgement seat of Christ. Nothing will be allowed to escape. all will be reality *then*, though there is so much fallacy *now*. Moreover, everything will get its proper name *then*, though it be misnamed *now*. Worldly-mindedness is called prudence; a grasping, covetous spirit is called foresight; and self-indulgence and personal aggrandisement are called judicious management and laudable diligence in business. Thus it is *now*; but *then* it will be quite the reverse. All things will be seen in their true colours, and called by their true names, before the judgement-seat. Wherefore, it is the wisdom of the disciple to act in the light of that day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed. As to this, he is placed on a vantage ground, for, says the apostle, "we must all (saints and sinners — though not at the same time, nor on the same ground) be manifested (*phanerothernai*) before the judgement-seat of Christ." Should this disturb the disciple's mind? Assuredly not, if his heart be so purged of the leaven of hypocrisy and his soul so thoroughly grounded, by the teaching of God the Holy Ghost, in the great foundation truth set forth in this very chapter (2 Cor. 5), namely, that Christ is his life, and Christ his righteousness; that he can say, "we are manifested (*pephanerometha*, — an inflection of the same word as is used at verse 10), unto God, and I trust also are manifested in your consciences."

But if he be deficient in this peace of conscience and transparent honesty of heart, there is no doubt but that the thought of the judgement-seat will disturb his spirit. Hence we see that in the Lord's teaching, in Luke 12, He sets the consciences of His disciples directly in the light of the judgement-seat. "And I say unto you, *my friends*, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him." "The fear of man bringeth a snare," and is closely connected with "the leaven of the Pharisees." But "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and causes a man always so to carry himself — so to think, speak, and act — as in the full blaze of the light of Christ's judgement seat. This would impart immense dignity and elevation to the character, while it would effectually nip, in the earliest bud, the spirit of haughty independence, by keeping the soul under the searching power of divine light, the effect of which is to make everything and everyone manifest.

There is nothing that so tends to rob the disciple of Christ of the proper dignity of his discipleship, as walking before the eyes or the thoughts of men. So long as we are doing so, we cannot be unshackled followers of our heavenly Master. Moreover, the evil of walking before men is morally allied with the evil of seeking to hide our ways from God. Both partake of "the leaven of the Pharisees," and both will find their proper place before the judgement-seat. Why should we fear men? Why should we regard their opinions? If their opinions will not bear to be tried in His presence, who has power to cast into hell, they are worth nothing; for it is with Him we have to do "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgement." Man may have a judgement-seat *now*, but he will not have it *then*. He may set up his tribunal in time, but he will have no tribunal in eternity. Why, therefore, should we shape our way in reference to a tribunal so frail and evanescent?

Oh! let us challenge our hearts as to this, God grant us grace to act more, in reference to then — to carry ourselves here with our eye on hereafter — to look; at time in the light of eternity.

The poor unbelieving heart may, however, inquire, "If I thus rise above human thoughts and human opinions, how shall I get on in a scene where those very thoughts and opinions prevail?" This is a very natural question: but it meets its full and satisfactory answer from the Master's lips; yea, it would even seem as though He had graciously anticipated this rising element of unbelief, when, having carried His disciples above the hazy mists of time, and set them in the clear, searching, powerful light of eternity, He added, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." (Ver. 6, 7) Here the heart is taught not only to *fear* God, but also to *confide* in Him — it is not only warned, but also tranquillised. "Fear," and "fear not," may seem a paradox to flesh and blood; but to faith it is no paradox. The man who fears God most will fear circumstances least. The man of faith is, at once, the most dependent and independent man in the world — dependent upon God, independent upon circumstances. The latter is the consequence of the former; real dependence produces real independence.

And mark the ground of the believer's peace. The One who has power to cast into hell, the only One whom he is to fear, has actually taken the trouble to count the hairs of his head. He surely has not taken the trouble for the purpose of letting him perish here or hereafter. By no means. The minuteness of our Father's care should silence every doubt that might arise in our hearts. There is nothing too small, and there can be nothing too great for Him. The countless orbs that move through infinite space, and a falling sparrow, are alike to Him. His infinite mind can take in, with equal facility, the course of everlasting ages, and the hairs of our head. This is the stable foundation on which Christ founds His "fear not," and "take no thought." We frequently fail in the practical application of this divine principle. We may admire it as a principle; but it is only in the application of it that its real beauty is seen or felt. If we do not put it in practice, we are but painting sunbeams on canvas, while we famish beneath the chilling influences of our own unbelief.

Now, we find in this scripture before us, that bold and uncompromising testimony for Christ is connected with this holy elevation above men's thoughts, and this calm reliance upon our Father's minute and tender care. If my heart is lifted above the influence of the fear of man, and sweetly tranquillised by the assurance that God takes account of the hairs of my head, then I am in a condition of soul to confess Christ before men. (See ver. 8-10) Nor need I be careful as to the result of this confession, for so long as God wants me here, He will maintain me here. "And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say; for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." The only proper ground of testimony for Christ is to be fully delivered from human influence, and established in unqualified confidence in God. So far as I am influenced by, or a debtor to, men, so far am I disqualified for being a servant of Christ; but I can only be effectually delivered from human influence by a lively faith in God. When God fills the heart, there is no room for the creature; and we may be perfectly sure of this, that no man has ever taken the trouble to count the hairs of our head; we have not even taken that trouble ourselves; but God has, and therefore I can trust God more than anyone. God is perfectly sufficient for every exigency, great or small, and we only want to trust Him to know that He is.

True, He may and does use men as instruments; but if we lean on men instead of God — if we lean on instruments instead of on the hand that uses them — we bring down a curse upon us, for it is written, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth

from the Lord." (Jer. 17: 5) The Lord used the ravens to feed Elijah; but Elijah never thought of trusting in the ravens. Thus it should be ever. Faith leans on God, counts on Him, clings to Him, trusts in Him, waits for Him, ever leaves a clear stage for Him to act on, does not obstruct His glorious path by any creature-confidence, allows Him to display Himself in all the glorious reality of what He is, leaves everything to Him; and, moreover, if it gets into deep and rough waters, it will always be seen upon the crest of the loftiest billow, and from thence gazing in perfect repose upon God and His powerful actings. Such is faith — that precious principle — the only thing in this world that gives God and man their respective places.

While the Lord Jesus was in the act of pouring forth these unearthly principles, a true child of earth intrudes upon Him with a question about property. "And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." How marvellously little did he know of the true character of that heavenly Man who stood before him! He knew nothing of the profound mystery of His being, or the object of His heavenly mission. He surely had not come from the bosom of the Father to settle lawsuits about property, nor to arbitrate between two covetous men. The spirit of covetousness was manifestly in the whole affair. Both defendant and plaintiff were governed by covetousness. One wanted to grasp, and the other wanted to keep; what was this but covetousness? "And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" It was not a question of which was right or which was wrong, as to the property. According to Christ's pure and heavenly doctrine, they were both wrong. In the light of eternity, a few acres of land were little worth; and as to Christ Himself, He was only teaching principles entirely hostile to all questions of earthly possession; but, in His own person and character, He set an example of the very opposite. He did not go to law about the inheritance. He was "Heir of all things." The land of Israel, the throne of David, and all creation belonged to Him; but man would not own Him, or give Him possession. "The husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir, come let us kill him, and seize upon the inheritance." To this the Heir submitted in perfect patience, but — eternal homage to His glorious name! — by submitting unto death He crushed the enemy's power, and brought "many sons to glory."

Thus we see, in the doctrine and practice of the Heavenly Man, the true exhibition of the principles of the kingdom of God. He would not arbitrate, but yet He taught truth which would entirely do away with the need of arbitration. If the principles of the kingdom of God were dominant, there would be no need for courts of law; for inasmuch as people would not be wronged of their rights, they could have no wrongs to be righted. This would be admitted by all. But then the Christian, being in the kingdom, is bound to be governed by the principles of the kingdom, and to carry them out at all cost; for, in the exact proportion that he fails to exhibit those principles, he is robbing his own soul of blessing, and marring his testimony.

Hence, then, a person going to law is not governed in so doing by the principles of the kingdom of God, but by the principles of the kingdom of Satan, who is the prince of this world. It is not a question as to his being a Christian, but simply a question as to the principle by which he is governed in the act of going to law, under any circumstances. [How often, alas! does it happen, that people go to law to be righted of their wrongs, and, in the end, find themselves wronged of their rights!] I say nothing of the moral instincts of the divine nature, which would surely lead one to apprehend with accuracy the gross inconsistency of a man who professes to be saved by *grace* going to *law* with a fellow-man — of one who, while he owns that if he had his *right* from the hand of God, he would be burning in hell, nevertheless insists upon exacting his rights from his fellow-man — of one who has been forgiven ten thousand talents, but yet seizes his fellow by the throat for a paltry hundred pence. Upon these things I shall not dwell. I merely look at the question of going to law in the light of the

kingdom, in the light of eternity; and if it be true that in the kingdom of God there is no need for courts of law, then I press it solemnly upon my reader's conscience, in the presence of God, that he, as a subject of that kingdom, is totally wrong in going to Law. True, it will lead to loss and suffering; but who is "worthy of the kingdom of God" who is not prepared to "suffer for it?" Let those who are governed by the things of time go to law; but the Christian is, or ought to be, governed by the things of *eternity*. People go to law *Now*', but it will not be so *then*; and the Christian is to act *now* as if it were *then*. He belongs to the kingdom; and it is just because the kingdom of God is not dominant, but the King rejected, that the subjects of the kingdom are called to suffer. Righteousness "suffers" *now*; it will "reign" in the millennium; and it will "dwell" in the new heavens and the new earth. Now, in going to law, the Christian anticipates the millennial age. He is going before his Master in the assertion of his rights. He is called to suffer patiently all sorts of wrongs and injuries. To resent them is to deny the truth of that kingdom to which he professes to belong. I press this principle upon my reader's conscience. I earnestly implore his serious attention thereto. Let it have its full weight upon his conscience. Let him not trifle with its truth. There is nothing which tends so to hinder the freshness and power, growth and prosperity of the kingdom of God in the heart, as the refusal to carry out the principles of that kingdom in the conduct. [The Christian should be governed by the principles of the kingdom in everything. If he is engaged in business, he should conduct his business as a child of God, and a servant of Christ. He should not have a Christian character on Lords day, and a commercial character on Monday. I should have the Lord with me in my shop, my warehouse, and my counting-house. It is my privilege to depend upon God in my business; but, in order to depend upon Him, my business must be of such a nature, and conducted upon such a principle, as He can own. If I say, I must do business as others do business," I abandon true Christian ground, and get into the current of the world's thoughts. If, for example, I resort to placards, newspaper advertisements, and all such means of puffing and pushing, I am evidently not working in simple dependence upon God, but rather depending upon the world's principle. But some will say, "How am I to get on in business?" I reply by putting another question, namely, "What is your object? Is it food and raiment. or to hoard up?" If the former God has promised it so that you are in the way of His appointment, you have only to depend upon Him. Faith always puts the soul on a totally different ground from that occupied by the world, no matter what our calling may be. Take, for example, David in the valley of Elah. Why did he not fight like other men? Because he was on the ground of faith. So also Hezekiah. Why did he put on sackcloth when other men put on armour? Because he was on the ground of simple dependence upon God. Just so in the case of a man in trade; he must carry on his trade as a Christian, else he will mar the testimony, and rob his own soul of blessing.]

But some may say, that it is bringing us down from the high ground of the church, as set forth in Paul's Epistles, to press thus the principles of the kingdom. By no means. We belong to the church, but we are in the kingdom; and while we must never confound the two, it is perfectly plain that the ethics — the moral habits and ways — of the church can never be below those of the kingdom. If it be contrary to the spirit and principles of the kingdom to assert my rights and go to law, it must, if possible, be still more contrary to the spirit and principles of the church. This cannot be questioned. The higher my position, the higher should be my code of ethics, and tone of character. I fully believe, and desire firmly to hold, experimentally to enter into, and practically to exhibit, the truth of the church as the body and bride of Christ — the possessor of a heavenly standing, and the expectant of heavenly glory, by virtue of her oneness with Christ; but I cannot see how my being a member of that highly-privileged body can make my practice lower than if I were merely a subject or member of the kingdom. What is the difference, as regards present conduct and character, between belonging to the body of a rejected Head, and belonging to the kingdom of a rejected King? Assuredly it cannot be to lower the

tone in the former case. The higher and more intimate my relationship to the rejected One, the more intense should be my separation from that which rejects Him, and the more complete should be my assimilation to His character, and the more precise and accurate my walk in His footsteps, in the midst of that scene from which He is rejected.

But the simple fact is, WE WANT CONSCIENCE. Yes, beloved reader, a tender, exercised, honest conscience, which will truly and accurately respond to the appeals of God's pure and holy word, is, I verily believe, the grand desideratum — the pressing want of the present moment. It is not so much principles we want, as the grace, the energy, the holy decision, that will carry them out, cost what it may. We admit the truth of principles, which most plainly cut at the very things which we ourselves are either directly or indirectly doing. We admit the principle of grace, and yet we live by the strict maintenance of righteousness. For example, how often does it happen that persons are preaching, teaching, and professing to enjoy grace, while at the very moment they are insisting upon their rights in reference to their tenants; and, either directly themselves, or indirectly by means of their agents, dispossessing poor people, unroofing their houses, and sending them out, in destitution and misery, upon a cold, heartless world! This is a plain, palpable case, of which, alas! there have been too many painful illustrations in the world within the last ten years.

And why put cases? Because one finds such melancholy deficiency in sensibility of conscience, at the present day, that unless the thing is brought home plainly to oneself it will not be understood. Like David, our indignation is wrought up to the highest pitch by a picture of moral turpitude, so long as we do not see *self* in that picture. It needs some Nathan to sound in our ears, "Thou art the man," in order to prostrate us in the dust, with a smitten conscience, and true self-abhorrence. Thus, at the present day, eloquent sermons are preached, eloquent lectures delivered, and elaborate treatises written about the principles of grace, and yet the courts of law are frequented, attorneys, lawyers, sheriffs, agents, and sub-agents, are called into requisition, with all their terrible machinery, in order to assert our rights; but we feel it not, because we are not present to witness the distress, and hear the groans and execrations of houseless mothers and children. Need we wonder, therefore, that true practical Christianity is at a low ebb amongst us? Is it any marvel that leanness, barrenness, drought, and poverty, coldness and deadness, darkness, ignorance, and spiritual depression should be found amongst us? What else could be expected, when the principles of the kingdom of God are openly violated?

But is it unrighteous to seek to get our own, and to make use of the machinery within our reach, in order to do so? Surely not. What is here maintained is, that no matter how well defined and clearly established the right may be, the assertion thereof is diametrically opposed to the kingdom of God. The servant in Matthew 18 was called "a wicked servant," and "delivered to the tormentors," not because he acted unrighteously in enforcing the payment of a lawful debt, but because he did not act in grace and remit that debt. Let this fact be solemnly weighed. A man who fails to act in grace will lose the sense of grace; a man who fails to carry out the principles of the kingdom of God will lose the enjoyment of those principles in his own soul. This is the moral of the wicked servant. Well, therefore, might the Lord Jesus sound in His disciples' ears this warning voice, "Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

But how difficult to define this "covetousness!" How hard to bring it home to the conscience! It is, as some one has said of worldliness, "shaded off gradually from white to jet black;" so that it is only as we are imbued with the spirit and mind of heaven, and thoroughly schooled in the principles of eternity, that we shall be able to detect its working. And not only so, but our hearts must, in this also, be purged from the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. The Pharisees were covetous, and could only turn Christ's doctrine into ridicule (see Luke 16: 14); and so will it be with all those who are

tainted by their leaven. They will not see the just application of truth, either as to covetousness or anything else. They will seek to define it in such a way as will suit themselves. They will interpret, modify, pare down accommodate, until they have fully succeeded in getting their conscience from under the edge of God's truth; and thus they get into the power and under the influence of the enemy. I must either be governed by the pure truth of the word, or by the impure principles of the world, which, as we very well know, are forged in Satan's workshop, and brought into the world to be used in doing his work.

In the parable of the rich man, which the Lord here puts forth, in illustration of covetousness, we see a character which the world respects and admires. But in this, as in everything else brought forward in this searching chapter, we see the difference between *now* and *then*, — between “time and eternity.” All depends upon the light in which you look at men and things. If you merely look at them *now*; it may be all very well to get on in trade, and enlarge one's concerns, and make provision for the future. The man who does this is counted wise *now*; but he will be a “fool” *then*. Title-deeds, debentures, bank receipts, insurance policies, are current coin *now*, but they will be rejected *then*; they are genuine *now*, they will be spurious *then*. Thus it is; and, my reader, let us remember, that we must make God's *then* to be our *now*; we must look at the things of time in the light of eternity; the things of earth in the light of heaven. This is true wisdom which does not confine the heart to that system of things which obtains “under the sun,” but conducts it into the light, and leaves it under the power of “that [unseen] world” where the principles of the kingdom of God bear sway. What should we think of courts of law, banks, and insurance offices, if we look at them in the light of eternity. [It should be a serious question with a child of God, ere he avails himself of an assurance company, whether in the matter of fire or life, “Am I, hereby, distrusting God? or, am I seeking by human agency to counteract divine visitations? There is something sadly anomalous in a Christian's insuring his life. He professes to be dead, and that Christ is his life: why then talk of insuring his life? But many will say, “We cannot bring Christianity into such things.” I ask, Where are we to leave it? Is Christianity a convenient sort of garment, which we put on on Lord's day, and at the close of that day take it off, fold it carefully up, and lay it on the shelf till the following Lord's day? It is too often thus. People have two characters; and what is this but the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy? Insurance offices are all very well for the men of this world, who should certainly avail themselves of them, inasmuch as everything around and within is so uncertain. but to the child of God, all is sure. God has insured his life for ever; and, hence, he should regard insurance offices as so many depots of unbelief.] These things do very well for men who are only governed by *now*; but the disciple of Christ is to be governed by *then*. This makes all the difference; and truly it is a serious difference.

“The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully.” What sin is there in being a successful agriculturist or merchant? If God bless a man's labour, should he not rejoice? Truly so; but mark the moral progress of a covetous heart. “He thought *within himself*.” He did not think in the presence of God; he did not think under the mighty influences of the eternal world. No; “he thought within himself” — within the narrow compass of his selfish heart. Such was his range; and, therefore, we need not marvel at his practical conclusion. “What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?” What! Was there no way of using his resources with a view to God's future? Alas! no. Man has a future, or thinks he has, on which he counts, and for which he makes provision; but self is the only object which figures in that future, — self whether in my own person, or that of my wife or child, which is, morally, the same thing.

The grand object in God's future is Christ; and true wisdom will lead us to fix our eye on Him and make Him our undivided object for time and eternity, *now* and *then*. But this, in the judgement of a

worldly man, is nonsense. Yes, heaven's wisdom is nonsense in the judgement of earth. Harken to the wisdom of earth, and the wisdom of those who are under the influence of earthly maxims and habits. "And he said, This will I do; I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and *there* will I bestow *all* my fruits and my goods." Thus we have what he "thought," what he "said," and what he "did;" and there is a melancholy consistency between his thoughts, his words, and his acts. "*There*," in my self-built storehouse, "will I bestow *all*." Miserable treasure-house to contain the "all" of an immortal soul! God was not an item in the catalogue. God was neither his treasury nor his treasure. This is plain; and it is always thus with a mere man of the world. "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Thus we see that a worldly man's provision is *only* "for many years." Make the best of it, it cannot go beyond that narrow limit. It cannot, even in his own thought about it, reach into that boundless eternity, which stretches beyond this contracted span of time. And this provision he offers to his never-dying soul, as the basis of its "ease and merriment." Miserable fatuity! Senseless calculation!

How different is the address which a believer may present to his soul! He, too, may say to his soul, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry; eat of the fatness of God's storehouse, and drink of the river of His pleasures, and of the wine of His kingdom; and be glad in His accomplished salvation; for thou hast much goods, yea, unsearchable riches, untold wealth, laid up, not merely for many years, but for eternity. Christ's finished work is the ground of thine eternal peace, and His coming glory the sure and certain object of thy hope." This is a different character of address, my reader. This shows the difference between *now* and *then*. It is a fatal mistake not to make Christ the Crucified, Christ the Risen, Christ the Glorified, the Alpha and Omega of all our calculations. To paint a future, and not to place Christ in the foreground, is extravagance of the wildest character; for the moment God enters the scene, the picture is hopelessly marred.

"But God said unto him, Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee: THEN whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" And, then, mark the moral of all this. "So is he," no matter who, saint or sinner, "that layeth up *treasure for himself*, and is not rich towards God." The man who hoards up is virtually making a god of his hoard. His mind is tranquillised as to the future when he thinks of his hoard, for if he had not that hoard he would be uneasy. It is sufficient to put a natural man entirely out of his reason to give him nought but God to depend upon. Anything but that for him. Give him old pieces of parchment in the shape of title deeds, in which some clever lawyer will finally pick a hole, and prove worthless. He will lean on them, yea, die in peace, if he can leave such to his heirs. Give him an insurance policy — anything, in short, but God for the natural heart. ALL IS REALITY SAVE THE ONLY REALITY, in the judgement of nature. This proves what nature's true condition is. It cannot trust God. It *talks* about Him, but it cannot *trust* Him. The very basis of man's moral constitution is distrust of God; and one of the fairest fruits of regeneration is the capacity to confide in God for everything. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." None else can.

However, my main object in this paper is to deal with Christian consciences. I ask the Christian reader, therefore, in plain terms, is it in keeping with Christ's doctrine, as set forth in the Gospel, for His disciples to lay up for themselves treasure on the earth? It would seem almost an absurdity to put such a question in the face of Luke 12 and parallel scriptures. "Lay not up for yourselves treasure on the earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal." This is plain enough, and only wants an honest conscience to apply it, in order to produce its proper results. It is directly contrary to the doctrine of the kingdom of God, and perfectly incompatible with true discipleship, to lay up "treasure," in any shape or form, "on the earth." In this, as



in the matter of going to law, we have only to remember that we are in the kingdom of God, in order to know how we should act. The principles of that kingdom are eternal and binding upon every disciple of Christ.

"And he said unto his disciples, Therefore, I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment." Observe, "take NO thought." This needs no interpretation or accommodation. Persons may say it means "anxious thought," but there is nothing about "anxious" in the passage. It is simply said, "no thought;" and that, too, in reference to all that man can really want, namely, food and raiment, in both of which the ravens and the lilies are set before us as an example; for the former are fed, and the latter are clothed, without thought. If the Lord Jesus meant "anxious thought," He would have said so. Nor is this merely true in reference to those who are only in the kingdom; it is also true as to the members of the church. "Be careful for nothing," says the Spirit by the apostle. Why? Because God is caring for you. There is no use in two thinking about the same thing, when One can do everything, and the other can do nothing. "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall garrison (*phrouresei*) your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus." This is the solid foundation of peace of heart, which so few really enjoy. Many have gotten peace of conscience through faith in the sufficiency of Christ's work, who do not enjoy peace of heart through faith in the sufficiency of God's care. And often times we go to pray about our difficulties and trials, and we rise from our knees as troubled as we knelt down. We profess to put our affairs into the hands of God, but we have no notion of *leaving them* there; and, consequently, we do not enjoy peace of heart. Thus it was with Jacob, in Genesis 32. He asked God to deliver him from the hand of Esau; but, no sooner did he rise from his knees than he set forth the real ground of his soul's dependence, by saying, "I will appease him by a present." It is clear he had much more confidence in the "present" than in God. This is a common error amongst the children of God. We profess to be looking to the Eternal Fountain; but the eye of the soul is askance upon some creature stream. Thus God is practically shut out; our souls are not delivered, and we have not got peace of heart.

The apostle then goes on, in Philippians 4: 8, to give a catalogue of those things about which we ought to think; and we find that *self*, or its affairs, is not once alluded to. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are venerable (*semna*) whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things And the God of peace shall be with you." Thus, when I know and believe that God is thinking about me, I have "*the peace of God*;" and when I am thinking about Him and the things belonging to Him, I have "*the God of peace*." This, as might be expected, harmonises precisely with Christ's doctrine in Luke 12. After relieving the minds of His disciples in reference to present supplies and future treasure, He says, "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you." That is, I am not to seek the kingdom with the latent thought in my mind that my wants will be supplied in consequence. That would not be true discipleship. A true disciple never thinks of aught but the Master and His kingdom; and the Master will assuredly think of him and his wants. Thus it stands, my beloved reader, between a faithful servant and an All-powerful and All-gracious Master. That servant may therefore be free, perfectly free, from care.

But there is another ground on which we are exhorted to be free from care, and that is, the utter worthlessness of that care. "Which of you, with taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?" We gain nothing by our care; and by indulging therein we only unfit ourselves for seeking the kingdom of God, and place a

barrier, by our unbelief, in the way of His acting for us. It is always true in reference to us, "He could there do no mighty work, because of their unbelief." Unbelief is the great hindrance to the display of God's mighty works on our behalf. If we take our affairs into our own hands, it is clear that we do not want God. Thus we are left to the depressing influence of our own perplexing thoughts, and, finally, we take refuge in some human resource, and make shipwreck of faith.

It is important to understand that we are either leaning on God, or on circumstances. It will not do, by any means, to say that we are leaning on God. *and* circumstances. It must be God *only*, or not at all. It is all very well to talk of faith when our hearts are, in reality, leaning on the creature, in some shape or form. We should sift and try our ways closely as to this; for, inasmuch as absolute dependence upon God is one of the special characteristics of the divine life, and one of the fundamental principles of the kingdom, it surely becomes us to look well to it, that we are not presenting any barrier to our progress in that heavenly quality. True, it is most trying to flesh and blood to have no settled thing to lean upon. The heart will quiver as we stand upon the shore of circumstances, and look forth upon that unknown ocean — unknown to all but faith, and where nought but simple faith can live for an hour. We may feel disposed, like Lot, to cry out, "Is it not a little one? and my soul shall live." The heart longs for some shred of the creature, some plank from the raft of circumstances, anything but absolute dependence upon God. But oh! let God only be known, and He must be trusted; let Him be trusted, and He must be known.

Still the poor heart will yearn after something settled, something tangible. If it be a question of maintenance, it will earnestly desire some settled income, a certain sum in the funds, a certain amount of landed property, or a fixed jointure or annuity of some kind or other. Then, if it be a question of public testimony or ministry of any kind, it will be the same thing. If a man is going to preach or lecture, he will like to have something to lean upon; if not a written sermon, at least, some notes, or some kind of previous preparation; anything but unqualified, self-emptied dependence upon God. Hence it is that worldliness prevails to such a fearful extent amongst Christians. Faith alone can overcome the world, and purify the heart. It brings the soul from under the influence of time, and keeps it habitually in the light of eternity. It is occupied not with *now*, but with *then*; not with *here*, but *hereafter*; not with earth, but with heaven. Thus it overcomes the world, and purifies the heart. It hears and believes Christ's word, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Now, if "the kingdom" fills my soul's vision, I have no room for aught beside. I can let go present shadows in the prospect of future realities. I can give up an evanescent *now*, in the prospect of an eternal *then*.

Wherefore, the Lord immediately adds, "Sell that ye have, and give alms: provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fadeth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will the heart be also." If I have treasure on earth, no matter in what shape, my *heart* will be there also, and I shall be a downright worldly man. How shall I most effectually empty my heart of the world? By getting it filled with Christ. He is the true treasure which neither the world's "bags," nor its "storehouses," can contain. The world has its "barns" and its "bags," in which it hoards its "goods;" but its barns will fall, and its bags will wax old; and then, what will become of the treasure? Truly, "they build too low that build beneath the skies."

Yet, people will build and hoard up, if not for themselves, at least for their children; or, in other words, their second selves. If I hoard for my children, I am hoarding for myself; and not only so, but in numberless cases, the hoard, in place of proving a blessing, proves a positive curse to the child, by taking him off the proper ground appointed for him, as well as for all, in God's moral government, namely, "working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have [not to hoard up for

himself, or for his second self, but] to give to him that needeth." This is God's appointed ground, for every man; and, therefore, if I hoard for my child, I am taking both myself and him off the divine ground, and the consequence will be a forfeiture of blessing. Do I taste the surpassing sweetness of obedience to, and dependence upon God, and shall I deprive my child thereof? Shall I rob him, virtually, and so far as in me lies, of God, and give him, as a substitute, a few "old bags," an insurance policy, or some musty parchments? Would this be acting a father's part? Surely not. It would be selling *then* for *now*. It would be like the profane and sensual Esau, selling the birthright for a morsel of meat; it would be giving up God's future for man's present.

But why need I hoard up for my children? If I can trust God for myself, why not trust Him for them likewise? Cannot the One who has fed and clothed me, feed and clothe them also? Is His hand shortened, or His treasury exhausted? Shall I make them idlers, or give them money instead of God? Ah! my reader, let us bear in mind this simple fact, that if we *cannot* trust God for our little ones, we *do not* trust Him for ourselves. The moment I begin to hoard up a sixpence, I have, in principle, departed from the life of faith. I may call my hoard by all the fair names that were ever invented by worldly minds or unbelieving hearts; but the unvarnished truth of the matter is this. MY HOARD IS MY GOD. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Let not the truth be misunderstood or misinterpreted. I am bound, by the powerful obligations of the word and example of God, to provide for my own; for, "if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim. 5: 8.) This is plain enough. And, moreover, I am bound to fit my children, so far as God's principles admit, and my province extends, for any service to which He may be graciously pleased to call them. But I am nowhere instructed in the word of God to give my children a hoard in place of an honest occupation, with simple dependence upon a heavenly Father. As a matter of actual fact, few children ever thank their fathers for inherited wealth; whereas they will ever remember, with gratitude and veneration, having been led, by parental care and management, into a godly course of action for themselves.

I do not, however, forget a passage which has often been used, or rather abused, to defend the worldly, unbelieving practice of hoarding up. I allude to 2 Corinthians 12: 14. "Behold the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." How glad people are when they get a semblance of scripture authority for their worldliness! In this passage it is but a semblance of authority; for the apostle is certainly not teaching Christians to hoard up — he is not teaching heavenly men to lay up treasure upon the earth, for any object. He simply refers to a common practice *in the world* and to a common feeling *in nature*, in order to illustrate his own mode of dealing with the Corinthians, who were his children in the faith. He had not burdened them, and he would not burden them, for he was the parent. Now, if the saints of God are satisfied to go back to the world and its maxims, to nature and its ways, then let them hoard up with all diligence — let them "heap treasure together for the last days;" but let them remember that the moth, the canker-worm, and the rust, will be the end of it all. Oh! for a heart to value those immortal "bags" in which faith lays up its "unfading treasure," those heavenly storehouses where faith "bestows all its fruits and its goods." Then shall we pursue a holy and an elevated path through this present evil world — then, too, shall we be lifted upon faith's vigorous pinion above the dark atmosphere which enwraps this Christ-rejecting, God-hating world, and which is impregnated and polluted by those two elements, namely, *hatred of God, and love of gold*.

I shall only add, ere closing this paper, that the Lord Jesus — the Adorable, the Divine, the Heavenly Teacher, having sought to raise, by His unearthly principles, the thoughts and affections of

His disciples to their proper centre and level, gives them two things to do; and these two things may be expressed in the words of the Holy Ghost, "to serve the living and true God; and wait for his Son from heaven." The entire of the teaching of Luke 12 from verse 35 to the end, may be ranged under the above comprehensive heads, to which I call the Christian reader's prayerful attention. We have no one else to serve but "the living God;" and nothing to wait for — nothing worth waiting for, but "his Son." May the Holy Ghost clothe His own word with heavenly power, so that it may come home to the heart and conscience, and tell upon the life of every child of God, that the name of the Lord Christ may be magnified, and His truth vindicated in the conduct of those that belong to Him. May the grace of an honest heart, and a tender, upright, well-adjusted conscience, be largely ministered to each and all of us, so that we may be like a well-tuned instrument, yielding a true tone when touched by the Master's hand, and harmonising with His heavenly voice.

Finally, if this paper should fall into the hands of one who has not yet found rest of conscience in the perfected atonement of the Son of God, I would say to such a one, you will surely lay this paper down, and say, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" You may be disposed to ask, "What would the world come to, if such principles were universally dominant?" I reply, it would cease to be governed by Satan, and would be "the kingdom of God." But let me ask you, my friend, "To which kingdom do you belong? Which is it — *now* or *then* — with you? Are you living for time or eternity, earth or heaven, Satan or Christ?" Do, I affectionately implore of you, be thoroughly honest with yourself in the presence of God. Remember, "there is *nothing* covered that shall not be revealed." The judgement-seat will bring *all* to light. Therefore, I say, be honest with yourself, and now ask your heart, "Where am I? How do I stand? What is the ground of my peace? What are my prospects for eternity?" Do not imagine that God wants *you* to buy heaven with a surrender of earth. No; He points you to Christ, who, by bearing sin in His own body on the cross, has opened the way for the believing sinner to come into the presence of God in the power of divine righteousness. You are not asked to do or to be anything; but the gospel tells you what Jesus is, and what He has done; and if you believe this in your heart, and confess it with your mouth, you shall be saved. Christ — God's Eternal Son — God manifest in the flesh — co-equal with the Father, being conceived by the Holy Ghost, was born of a woman, took upon Him a body prepared by the power of the Highest — and thus became a REAL MAN — very God and very man — He, having lived a life of perfect obedience, died upon the cross, being made sin and a curse, and having exhausted the cup of Jehovah's righteous wrath, endured the sting of death, spoiled the grave of its victory, and destroyed him that had the power of death, He went up into heaven, and took His seat at the right hand of God. Such is the infinite merit of His perfect sacrifice, that all who believe are justified from ALL THINGS — yea, are accepted in Him — stand in His acceptableness before God, and can never come into condemnation, but have passed from death into life. This is the gospel — the glad tidings of salvation, which God the Holy Ghost came down from heaven to preach to every creature. My reader, let me exhort you, in this concluding line, to "behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." BELIEVE AND LIVE

C.H.M.