

**Exodus 1 - 14**, Section 1 of 2.

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Preface to the Third Edition.

The writer cannot suffer a new edition of this volume to issue from the press without a line or two of deep thankfulness to the Lord for His grace, in making use of such a feeble instrumentality in the furtherance of His truth, and the edification of His people. Blessed be His name, when He takes up a book or a tract, He can make it effectual in the accomplishment of His gracious ends. He can clothe, with spiritual power, page and paragraphs which, to us, might seem pointless and powerless. May He continue to own and bless this service, and His name shall have all the praise.

C.H.M. Dublin, April, 1862.

**Exodus 1**

We now approach, by the mercy of God, the study of the Book of Exodus, of which the great prominent theme is redemption. The first five verses recall to the mind the closing scenes of the preceding book. The favoured objects of God's electing love are brought before us; and we find ourselves, very speedily, conducted, by the inspired penman, into the section of the book.

In our meditations on the Book of Genesis, we were led to see that the conduct of Joseph's brethren toward him was that which led to their being brought down into Egypt. This fact is to be looked at in two ways. In the first place, we can read therein a deeply solemn lesson as taught in Israel's actings toward God; and, secondly, we have, therein unfolded, an encouraging lesson, as taught in God's actings toward Israel.

And, first, as to Israel's actings toward God, what can be more deeply solemn than to follow out the results of their treatment of him who stands before the spiritual mind as the marked type of the Lord Jesus Christ? They, utterly regardless of the anguish of his soul, consigned Joseph into the hands of the uncircumcised. And what was the issue, as regards them? They were carried down into Egypt, there to experience those deep and painful exercises of heart which are so graphically and touchingly presented in the closing chapters of Genesis. Nor was this all. A long and dreary season awaited their offspring in that very land in which Joseph had found a dungeon.

But then God was in all this, as well as man; and it is His prerogative to bring good out of evil. Joseph's brethren might sell him to the Ishmaelites, and the Ishmaelites might sell him to Potiphar, and Potiphar might cast him into prison; but Jehovah was above all, and He was accomplishing His own mighty ends. "The wrath of man shall praise him." The time had not arrived in which the heirs were ready for the inheritance, and the inheritance for the heirs. The brickkilns of Egypt were to furnish a rigid school for the seed of Abraham, while, as yet, "the iniquity of the Amorites" was rising to a head, amid the "hills and valleys" of the promised land.

All this is deeply interesting and instructive. There are "wheels within wheels" in the government of God. He makes use of an endless variety of agencies, in the accomplishment of His unsearchable designs. Potiphar's wife, Pharaoh's butler, Pharaoh's dreams, Pharaoh himself, the dungeon, the throne, the fetters, the royal signet, the famine — all are at His sovereign disposal, and all be made instrumental in the development of His stupendous counsels. The spiritual mind delights to dwell upon this. It delights to range through the wide domain of creation and providence, And to recognise, in all,

the machinery which an All-wise and an Almighty God is using for the purpose of unfolding His counsels of redeeming love. True, we may see many traces of the serpent; many deep and well-defined footprints of the enemy of God and man; many things which we cannot explain nor even comprehend; suffering innocence and successful wickedness may furnish an apparent basis for the infidel-reasoning of the sceptic mind; but the true believer can piously repose in the assurance that "the Judge of all the earth shall do right." He knows right well that,

Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan His ways in vain;  
God is His own interpreter,  
and He will make it plain."

Blessed be God for the consolation and encouragement flowing out of such reflections as these. We need them, every hour, while passing through an evil world, in which the enemy has wrought such appalling mischief, in which the lusts and passions of men produce such bitter fruits, and in which the path of the true disciple presents roughnesses which mere nature could never endure. Faith knows, of a surety, that there is One behind the scenes whom the world sees not nor regards; and, in the consciousness of this, it can calmly say, "it is well," and, "it shall be well."

The above train of thought is distinctly suggested by the opening lines of our book. "God's counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." The enemy may oppose; but God will ever prove Himself to be above him; and all we need is a spirit of simple, child-like confidence and repose in the divine purpose. Unbelief will rather look at the enemy's efforts to countervail, than at God's power to accomplish. It is on the latter that faith fixes its eye. Thus it obtains victory, and It has to do with God and His infallible faithfulness. It rests not upon the ever shifting sands of human affairs and earthly influences, but upon the immovable rock of God's eternal Word. That is faith's holy and solid resting-place. Come what may, it abides in that sanctuary of strength. "Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation." What then? Could death affect the counsels of the living God? Surely not. He only waited for the appointed moment, the due time, and then the most hostile influences were made instrumental in the development of His purposes.

"Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: come on, let us deal *wisely* with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass that when there falleth out any war they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land." (Vv. 8-10) All this is the reasoning of a heart that had never learnt to take God into its calculations. The unrenewed heart never can do so; and hence, the moment you introduce God, all its reasonings fall to the ground. Apart from, or independent of Him, they may seem very wise; but only bring Him in, and they are proved to be perfect folly.

But why should we allow our minds to be, in any wise, influenced by reasonings and calculations which depend, for their *apparent* truth, upon the total exclusion of God? To do so is, in principle, and according to its measure, practical atheism. In Pharaoh's case, we see that he could accurately recount the various contingencies of human affairs, the multiplying of the people, the falling out of war, their joining with the enemy, their escape out of the land. All these circumstances he could, with uncommon sagacity, put into the scale; but it never once occurred to him that God could have anything whatever to do in the matter. Had he only thought of this, it would have upset his entire reasoning, and have written folly upon all his schemes.

Now it is well to see that it is ever thus with the reasonings of man's sceptic mind. God is entirely shut out; yea, the truth and consistency thereof depend upon His being kept out. The death-blow to all scepticism and infidelity is the introduction of God into the scene. Till He is seen, they may strut up and down upon the stage, with an amazing show of wisdom and cleverness; but the moment the eye catches even the faintest glimpse of that Blessed One, they are stripped of their cloak, and disclosed in all their nakedness and deformity.

In reference to the king of Egypt, it may, assuredly, be said, he did "greatly err," not knowing God, or His changeless counsels. He knew not that, hundreds of years back, before ever he had breathed the breath of mortal life, God's word and oath — "two immutable things" — had infallibly secured the full and glorious deliverance of that very people whom he was going, in his wisdom, to crush. All this was unknown to him; and, therefore, all his thoughts and plans were founded upon ignorance of that grand foundation-truth of all truths, namely, that GOD IS. He vainly imagined that he, by his management, could prevent the increase of those concerning whom God had said, "they shall be as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore." His wise dealing, therefore, was simply madness and folly.

The wildest mistake which a man can possibly fall into is to act without taking God into his account. Sooner or later, the thought of God will force itself upon him, and then comes the awful crash of all his schemes and calculations. At best, everything that is undertaken, independently of God, can last but for the present time. It cannot, by any possibility, stretch itself into eternity. All that is merely human, however solid, however brilliant, or however attractive, must fall into the cold grasp of death, and moulder in the dark, silent tomb. The clod of the valley must cover man's highest excellencies and brightest glories; mortality is engraved upon his brow, and all his schemes are evanescent. On the contrary, that which is connected with, and based upon, God, shall endure for ever. "His name shall endure for ever, and his memorial to all generations."

What a sad mistake, therefore, for a feeble mortal to set himself up against the eternal God, to "rush upon the thick bosses of the shield of the Almighty!" As well might the monarch of Egypt have sought to stem, with his puny hand, the ocean's tide, as to prevent the increase of those who were the subjects of Jehovah's everlasting purpose. Hence, although "they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens," yet, "the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." Thus it must ever be. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." (Ps. 2: 4) Eternal confusion shall be inscribed upon all the opposition of men and devils. This gives sweet rest to the heart, in the midst of a scene where all is, apparently, so contrary to God and so contrary to faith. Were it not for the settled assurance that "the wrath of man shall praise" the Lord, the spirit would often be cast down, while contemplating the circumstances and influences which surround one in the world. Thank God, "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) In the power of this, we may well say, "*rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him*: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass." (Ps. 37: 7) How fully might the truth of this be seen in the case of both the oppressed and the oppressor, as set before us in our chapter! Had Israel "looked at the things that are seen," what were they? Pharaoh's wrath, stern taskmasters, afflictive burdens, rigorous service, hard bondage, mortar and brick. But, then, "the things which are not seen," what were they? God's eternal purpose, His unfailing promise, the approaching dawn of a day of salvation, the "burning lamp" of Jehovah's deliverance. Wondrous contrast Faith alone could enter into it. Nought save that precious principle could enable any poor, oppressed Israelite to look from out the smoking furnace of Egypt, to the green fields and vine-

clad mountains of the land of Canaan. Who could possibly recognise in those oppressed slaves, toiling in the brick-kilns of Egypt, the heirs of salvation, and the objects of Heaven's peculiar interest and favour.

Thus it was then, and thus it is now. "We walk by faith, not by sight." (2 Cor. 5: 7) "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." (1 John 3: 2) We are "here in the body pent," "absent from the Lord." As to fact, we are in Egypt, yet, in spirit, we are in the heavenly Canaan. Faith brings the heart into the power of divine and unseen things, and thus enables it to mount above everything down here, in this place "where death and darkness reign. Oh! for that simple child-like faith that sits beside the pure and eternal fountain of truth, there to drink those deep and refreshing draughts, which lift up the fainting spirit, and impart energy to the new man, in its upward and onward course.

The closing verses of this section of our book present an edifying lesson in the conduct of those God-fearing women, Shiphrah and Puah. They would not carry out the king's cruel scheme, but braved his wrath, and hence, God made them houses. "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." (1 Sam. 2: 30) May we ever remember this, and act for God, under all circumstances!

## **Exodus 2**

This section of our book abounds in the weightiest principles of divine truth — principles, which range themselves under the three following heads, namely, the power of Satan, the power of God, and the power of faith.

In the last verse of the previous chapter, we read, "And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river." This was Satan's power. The river was the place of death; and, by death, the enemy sought to frustrate the purpose of God. It has ever been thus. The serpent has, at all times, watched, with malignant eye, those instruments which God was about to use for his own gracious ends. Look at the case of Abel, in Genesis 4. What was that but the serpent watching God's vessel and seeking to put it out of the way by death? Look at the case of Joseph, in Gen. 37. There you have the enemy seeking to put the man of God's purpose in the place of death. Look at the case of "the seed royal," in 2 Chr. 22, the act of Herod, in Matt. 2, the death of Christ, in Matt. 27. In all these cases, you find the enemy seeking, by death, to interrupt the current of divine action.

But, blessed be God, there is something beyond death. The entire sphere of divine action, as connected with redemption, lies beyond the limits of death's domain. When Satan has exhausted his power, then God begins to show Himself. The grave is the limit of Satan's activity; but there it is that divine activity begins. This is a glorious truth. Satan has the power of death; but God is the God of the living; and He gives life beyond the reach and power of death — a life which Satan cannot touch. The heart finds sweet relief in such a truth as this, in the midst of a scene where death reigns. Faith can stand and look on at Satan putting forth the plenitude of his power. It can stay itself upon God's mighty instrumentality of resurrection. It can take its stand at the grave which has just closed over a beloved object, and drink in, from the lips of Him who is "the resurrection and the life," the elevating assurance of a glorious immortality. It knows that God is stronger than Satan, and it can, therefore, quietly wait for the full manifestation of that superior strength, and, in thus waiting, find its victory and its settled peace. We have a noble example of this power of faith in the opening verses of our chapter.

"And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived and bare a son; and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could no longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes and daubed it with slime

and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him." (Ex. 2: 1-4) Here we have a scene of touching interest, in whatever way we contemplate it. In point of fact, it was simply faith triumphing over the influences of nature and death, and leaving room for the God of resurrection to act in His own proper sphere and character. True, the enemy's power is apparent, in the circumstance that the child had to be placed in such position — a position of death, in principle. And, moreover, a sword was piercing through the mother's heart, in thus beholding her precious offspring laid, as it were, in death. Satan might act, and nature might weep; but the Quickener of the dead was behind the dark cloud, and faith beheld Him there, gilding heaven's side of that cloud with His bright and life-giving beams. "By faith Moses when he was born was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment." (Heb. 11: 23)

Thus, this honoured daughter of Levi teaches us a holy lesson. Her "ark of bulrushes, daubed with slime and *pitch*," declares her confidence in the truth that there was a something which could keep out the waters of death, in the case of this "proper child," as well as in the case of Noah, "the preacher of righteousness. Are we to suppose, for a moment, that this "Ark" was the invention of mere nature? Was it nature's mere thought that devised it, or nature's ingenuity that constructed it? Was the babe placed in the ark at the suggestion of a mother's heart, cherishing the fond but visionary hope of thereby saving her treasure from the ruthless hand of death? Were we to reply to the above inquiries in the affirmative, we should, I believe, lose the beautiful teaching of this entire scene. How could we ever suppose that the "*ark*" was devised by one who saw no other portion or destiny for her child but death by *drowning*? Impossible. We can only look upon that significant structure, as faith's draft handed in at the treasury of the God of resurrection. devised by the hand of faith, as a vessel of mercy, to carry "a proper child" safety over death's dark waters, into the place assigned him by the immutable purpose of the living God. When we behold this daughter of Levi bending over that ark of bulrushes," which her faith had constructed, and depositing therein her babe, we see her "walking in the steps of that faith of her father Abraham, which he had," when "he rose up from before his dead," and purchased the cave of Machpelah from the sons of Heth. (Gen. 23) We do not recognise in her the energy of mere nature, hanging over the object of its affections, about to fall into the iron grasp of the king of terrors. No; but we trace in her the energy of a faith which enabled her to stand, as a conqueror, at the margin of death's cold flood, and behold the chosen servant of Jehovah in safety at the other side.

Yes, my reader, faith can take those bold and lofty flights into regions far removed from this land of death and wide-spread desolation. Its eagle eye can pierce the gloomy clouds which gather around the tomb, and behold the God of resurrection displaying the results of His everlasting counsels, in the midst of a sphere which no arrow of death can reach. It can take its stand upon the top of the Rock of Ages, and listen, in holy triumph, while the surges of death are lashing its base.

And what, let me ask, was "the king's commandment" to one who was in possession of this heaven-born principle? What weight had that commandment with one who could calmly stand beside her "ark of bulrushes" and look death straight in the face? The Holy Ghost replies, "they were not afraid of the king's commandment." The spirit that knows ought of communion with Him who quickens the dead, is not afraid of anything. Such an one can take up the triumphant language of 1 Cor: 15 and say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." He can give forth these words of triumph over a martyred Abel; over Joseph in the pit; over Moses in his ark of bulrushes; in the midst of "the seed royal," slain by the hand of Athaliah; and in the babes of Bethlehem, murdered by the mandate of the cruel Herod; and far above all, he can utter them

at the tomb of the Captain of our salvation.

Now, it may be, there are some who cannot trace the activities of faith, in the matter of the ark of bulrushes. Many may not be able to travel beyond the measure of Moses' sister, when "she stood afar off, to wit, what would be done to him." It is very evident that "his sister" was not up to "the measure of faith" possessed by "his mother." No doubt, she possessed deep interest and true affection, such as we may trace in "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary sitting over against the sepulchre." (Matt. 27: 61) But there was something far beyond either interest or affection in the maker of the "ark." True, she did not "stand afar off to wit what would be done to" her child, and hence, what frequently happens, the dignity of faith might seem like indifference, on her part. It was not, however, indifference, but true elevation — the elevation of faith. If natural affection did not cause her to linger near the scene of death, it was only because the power of faith was furnishing her with nobler work, in the presence of the God of resurrection. Her faith had cleared the stage for Him, and most gloriously did He show Himself thereon.

"And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it she saw the child; and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children." Here, then, the divine response begins to break, in sweetest accents, on the ear of faith. God was in all this. Rationalism, or scepticism, or infidelity, or atheism, may laugh at such an idea. And faith can laugh also; but the two kinds of laughter are very different. The former laughs, in cold contempt, at the thought of divine interference in the trifling affair of a royal maiden's walk by the river's side. The latter laughs, with real heart-felt gladness, at the thought that God is in everything. And, assuredly, if ever God was in anything, He was in this walk of Pharaoh's daughter, though she knew it not.

The renewed mind enjoys one of its sweetest exercises, while tracing the divine footsteps in circumstances and events in which a thoughtless spirit sees only blind chance or rigid fate. The most trifling matter may, at times, turn out to be a most important link in a chain of events by which the Almighty God is helping forward the development of His grand designs. Look, for instance, at Esther 4: 1, and what do you see? A heathen monarch, spending a restless night. No uncommon circumstance, we may suppose; and, yet, this very circumstance was a link in a great chain of providence at the end of which you find the marvellous deliverance of the oppressed seed of Israel.

Thus was it with the daughter of Pharaoh, in her walk by the river's side. Little did she think that she was helping forward the purpose of "the Lord God of the Hebrews" How little idea had she that the weeping babe, in that ark of bulrushes, was yet to be Jehovah's instrument in shaking the land of Egypt to its very centre! Yet so it was. The Lord can make the wrath of man to praise Him, and restrain the remainder. How plainly the truth of this appears in the following passage!

"Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child sway, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child and nursed it. And the child grew and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water." (Ex. 2: 7-10) The beautiful faith of Moses' mother here meets its full reward; Satan is confounded; and the marvellous wisdom of God is displayed. Who would have thought that the one who had said, "If it be a son, then ye shall kill him," and, again, "every son that is born ye shall cast into the river," should have in his court one of those

very sons, and such "a son." The devil was foiled by his own weapon, inasmuch as Pharaoh, whom he was using to frustrate the purpose of God, is used of God to nourish and bring up Moses, who was to be His instrument in confounding the power of Satan. Remarkable providence! Admirable wisdom! Truly, Jehovah is "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." May we learn to trust Him with more artless simplicity, and thus our path shall be more brilliant, and our testimony more effective.

In considering the history of Moses, we must look at him in two ways, namely, personally and typically.

First, in his personal character, there is much, very much, for us to learn. God had not only to raise him up, but also to train him, in one way or another, for the lengthened period of eighty years—first in the house of Pharaoh's daughter; and then at "the backside of the desert." This, to our shallow thoughts, would seem an immense space of time to devote to the education of a minister of God. But then God's thoughts are not as our thoughts. He knew the need of those forty years, twice told, in the preparation of His chosen vessel. When God educates, He educates in a manner worthy of Himself and His most holy service. He will not have a novice to do His work. The servant of Christ has to learn many a lesson, to undergo many an exercise, to pass through many a conflict, in secret, ere he is really qualified to act in public. Nature does not like this. It would rather figure in public than learn in private. It would rather be gazed upon and admired by the eye of man than be disciplined by the hand of God. But it will not do. We must take God's way. Nature may rush into the scene of operation; but God does not want it there. It must be withered, crushed, set aside. The place of death is the place for nature. If it *will* be active, God will so order matters, in His infallible faithfulness and perfect wisdom, that the results of its activity will prove its utter defeat and confusion. He knows what to do with nature, where to put it, and where to keep it. Oh that we may all be in deeper communion with the mind of God, in reference to self and all that pertains thereto. Then shall we make fewer mistakes. Then shall our path be steady and elevated, our spirit tranquil, and our service effective.

"And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens; and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand." This was zeal for his brethren; but it was "not according to knowledge." God's time was not yet come for judging Egypt and delivering Israel; and the intelligent servant will ever wait for God's time. "Moses was grown;" and "he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians;" and, moreover, "he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them." all this was true; yet he evidently ran before the time, and when one does this failure must be the issue. [In Stephen's address to the council, at Jerusalem, there is an allusion to Moses' acting, to which it may be well to advert. "And when he was full forty years old it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian; for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God, by his hand, would deliver them; but they understood not." (Acts 7: 23-25) It is evident that Stephen's object, in his entire address, has to bring the history of the nation to bear upon the consciences of those whom he had before him; and it would have been quite foreign to this object, and at variance with the Spirit's rule in the New Testament, to raise a question as to whether Moses had not acted before the divinely-appointed time.

Moreover, he merely says, "it came into his heart to visit his brethren." He does not say that God sent him, *at that time*. Nor does this, in the least, touch the question of the moral condition of those who rejected him. "They understood not." This was the fact as to them, whatever Moses might have personally to learn in the matter. The spiritual mind can have no difficulty in apprehending this.

Looking at Moses, typically, we can see the mission of Christ to Israel, and their rejection of Him, and refusal to have Him to reign over them. On the other hand, looking at Moses, personally, we find that he, like others, made mistakes and displayed infirmities; sometimes went too fast, and sometimes too slow. All this is easily understood, and only tends to magnify the infinite grace and exhaustless patience of God.]

And not only is there failure in the end, but also manifest uncertainty, and lack of calm elevation and holy independence in the progress of a work begun before God's time. Moses "*looked this way and that way.*" There is no need of this when a man is acting with and for God, and in the full intelligence of His mind, as to the details of his work. If God's time had really come, and if Moses was conscious of being divinely commissioned to execute judgement upon the Egyptian, and if he felt assured of the divine presence with him, he would not have "looked this way and that way."

This action teaches a deep practical lesson to all the servants of God. There are two things by which it is superinduced: namely, the fear of man's wrath, and the hope of man's favour. The servant of the living God should neither regard the one nor the other. What avails the wrath or favour of a poor mortal, to one who holds the divine commission, and enjoys the divine presence? It is, in the judgement of such an one, less than the small dust of the balance. "*Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee, whithersoever thou goest.*" (Joshua 1: 9) "Thou, therefore, gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak, unto them *all that I command thee*: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defended city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee; for *I am with thee*, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." (Jer 1: 17-19)

When the servant of Christ stands upon the elevated ground set forth in the above quotations, he will not "look this way and that way;" he will act on wisdom's heavenly counsel, "let thine eyes look straight on, and thine eyelids look straight before thee." Divine intelligence will ever lead us to look upward and onward. Whenever we look around to shun a mortal's frown or catch his smile, we may rest assured there is something wrong; we are off the proper ground of divine service. We lack the assurance of holding the divine commission, and of enjoying the divine presence, both of which are absolutely essential.

True, there are many who, through profound ignorance, or excessive self-confidence, stand forward in a sphere of service for which God never intended them, and for which He, therefore, never qualified them. And not only do they thus stand forward, but they exhibit an amount of coolness and self-possession perfectly amazing to those who are capable of forming an impartial judgement about their gifts and merits. But all this will very speedily find its level; nor does it in the least interfere with the integrity of the principle that nothing can effectually deliver a man from the tendency to "look this way and that way," save the consciousness of the divine commission and the divine presence. When these are possessed, there is entire deliverance from human influence, and consequent independence. No man is in a position to serve others who is not wholly independent of them; but a man who knows his proper place can stoop and wash his brethren's feet.

When we turn away our eyes from man, and fix them upon the only true and perfect Servant, we do not find him looking this way and that way, for this simple reason, that He never had His eye upon men, but always upon God. He feared not the wrath of man nor sought his favour. He never opened His lips to elicit human applause, nor kept them closed to avoid human censure. This gave holy stability



and elevation to all He said and did. Of Him alone could it be truly said, "His leaf shall not wither, and *whatsoever* he doeth shall prosper." Everything He did turned to profitable account, because everything was done to God. Every action, every word, every movement, every look, every thought, was like a beautiful cluster of fruit, sent up to refresh the heart of God. He was never afraid of the results of His work, because He always acted with and for God, and in the full intelligence of His mind. His own will, though divinely perfect, never once mingled itself in ought that He did, as a man, on the earth. He could say, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." Hence, He brought forth fruit, "in its season" He did "always those things which pleased the Father," and, therefore, never had any occasion to "fear," to "repent," or to "look this way and that way."

Now in this, as in everything else, the blessed Master stands in marked contrast with His most honoured and eminent servants. Even a Moses "feared," and a Paul "repented;" but the Lord Jesus never did either. He never had to retrace a step, to recall a word, or correct a thought. All was absolutely perfect. All was "fruit in season." The current of His holy and heavenly life flowed onward without a ripple and without a curve. His will was divinely subject. The best and most devoted men make mistakes; but it is perfectly certain that the more we are enabled, through grace, to mortify our own will, the fewer our mistakes will be. Truly happy it is when, in the main, our path is really a path of faith and single-eyed devotedness to Christ.

Thus it was with Moses. He was a man of faith—a man who drank deeply into the spirit of his Master, and walked with marvellous steadiness in His footprints. True, he anticipated, as has been remarked, by forty years, the Lord's time of judgement on Egypt and deliverance for Israel; yet, when we turn to the inspired commentary, in Hebrews 11, we find nothing about this. We there find only the divine principle upon which, in the main, his course was founded. "By faith Moses, *when he was come to years*, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible." (Ver. 24-27)

This quotation furnishes a most gracious view of the actings of Moses. It is ever thus the Holy Ghost deals with the history of Old Testament saints. When He writes a man's history, He presents him to us as he is, and faithfully sets forth all his failures and imperfections. But when, in the New Testament, he comments upon such history, He merely gives the real principle and main result of a man's life. Hence, though we read, in Exodus, that "Moses looked this way and that way" — that "he feared and said, surely this thing is known" — and, finally, "Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh;" yet, we are taught, in Hebrews, that what he did, he did "by faith" — that he did not fear "the wrath of the king" — that "he endured as seeing him who is invisible."

Thus will it be, by and by, when "the Lord comes, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the *counsels of the hearts*: and then shall every man have praise of God." (1 Cor. 4: 5) This is a precious and consolatory truth for every upright mind and every loyal heart. Many a "Counsel" the "*heart*" may form, which, from various causes, the *hand* may not be able to execute. All such "counsels" will be made "manifest" when "the Lord comes." Blessed be the grace that has told us so! The affectionate counsels of the heart are far more precious to Christ than the most elaborate works of the hand. The latter may shine before the eye of man; the former are designed *only* for the heart of Jesus. The latter may be spoken of amongst men; the former will be made manifest before God and His holy angels. May all the servants of Christ have their hearts undividedly occupied with His person, and their eyes steadily fixed upon His advent.

In contemplating the path of Moses, we observe how that faith led him entirely athwart the ordinary course of nature. It led him to despise all the pleasures, the attractions, and the honours of Pharaoh's court. And not only that, but also to relinquish an apparently wide sphere of usefulness. Human expediency would have conducted him along quite an opposite path. It would have led him to use his influence on behalf of the people of God — to act *for* them instead of suffering *with* them. According to man's judgement, Providence would seem to have opened for Moses a wide and most important sphere of labour; and surely if ever the hand of God was manifest in placing a man in a distinct position, it was in his case. By a most marvellous interposition — by a most unaccountable chain of circumstances, every link of which displayed the finger of the Almighty — by an order of events which no human foresight could have arranged, had the daughter of Pharaoh been made the instrument of drawing Moses out of the water, and of nourishing and educating him until he was "full forty years Old." With all these circumstances in his view, to abandon his high, honourable, and influential position, could only be regarded as the result of a misguided zeal which no sound judgement could approve.

Thus might poor blind nature reason. But faith thought differently; for nature and faith are always at issue. They cannot agree upon a single point. Nor is there anything, perhaps, in reference to which they differ so widely as what are commonly called "openings of Providence." Nature will constantly regard such openings as warrants for self-indulgence; whereas faith will find in them opportunities for self-denial. Jonah might have deemed it a very remarkable opening of Providence to find a ship going to Tarshish; but in truth it was an opening through which he slipped off the path of obedience.

No doubt, it is the Christian's privilege to see his Father's hand, and hear His voice, in everything; but he is not to be guided by circumstances. A Christian so guided is like a vessel at sea without rudder or compass; she is at the mercy of the waves and the winds. God's promise to His child is, "I will guide thee with mine eye." (Ps: 32: 8) His warning is, "Be 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." It is much better to be guided by our Father's eye, than by the bit and bridle of circumstances; and we know that in the ordinary acceptation of the term, "Providence" is only another word for the impulse of circumstances.

Now, the power of faith may constantly be seen in refusing and forsaking the apparent openings of Providence. It was so in the case of Moses. "By faith he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;" and "by faith he forsook Egypt." Had he judged according to the sight of his eyes, he would have grasped at the proffered dignity, as the manifest gift of a kind Providence, and he would have remained in the court of Pharaoh as in a sphere of usefulness plainly thrown open to him by the hand of God. But, then, he walked by faith, and not by the sight of his eyes; and, hence, he forsook all. Noble example! May we have grace to follow it!

And observe what it was that Moses "esteemed greater riches than the treasures in Egypt;" it was the "reproach of Christ." It was not merely reproach for Christ. "The reproaches of them that reproached thee have fallen upon me." The Lord Jesus, in perfect grace, identified Himself with His people. He came down from heaven, leaving His Father's bosom, and laying aside all His glory, He took His people's place, confessed their sins, and bore their judgement on the cursed tree. Such was His voluntary devotedness, He not merely acted *for* us, but made Himself one *with* us, thus perfectly delivering us from all that was or could be against us.

Hence, we see how much in sympathy Moses was with the spirit and mind of Christ, in reference to the people of God. He was in the midst of all the ease the pomp and dignity of Pharaoh's house,

where "the pleasures of sin," and "the treasures of Egypt," lay scattered around him, in richest profusion. All these things he might have enjoyed if he would. He could have lived and died in the midst of wealth and splendour. His entire path, from first to last, might, if he had chosen, have been enlightened by the sunshine of royal favour: but that would not have been "faith;" it would not have been Christ-like. From his elevated position, he saw his brethren bowed down beneath their heavy burden, and faith led him to see that his place was to be with them. Yes; with them, in all their reproach, their bondage, their degradation, and their sorrow. Had he been actuated by mere benevolence, philanthropy, or patriotism, he might have used his personal influence on behalf of his brethren. He might have succeeded in inducing Pharaoh to lighten their burden, and render their path somewhat smoother, by royal grants in their favour; but this would never do, never satisfy a heart that had a single pulsation in common with the heart of Christ. Such a heart Moses, by the grace of God, carried in his bosom; and, therefore, with all the energies and all the affections of that heart, he threw himself, body, soul, and spirit, into the very midst of his oppressed brethren. He "chose rather to suffer affliction *with* the people of God." And, moreover, he did this "by faith."

Let my reader ponder this deeply. We must not be satisfied with wishing well to, doing service for, or speaking kindly on behalf of, the people of God. We ought to be fully identified *with* them, no matter how despised or reproached they may be. It is, in a measure, an agreeable thing to a benevolent and generous spirit, to patronise Christianity; but it is a wholly different thing to be identified with Christians, or to suffer with Christ. A *patron* is one thing, a *martyr* is quite another. This distinction is apparent throughout the entire book of God. Obadiah took care of God's witnesses, but Elijah was a witness for God. Darius was so attached to Daniel that he lost a night's rest on his account, but Daniel spent that selfsame night in the lion's den, as a witness for the truth of God. Nicodemus ventured to speak a word *for* Christ, but a more matured discipleship would have led him to identify himself *with* Christ.

These considerations are eminently practical. The Lord Jesus does not want patronage; He wants fellowship. The truth concerning Him is declared to us, not that we might patronise His cause on earth, but have fellowship with His Person in heaven. He identified Himself with us, at the heavy cost of all that love could give. He might have avoided this. He might have continued to enjoy His eternal place "in the bosom of the Father." But how, then, could that mighty tide of love, which was pent up in His heart, flow down to us guilty and hell-deserving sinners? Between Him and us there could be no oneness, save on conditions which involved the surrender of everything on His part. But, blessed, throughout the everlasting ages, be His adorable Name, that surrender was voluntarily made. "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify *unto himself* a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2: 14) He would not enjoy His glory alone. His loving heart would gratify itself by associating "many sons" with Him in that glory. "Father," He says, "I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with Me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." (John 17: 24) Such were the thoughts of Christ in reference to His people; and we can easily see how much in sympathy with these precious thoughts was the heart of Moses. He, unquestionably, partook largely of his Master's spirit; and he manifested that excellent spirit in freely sacrificing every personal consideration, and associating himself, unreservedly, with the people of God.

The personal character and actions of this honoured servant of God will come before us again in the next section of our book. We shall here briefly consider him as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. That he was a type of Him is evident from the following passage, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." (Deut. 18:

15) We are not, therefore, trafficking in human imagination in viewing Moses as a type; it is the plain teaching of scripture, and, in the closing verses of Exodus 2. we see this type in a double way: first, in the matter of his rejection by Israel; and, secondly, in his union with a stranger in the land of Midian. These points have already been, in some measure, developed in the history of Joseph, who, being cast out by his brethren, according to the flesh, forms an alliance with an Egyptian bride. Here, as in the case of Moses, we see shadowed forth Christ's rejection by Israel, and His union with the Church, but in a different phase. In Joseph's case, we have the exhibition of positive enmity against his person. In Moses it is the rejection of his mission. In Joseph's case we read, "they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him." (Gen. 37: 4) In the case of Moses, the word is, "*Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?*" In short, the former was personally hated; the latter, officially refused.

So also in the mode in which the great mystery of the Church is exemplified, in the history of those two Old Testament saints. "Asenath" presents quite a different phase of the Church from that which we have in the person of "Zipporah." The former was united to Joseph in the time of his exaltation; the latter was the companion of Moses, in the obscurity of his desert life. (Comp. Gen. 41: 41-45 with Ex. 2: 15; 3: 1) True, both Joseph and Moses were, at the time of their union with a stranger, rejected by their brethren; yet the former was "governor over all the land of Egypt;" whereas the latter tended a few sheep at "the backside of the desert."

Whether, therefore, we contemplate Christ, as manifested in glory: or as hidden from the world's gaze, the Church is intimately associated with Him. And now, inasmuch as the world seeth Him not, neither can it take knowledge of that body which is wholly one with Him. "The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." (2 John 3: 1) By and by, Christ will appear in His glory, and the Church with Him. "When Christ our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Col. 3: 4) And, again, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved Me." (John 17: 22, 23)

[There are two distinct unities spoken of in John 17: 21, 23. The first is that unity which the Church was responsible to have maintained, but in which she has utterly failed. The second, that unity which God will infallibly accomplish, and which He will manifest in glory. If the reader will turn to the passage he will at once see the difference, both as to character and result, of the two.]

Such, then, is the Church's high and holy position. She is one with Him who is cast out by this world, but who occupies the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. The Lord Jesus made Himself responsible for her on the cross, in order that she might share with Him His present rejection and His future glory. Would that all who form a part of such a highly privileged body were more impressed with a sense of what becomes them as to course and character down here! Assuredly, there should be a fuller and clearer response on the part of all the children of God, to that love wherewith He has loved them, to that salvation wherewith He has saved them, and to that dignity wherewith He has invested them. The walk of the Christian should ever be the natural result of realised privilege, and not the constrained result of legal vows and resolutions, the proper fruit of a position known and enjoyed by faith, and not the fruit of one's own efforts to reach a position "by works of law." All true believers are a part of the bride of Christ. Hence they owe Him those affections which become that relation. The relationship is not obtained because of the affections, but the affections flow out of the relationship.

So let it be, O Lord, with all thy beloved and blood bought people.

### **Exodus 3**

We shall now resume the personal history of Moses, and contemplate him during that deeply-

interesting period of his career which he spent in retirement—a period including, as we should say, forty of his very best years — the prime of life. This is full of meaning. The Lord had graciously, wisely, and faithfully, led His dear servant apart from the eyes and thoughts of men, in order that He might train him under His own immediate hand. Moses needed this. True, he had spent forty years in the house of Pharaoh; and, while his sojourn there was not without its influence and value, yet was it as nothing when compared with his sojourn in the desert. The former might be valuable; but the latter was indispensable.

Nothing can possibly make up for the lack of secret communion with God, or the training and discipline of His school "All the wisdom of the Egyptians" would not have qualified Moses for his future path. He might have pursued a most brilliant course through the schools and colleges of Egypt. He might have come forth laden with literary honours — his intellect stored with learning, and his heart full of pride and self-sufficiency. He might have taken out his degree in the school of man, and yet have to learn his alphabet in the school of God. Mere human wisdom and learning; how valuable soever in themselves, can never constitute any one a servant of God, nor equip him for any department of divine service. Such things may qualify unrenewed nature to figure before the world; but the man whom God will use must be endowed with widely different qualifications — such qualifications as can alone be found in the deep and hallowed retirement of the Lord's presence.

All God's servants have been made to know and experience the truth of these statements. Moses at Horeb, Elijah at Cherith, Ezekiel at Chebar, Paul in Arabia, and John at Patmos, are all striking examples of the immense practical importance of being alone with God. and when we look at the Divine Servant, we find that the time He spent in private was nearly ten times as long as that which He spent in public. He, though perfect in understanding and in will, spent nearly thirty years in the obscurity of a carpenter's house at Nazareth, ere He made His appearance in public. And, even when He had entered upon His public career, how oft did He retreat from the gaze of men, to enjoy the sweet and sacred retirement of the divine presence!

Now we may feel disposed to ask, how could the urgent demand for workmen ever be met, if all need such protracted training, in secret, ere they come forth to their work? This is the Master's care — not ours. He can provide the workmen, and He can train them also. This is not man's work. God alone can provide and prepare a true minister. Nor is it a question with Him as to the length of time needful for the education of such an one. We know He could educate him in a moment, if it were His will to do so. One thing is evident, namely, that God has had all His servants very much alone with Himself, both before and after their entrance upon their public work; nor will any one ever get on without this. The absence of secret training and discipline will, necessarily leave us barren, superficial, and theoretic. A man who ventures forth upon a public career ere he has duly weighed himself in the balances of the sanctuary, or measured himself in the presence of God, is like a ship putting out to sea without proper ballast: he will doubtless upset with the first stiff breeze. On the contrary, there is a depth, a solidity, and a steadiness flowing from our having passed from form to form in the school of God, which are essential elements in the formation of the character of a true and effective servant of God.

Hence, therefore, when we find Moses, at the age of forty years, taken apart from all the dignity and splendour of a court, for the purpose of spending forty years in the obscurity of a desert, we are led to expect a remarkable course of service; nor are we disappointed. The man whom God educates, is educated, and none other. It lies not within the range of man to prepare an instrument for the service of God. The hand of man could never mould "a vessel meet for the Master's use." The One who is to use the vessel can alone prepare it; and we have before us a singularly beautiful sample of His mode of preparation.

"Now, Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb." (Ex. 3: 1) Here, then, we have a marvellous change of circumstances. In Genesis 46: 31, we read, "every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians;" and yet Moses, who was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," is transferred from the Egyptian court to the back of a mountain to tend a flock of sheep, and to be educated for the service of God. Assuredly, this is not "the manner of man." This is not nature's line of things. Flesh and blood could not understand this. We should have thought that Moses' education was finished when he had become master of all Egypt's wisdom, and that, moreover, in immediate connection with the rare advantages which a court life affords. We should have expected to find in one so highly favoured, not only a solid and varied education; but also such an exquisite polish as would fit him for any sphere of action to which he might be called. But then, to find such a man with such attainments, called away from such a position to mind sheep at the back of a mountain, is something entirely beyond the utmost stretch of human thought and feeling. It lays prostrate in the dust all man's pride and glory. It declares plainly that this world's appliances are of little value in the divine estimation; yea, they are as "dung and dross," not only in the eyes of the Lord, but also in the eyes of all those who have been taught in His school.

There is a very wide difference between human and divine education. The former has for its end the refinement and exaltation of nature; the latter begins with withering it up and setting it aside. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2: 14) Educate the "natural man" as much as you please, and you cannot make him a "spiritual man." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit:" (John 3: 6) If ever an educated "natural man" might look for success in the service of God, Moses might have counted upon it; he was "grown," he was "learned," he was "mighty in word and deed," and yet he had to learn something at "the backside of the desert," which Egypt's schools could never have taught him. Paul learnt more in Arabia than ever he had learnt at the feet of Gamaliel.\* None can teach like God; and all who will learn *of* Him must be alone *with* Him. "In the desert God will teach thee." There it was that Moses learnt his sweetest, deepest, most influential and enduring lessons. Thither, too, must all repair who mean to be educated for the ministry.

{\*Let not my reader suppose for a moment that the design of the above remarks is to detract from the value of really useful information, or the proper culture of the mental powers. By no means. If, for example, he is a parent, let him store his child's mind with useful knowledge; let him teach him everything which may, hereafter, turn to account in the Master's service: let him not burden him with ought which he would have to "lay aside in running his Christian course, nor conduct him, for educational purposes through a region from which it is well-nigh impossible to come forth with an unsoiled mind. You might just as well shut him up for ten years in a coal mine, in order to qualify him for discussing the properties of light and shade, as cause him to wade through the mire of a heathen mythology, in order to fit him for the interpretation of the oracles of God, or prepare him for leading the flock of Christ}

Beloved reader, may you prove, in your own deep experience, the real meaning of "the backside of the desert," that sacred spot where nature is laid in the dust, and God alone exalted. There it is that men and things — the world and self — present circumstances and their influence, are all valued at what they are really worth. There it is, and there alone, that you will find a divinely-adjusted balance in which to weigh all within and all around. There are no false colours, no borrowed plumes, no empty pretensions there. The enemy of your soul cannot gild the sand of that place. All is reality there. The

heart that has found itself in the presence of God, at "the backside of the desert," has right thoughts about everything. It is raised far above the exciting influence of this world's schemes. The din and noise! the bustle and confusion of Egypt do not fall upon the ear in that distant place. The crash in the monetary and commercial world is not heard there. The sigh of ambition is not heaved there. This world's fading laurels do not tempt there. The thirst for gold is not felt there. The eye is never dimmed with lust, nor the heart swollen with pride there. Human applause does not elate, nor human censure depress there. In a word, everything is set aside save the stillness and light of the divine presence. God's voice alone is heard — His light enjoyed — His thoughts received. This is the place to which all must go to be educated for the ministry; and there all must remain, if they would succeed in the ministry.

Would that all who come forward to serve in public knew more of what it is to breathe the atmosphere of this place. We should, then, have far less vapid attempts at ministry, but far more effective Christ-honouring service.

Let us now enquire what Moses saw and what he heard at "the backside of the desert." We shall find him learning lessons which lay far beyond the reach of Egypt's most gifted masters. It might appear, in the eyes of human reason, a strange loss of time for a man like Moses to spend forty years doing nothing save to keep a few sheep in the wilderness. But he was there with God, and the time that is thus spent is never lost. It is salutary for us to remember that there is something more than mere *doing* necessary on the part of the true servant. A man who is always doing will be apt to do too much. Such an one would need to ponder over the deeply-practical words of the perfect Servant, "He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to *hear* as the learned." (Isa. 1: 4) This is an indispensable part of the servant's business. The servant must frequently stand in his master's presence, in order that he may know what he has to do. The "ear" and the "tongue" are intimately connected, in more ways than one; but, in a spiritual or moral point of view, if my ear be closed and my tongue loose, I shall be sure to talk a great deal of folly. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to *hear*, slow to *speak*." (James 1: 19) This seasonable admonition is based upon two facts, namely, that everything good comes from above, and that the heart is brim full of naughtiness, ready to flow over. Hence, the need of keeping the ear open and the tongue quiet rare and admirable attainments! -attainments in which Moses made great proficiency at "the backside of the desert," and which all can acquire, if only they are disposed to learn in that school.

"And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, And behold the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." (Ex. 3: 2, 3) This was, truly, "a great sight" — a bush burning, yet not burnt. The palace of Pharaoh could never have afforded such a sight. But it was a gracious sight as well as a great sight, for therein was strikingly exhibited the condition of God's elect. They were in the furnace of Egypt; and Jehovah reveals Himself in a burning bush. But as the bush was not consumed, so neither were they, for God was there. "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." (Ps. 46) Here is strength and security — victory and peace. God *with* us, God *in* us, and God *for* us. This is ample provision for every exigence.

Nothing can be more interesting or instructive than the mode in which Jehovah was pleased to reveal Himself to Moses, as presented in the above quotation. He was about to furnish him with his commission to lead forth His people out of Egypt, that they might be His assembly — His dwelling-place, in the wilderness, and in the land of Canaan; and the place from which He speaks is a burning bush. Apt, solemn, and beautiful symbol of Jehovah dwelling in the midst of His elect and redeemed congregation! "Our God is a consuming fire," not to consume *us*, but to consume all in us and about us which is contrary to His holiness, and, as such, subversive of our true and permanent happiness. "Thy

testimonies are very sure; holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, for ever."

There are various instances, both in the Old and New Testaments, in which we find God displaying Himself as "a consuming fire." Look, for example, at the case of Nadab and Abihu, in Leviticus 10. This was a deeply solemn occasion. God was dwelling in the midst of His people, and He would keep them in a condition worthy of Himself. He could not do otherwise. It would neither be for His glory nor for their profit, were He to tolerate ought in them inconsistent with the purity of His presence. God's dwelling-place must be holy.

So, also, in Joshua 7 we have another striking proof, in the case of Achan, that Jehovah could not possibly sanction, by His presence, evil, in any shape or form, how covert soever that evil might be. He was "a Consuming fire," and, as such, He should act, in reference to any attempt to defile that assembly in the midst of which He dwelt. To seek to connect God's presence with evil unjudged, is the very highest character of wickedness.

Again, in Acts 5 Ananias and Sapphira teach us the same solemn lesson. God the Holy Ghost was dwelling in the midst of the Church, not merely as an influence, but as a divine Person, in such a way as that one could lie to Him. The Church was, and is still, His dwelling place; and He must rule and judge in the midst thereof. Men may walk in company with deceit, covetousness, and hypocrisy; but God cannot. If God is going to walk with us, we must judge our ways, or we will judge them for us. (See also 1 Cor. 11: 29-32)

In all these cases, and many more which might be adduced, we see the force of that solemn word, "holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, for ever." The moral effect of this will ever be similar to that produced in the case of Moses, as recorded in our chapter. "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for *the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.*" (Verse 5) The place of God's presence is holy, and can only be trodden with unshod feet. God, dwelling in the midst of His people, imparts a character of holiness to their assembly, which is the basis of every holy affection and every holy activity. The character of the dwelling place takes its stamp from the character of the Occupant.

The application of this to the Church, which is now the habitation of God, through the Spirit, is of the very utmost practical importance. While it is blessedly true that God, by His Spirit, inhabits each individual member of the Church, thereby imparting a character of holiness to the individual; it is equally true that He dwells in the assembly; and, hence the assembly must be holy. The centre round which the members are gathered is nothing less than the Person of a living, victorious, and glorified Christ. The energy by which they are gathered is nothing less than God the Holy Ghost; and the Lord God Almighty dwells in them and walks in them. (See Matt. 18: 20; 1 Cor. 6: 19; 1 Cor. 3: 16, 17; Eph. 2: 21, 22) Such being the holy elevation belonging to God's dwelling-place, it is evident that nothing which is unholy, either in principle or practice, must be tolerated. Each one connected therewith should feel the weight and solemnity of that word, "the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." "If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy." (1 Cor. 3: 17) Most weighty words these, for every member of God's assembly — for every stone in His holy temple! May we all learn to tread Jehovah's courts, with unshod feet!

However, the visions of Horeb bear witness to the grace of the God of Israel as well as to His holiness. If God's holiness is infinite, His grace is infinite also; and, while the manner in which He revealed Himself to Moses, declared the former, the very fact of His revealing Himself at all evidenced the latter. He came down, because He was gracious; but when come down, He should reveal Himself as holy. "Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." (Verse 6) The effect of the



divine presence must ever be to make nature hide itself; and, when we stand before God, with unshod feet and covered head, i.e. in the attitude of soul which those acts so aptly and beautifully express, we are prepared to hearken to the sweet accents of grace. When man takes his suited place, God can speak, in the language of unmingled mercy.

"And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows. And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey. . . . Now, therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come up unto me; and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them." (Ver. 7-9) Here the absolute, free, unconditional grace of the God of Abraham, and the God of Abraham's seed, shines forth in all its native brightness, unhindered by the "ifs" and "buts," the vows, resolutions, and conditions of man's legal spirit. God had come down to display Himself, in sovereign grace, to do the whole work of salvation, to accomplish His promise made to Abraham, and repeated to Isaac and Jacob. He had not come down to see if, indeed, the subjects of His promise were in such a condition as to *merit* His salvation. It was sufficient for Him that they *needed it*. Their oppressed state, their sorrows, their tears, their sighs, their heavy bondage, had all come in review before Him; for, blessed be His name, He counts His people's sighs and puts their tears into His bottle. He was not attracted by their excellencies or their virtues. It was not on the ground of aught that was good in them, either seen or foreseen, that he was about to visit them, for He knew what was in them. In one word, we have the true ground of His gracious acting set before us in the words, "I am the God of Abraham," and "I have seen the affliction of my people."

These words reveal a great fundamental principle in the ways of God. It is on the ground of what He is, that He ever acts. "I AM," secures all for "MY PEOPLE." Assuredly He was not going to leave *His* people amid the brick-kilns of Egypt, and under the lash of Pharaoh's taskmasters. They were His people, and He mould act toward them in a manner worthy of Himself. To be His people — to be the favoured objects of Jehovah's electing love — the subjects of His unconditional promise, settled everything. Nothing should hinder the public display of His relationship with those for whom His eternal purpose had secured the land of Canaan. He had come down to deliver them; and the combined power of earth and hell could not hold them in captivity one hour beyond His appointed time. He might and did use Egypt as a school, and Pharaoh as a schoolmaster; but when the needed work was accomplished, both the school and the schoolmaster were set aside, and His people were brought forth with a high hand and an outstretched arm.

Such, then, was the double character of the revelation made to Moses at Mount Horeb. What he saw and what he heard combined the two elements of holiness and grace — elements which, as we know, enter into, and distinctly characterise, all the ways and all the relationships of the blessed God, and which should also mark the ways of all those who, in any wise, act for, or have fellowship with, Him. Every true servant is sent forth from the immediate presence of God, with all its holiness and all its grace; and he is called to be holy and gracious — he is called to be the reflection of the grace and holiness of the divine character; and, in order that he may be so, he should not only start from the immediate presence of God, at the first, but abide there, in spirit, habitually. This is the true secret of effectual service.

"Childlike, attend what thou wilt say  
Go forth and do it, while 'tis day,  
Yet never leave my sweet retreat."

The spiritual man alone can understand the meaning of the two things, "go forth and do," and, "yet never leave." In order to act *for* God outside, I should be *with* Him inside. I must be in the secret sanctuary of His presence, else I shall utterly fail.

Very many break down on this point. There is the greatest possible danger of getting out of the solemnity and calmness of the divine presence, amid the bustle of intercourse with men, and the excitement of active service. This is to be carefully guarded against. If we lose that hallowed tone of spirit which is expressed in "the unshod foot," our service will, very speedily, become vapid and unprofitable. If I allow my work to get between my heart and the Master, it will be little worth. We can only effectually serve Christ as we are enjoying Him. It is while the heart dwells upon His powerful attractions that the hands perform the most acceptable service to His name; nor is there any one who can minister Christ with unction, freshness, and power to others, if he be not feeding upon Christ, in the secret of his own soul. True, he may preach a sermon, deliver a lecture, utter prayers, write a book, and go through the entire routine of outward service, and yet not minister Christ. The man who will present Christ to others must be occupied with Christ for himself.

Happy is the man who ministers thus, whatever be the success or reception of his ministry. For should his ministry fail to attract attention, to command influence, or to produce apparent results, he has his sweet retreat and his unfailing portion in Christ, of which nothing can deprive him. Whereas, the man who is merely feeding upon the fruits of his ministry, who delights in the gratification which it affords, or the attention and interest which it commands, is like a mere pipe, conveying water to others, and retaining only rust itself. This is a most deplorable condition to be in; and yet is it the actual condition of every servant who is more occupied with his work and its results, than with the Master and His glory.

This is a matter which calls for the most rigid self-judgement. The heart is deceitful, and the enemy is crafty; and, hence there is great need to hearken to the word of exhortation, "be sober, be vigilant." It is when the soul is awakened to a sense of the varied and manifold dangers which beset the servant's path, that it is, in any measure, able to understand the need there is for being much alone with God: it is there one is secure and happy. It is when we begin, continue, and end our work at the Master's feet, that our service will be of the right kind.

From all that has been said, it must be evident to any reader that every servant of Christ will find the air of "the backside of the desert" most salutary. Horeb is really the starting post for all whom God sends forth to act for Him. It was at Horeb that Moses learnt to put off his shoes and hide his face. Forty years before he had gone to work; but his movement was premature. It was amid the flesh-subduing solitudes of the mount of God, and forth from the burning bush, that the divine commission fell on the servant's ear, "Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." (Ver. 10) Here was real authority. There is a vast difference between God sending a man, and a man running unsent. But it is very manifest that Moses was not ripe for service when first he set about acting. If forty years of secret training were needful for him, how could he have got on without it? Impossible! He had to be divinely educated, and divinely commissioned; and so must all who go forth upon a path of service and testimony for Christ. Oh! that these holy lessons may be deeply graven on all our hearts, that so our every work may wear upon it the stamp of the Master's authority, and the Masters approval.

However, we have something further to learn at the foot of Mount Horeb. The soul finds it seasonable to linger in this place. "It is good to be here." The presence of God is ever a deeply practical place; the heart is sure to be laid open there. The light that shines in that holy place makes everything

manifest; and this is what is so much needed in the midst of the hollow pretension around us, and the pride and self complacency within.

We might be disposed to think that, the very moment the divine commission was given to Moses, his reply would be, "Here am I," or "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" But no; he had yet to be brought to this. Doubtless, he was affected by the remembrance of his former failure. If a man acts in anything without God, he is sure to be discouraged, even when God is sending him. "And Moses said unto God, Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Ver. 11) This is very unlike the man who, forty years before, "supposed that his brethren would have understood how that God, by his hand, would deliver them." Such is man! — at one time too hasty; at another time too slow. Moses had learnt a great deal since the day in which he smote the Egyptian. He had grown in the knowledge of himself, and this produced diffidence and timidity. But, then, he manifestly lacked confidence in God. If I am merely looking at myself, I shall do "nothing;" but if I am looking at Christ, "I can do all things." Thus, when diffidence and timidity led Moses to say, "Who am I" God's answer was, "Certainly *I* will be with thee." (Ver. 12.) This ought to have been sufficient. If God be with me, it makes very little matter who I am, or what I am. When God says, "I will send thee," and "I will be with thee," the servant is amply furnished with divine authority and divine power; and he ought, therefore, to be perfectly satisfied to go forth.

But Moses puts another question; for the human heart is full of questions. "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?" It is marvellous to see how the human heart reasons and questions, when unhesitating obedience is that which is due to God; and still more marvellous is the grace that bears with all the reasonings and answers all the questions. Each question seems but to elicit some new feature of divine grace.

"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." (Ver. 14) The title which God here gives Himself is one of wondrous significancy. In tracing through Scripture the various names which God takes, we find them intimately connected with the varied need of those with whom He was in relation. "Jehovah-jireh," (the Lord will provide.) "Jehovah-nissi," (the Lord my banner.) "Jehovah-shalom," (the Lord send peace.) "Jehovah-tsidkenu," (the Lord our righteousness.) All these His gracious titles are unfolded to meet the necessities of His people; and when He calls Himself "I AM," it comprehends them all. Jehovah, in taking this title, was furnishing His people with a blank cheque, to be filled up to any amount. He calls Himself "I AM," and faith has but to write over against that ineffably precious name whatever we want. God is the only significant figure, and human need may add the ciphers. If we want life, Christ says, "I AM the life." If we want righteousness, He is "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." If we want peace, "He is our peace" If we want wisdom, sanctification, and redemption," He "is made" all these "unto us." In a word, we may travel through the wide range of human necessity, in order to have a just conception of the amazing depth and fullness of this profound and adorable name, "I AM."

What a mercy to be called to walk in companionship with One who bears such a name as this! We are in the wilderness, and there we have to meet with trial, sorrow, and difficulty; but, so long as we have the happy privilege of betaking ourselves, at all times, and under all circumstances, to One who reveals Himself in His manifold grace, in connection with our every necessity and weakness, we need not fear the wilderness: God was about to bring His people across the sandy desert, when He disclosed this precious and comprehensive name; and, although the believer now, as being endowed with the Spirit of adoption, can cry, "Abba Father," yet is he not deprived of the privilege of enjoying communion with God in each and every one of those manifestations which He has been pleased to

make of Himself. For example, the title "God" reveals Him as acting in the solitariness of His own being, displaying His eternal power and Godhead in the works of creation. "The Lord God" is the title which He takes in connection with man. Then, as "the Almighty God," He rises before the view of His servant Abraham, in order to assure his heart in reference to the accomplishment of His promise touching the seed. As Jehovah, He made Himself known to Israel, in delivering them out of the land of Egypt, and bringing them into the land of Canaan.

Such were the various measures and various modes in which "God spake in times past unto the fathers, by the prophets:" (Heb. 1: 1) and the believer, under this dispensation or economy, as possessing the spirit of sonship, can say, "It was my Father who thus revealed himself — thus spoke — thus acted."

Nothing can be more interesting or practically important in its way than to follow out those great dispensational titles of God. These titles are always used in strict moral consistency with the circumstances under which they are disclosed; but there is, in the name "I AM," a height, a depth, a length, a breadth, which truly pass beyond the utmost stretch of human conception.

"When God would teach mankind His name,  
He calls Himself the great "I AM,"  
And leaves a blank — believers may  
Supply those things for which they pray."

And, be it observed, it is only in connection with His own people that He takes this name. He did not address Pharaoh in this name. When speaking to him, He calls Himself by that commanding and majestic title, "The Lord God of the Hebrews;" i.e., God, in connection with the very people whom he was seeking to crush. This ought to have been sufficient to show Pharaoh his awful position with respect to God. "I AM" would have conveyed no intelligible sound to an uncircumcised ear — no divine reality to an unbelieving heart. When God manifest in the flesh declared to the unbelieving Jews of His day those words, "before Abraham was, *I am*," they took up stones to cast at Him. It is only the true believer who can feel, in any measure, the power, or enjoy the sweetness of that ineffable name, "I AM." Such an one can rejoice to hear from the lips of the blessed Lord Jesus such declarations as these: — "*I am* that bread of life," "*I am* the light of the world," "*I am* the good shepherd," "*I am* the resurrection and the life," "*I am* the way, the truth, and the life," "*I am* the true vine," "*I am* alpha and Omega," "*I am* the bright and morning star." In a word, he can take every name of divine excellence and beauty, and, having placed it after "I AM," find JESUS therein, and admire, adore, and worship.

Thus, there is a sweetness, as well as a comprehensiveness, in the name "I AM," which is beyond all power of expression. Each believer can find therein that which exactly suits his own spiritual need, whatever it be. There is not a single winding in all the Christian's wilderness journey, not a single phase of his soul's experience, not a single point in his condition which is not divinely met by this title, for the simplest of all reasons, that whatever he wants, he has but to place it, by faith, over against "I AM" and find it all in Jesus. To the believer, therefore, however feeble and faltering, there is unmingled blessedness in this name.

But, although it was to the elect of God that Moses was commanded to say, "I AM hath sent me unto you," yet is there deep solemnity and reality in that name, when looked at with reference to the unbeliever. If one who is yet in his sins contemplates, for a moment, this amazing title, he cannot, surely, avoid asking himself the question, "How do I stand as to this Being who calls Himself, "I AM THAT I AM.' If, indeed, it be true that HE Is, then what *is* He *to me*? What am *I* to write over against

this solemn name, "I AM" I shall not rob this question of its characteristic weight and power by any words of my own; but I pray that God the Holy Ghost may make it searching to the conscience of any reader who really needs to be searched thereby.

I cannot close this section without calling the attention of the Christian reader to the deeply-interesting declaration contained in the 15th verse: "And God said, moreover, unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: *this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial to all generations.*" This statement contains a very important truth — a truth which many professing Christians seem to forget, namely, that God's relationship with Israel is an eternal one. He is just as much Israel's God now, as when He visited them in the land of Egypt. Moreover, He is just as Positively dealing with them now as then, only in a different way. His word is clear and emphatic: "This is my name for ever." He does not say, "This is my name for a time, so long as they continue what they ought to be." No; "this is my name *for ever*, and this is my memorial unto *all generations.*" Let my reader ponder this. "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew." (Rom. 11: 2) They are His people still, whether obedient or disobedient, united together, or scattered abroad; manifested to the nations, or hidden from their view. They are His people, and He is their God. Exodus 3: 15 is unanswerable. The professing church has no warrant whatever, for ignoring a relationship which God says is to endure "for ever." Let us beware how we tamper with this weighty word, "for ever." If we say it does not mean for ever, when applied to Israel, what proof have we that it means for ever when applied to us? God means what He says; and He will, ere long, make manifest to all the nations of the earth, that His connection with Israel is one which shall outlive all the revolutions of time. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." When He said, "this is my name for ever," He spoke absolutely. "I AM" declared Himself to be Israel's God for ever; and all the Gentiles shall be made to understand and bow to this; and to know, moreover, that all God's providential dealings with them, and all their destinies, are connected, in some way or other, with that favoured and honoured, though now judged and scattered, people. "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people, according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is his people. Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." (Deut. 32: 8, 9)

Has this ceased to be true? Has Jehovah given up His "portion," and surrendered "the lot of His inheritance?" Does His eye of tender love no longer rest on Israel's scattered tribes, long lost to man's vision are the walls of Jerusalem no longer before Him! or has her dust ceased to be precious in His sight? To reply to these inquiries would be to quote a large portion of the Old Testament, and not a little of the New but this would not be the place to enter elaborately upon such a subject. I would only say, in closing this section, let not Christendom "be ignorant of this mystery, that blindness *in part* is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so *all Israel shall be saved.*" (Rom. 11: 25, 26)

#### **Exodus 4**

We are still called to linger at the foot of Mount Horeb, at "the backside of the desert;" and, truly, the air of this place is most healthful for the spiritual constitution. Man's unbelief and God's boundless grace are here made manifest in a striking way.

"And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." How hard it is to overcome the unbelief of the human heart! How difficult man ever finds it to trust God! How slow he is to venture forth upon the naked promise of Jehovah. Anything, for nature, but that. The most slender reed that the human eye

can *see* is counted more substantial, by far, as a basis for nature's confidence, than the unseen "Rock of ages." Nature will rush, with avidity, to any creature stream or broken cistern, rather than abide by the unseen "Fountain of living waters.

"We might suppose that Moses had seen and heard enough to set his fears entirely aside. The consuming fire in the unconsumed bush, the condescending grace, the precious, endearing, and comprehensive titles, the divine commission, the assurance of the divine presence, — all these things might have quelled every anxious thought, and imparted a settled assurance to the heart. Still, however, Moses raises questions, and still God answers them; and, as we have remarked, each successive question brings out fresh grace. "And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod." The Lord would just take him as he was, and use what he had in his hand. The rod with which he had tended Jethro's sheep was about to be used to deliver the Israel of God, to chastise the land of Egypt, to make a way through the deep, for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over, and to bring forth water from the flinty rock to refresh Israel's thirsty hosts in the desert. God takes up the weakest instruments to accomplish His mightiest ends. "A rod," "a ram's horn," "a cake of barley meal," "an earthen pitcher," "a shepherds sling," anything, in short, when used of God, will do the appointed work. Men imagine that splendid ends can only be reached by splendid means; but such is not God's way. He can use a crawling worm as well as a scorching sun, a gourd as well as a vehement east wind. (See Jonah.)

But Moses had to learn a deep lesson, both as to the rod and the hand that was to use it. and the people had to be convinced. Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee." This is a deeply significant sign. The rod became a serpent, so that Moses fled from it; but, being commissioned by Jehovah, he took the serpent by the tail, and it became a rod. Nothing could more aptly express the idea of Satan's power being turned against himself. This is largely exemplified in the ways of God. Moses himself was a striking example. The serpent is entirely under the hand of Christ; and when he has reached the highest point in his mad career, he shall be hurled into the lake of fire, there to reap the fruits of his work throughout eternity's countless ages. "That old serpent, the accuser, and the adversary," shall be eternally crushed beneath the rod of God's Anointed.

"Then the end — beneath His rod,  
Man's last enemy shall fall;  
Hallelujah! Christ in God,  
God in Christ, is all in all."

"And the Lord said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom; and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow. And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again, and plucked it out of his bosom; and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh." The leprous hand and the cleansing thereof present to us the moral effect of sin, as also the way in which sin has been met in the perfect work of Christ. The clean hand, placed in the bosom, becomes leprous; and the leprous hand placed there becomes clean. Leprosy is the well-known type of sin; and sin came in by the first man and was put sway by the second. "By man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." (1 Cor. 15: 21) Man brought in ruin, man brought in redemption; man brought in guilt, man brought in pardon;

man brought in sin, man brought in righteousness; man filled the scene with death, man abolished death and filled the scene with life, righteousness, and glory. Thus, not only shall the serpent himself be eternally defeated and confounded, but every trace of his abominable work shall be eradicated and wiped away by the atoning sacrifice of Him who "was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil."

"And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land; and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land." This was a solemn and most expressive figure of the consequence of refusing to bow to the divine testimony. This sign was only to be wrought in the event of their refusing the other two. It was, first, to be a sign to Israel, and afterwards a plague upon Egypt. (Comp. Ex. 7: 17)

All this, however, fails to satisfy the heart of Moses. "And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue." Terrible backwardness! Nought save Jehovah's infinite patience could have endured it. Surely when God Himself had said, "I will be with thee," it was an infallible security in reference to everything which could possibly be needed. If an eloquent tongue were necessary, what had Moses to do but to set it over against "I AM?" Eloquence, wisdom, might, energy, everything was contained in that exhaustless treasury. "And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not *I the Lord*? Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." Profound, adorable, matchless grace! worthy of God! There is none like unto the Lord our God, whose patient grace surmounts all our difficulties, and proves itself amply sufficient for our manifold need and weakness. "I THE LORD" Ought to silence for ever the reasonings of our carnal hearts. But, alas! these reasonings are hard to be put down. Again and again they rise to the surface, to the disturbance of our peace, and the dishonour of that blessed One, who sets Himself before our souls, in all His own essential fullness, to be used according to our need.

It is well to bear in mind that when we have the Lord with us, our very deficiencies and infirmities become an occasion for the display of His all-sufficient grace and perfect patience. Had Moses remembered this, his want of eloquence need not have troubled him. The Apostle Paul learnt to say, "most gladly, therefore, *will I rather glory* in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore *I take pleasure* in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak then am I strong." (2 Cor. 12: 9, 10) This is, assuredly, the utterance of one who had reached an advanced form in the school of Christ. It is the experience of one who would not have been much troubled because of not possessing an eloquent tongue, inasmuch as he had found an answer to every description of need in the precious grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The knowledge of this truth ought to have delivered Moses from his diffidence and inordinate timidity. When the Lord had so graciously assured him that He would be with his mouth, it should have set his mind at rest as to the question of eloquence. The Maker of man's mouth could fill that mouth with the most commanding eloquence, if such were needed. This, in the judgement of faith, is most simple; but, alas! the poor doubting heart would place far more confidence in an eloquent tongue than in the One who created it. This would seem most unaccountable, did we not know the materials of which the natural heart is composed. That heart cannot trust God; and hence it is that even the people of God, when they suffer themselves to be, in any measure, governed by nature; exhibit such a humiliating lack of confidence in the living God. Thus, in the scene before us, we find Moses still demurring. "And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send." This

was, in reality, casting from him the high honour of being Jehovah's sole messenger to Egypt and to Israel.

It were needless to say that divinely-wrought humility is an inestimable grace. To "be clothed with humility" is a divine precept; and humility is, unquestionably, the most becoming dress in which a worthless sinner can appear. But, it cannot be called humility to refuse to take the place which God assigns, or to tread the path which His hand marks out for us. That it was not true humility in Moses is obvious from the fact that "the anger of the Lord was kindled against him." So far from its being humility, it had actually passed the limit of mere weakness. So long as it wore the aspect of an excessive timidity, however reprehensible, God's boundless grace bore with it, and met it with renewed assurances; but when it assumed the character of unbelief and slowness of heart, it drew down Jehovah's just displeasure; and Moses, instead of being the sole, is made a joint, instrument in the work of testimony and deliverance.

Nothing is more dishonouring to God or more dangerous for us than a mock humility. When we refuse to occupy a position which the grace of God assigns us, because of our not possessing certain virtues and qualifications, this is not humility, inasmuch as if we could but satisfy our own consciences in reference to such virtues and qualifications, We should then deem ourselves entitled to assume the position. If, for instance, Moses had possessed such a measure of eloquence as he deemed needful, we may suppose he would have been ready to go. Now the question is, how much eloquence would he have needed, to furnish him for his mission? The answer is, without God no amount of human eloquence would have availed; but, with God, the merest stammerer would have proved an efficient minister.

This is a real practical truth. Unbelief is not humility, but thorough pride. It refuses to believe God because it does not find, in *self*, a reason for believing. This is the very height of presumption. If, when God speaks, I refuse to believe, on the ground of something in myself, I make Him a liar. (1 John 5: 10) When God declares His love, and I refuse to believe because I do not deem myself a sufficiently worthy object, I make Him a liar and exhibit the inherent pride of my heart. The bare supposition that I could ever be worthy of ought save the lowest pit of hell, can only be regarded as the most profound ignorance of my own condition and of God's requirements. And the refusal to take the place which the redeeming love of God assigns me, on the ground of the finished atonement of Christ, is to make God a liar, and cast gross dishonour upon the sacrifice of the cross. God's love flows forth spontaneously. It is not drawn forth by my deserts, but by my misery. Nor is it a question as to the place which I deserve, but which Christ deserves. Christ took the sinner's place, on the cross, that the sinner might take His place in the glory. Christ got what the sinner deserved, that the sinner might get what Christ deserves. Thus, *self* is totally set aside, and this is true humility. No one can be truly humble until he has reached heaven's side of the cross; but there he finds divine life, divine righteousness, and divine favour. He is done with himself for ever, as regards any expectation of goodness or righteousness, and he feeds upon the princely wealth of another. He is morally prepared to join in that cry which shall echo through the spacious vault of heaven, throughout the everlasting ages, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory." (Ps. 115: 1)

It would ill become us to dwell upon the mistakes or infirmities of so honoured a Servant as Moses, of whom we read that he "was verily faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after." (Heb. 3: 5) But, though we should not dwell upon them, in a spirit of self-complacency, as if we would have acted differently, in his circumstances, we should, nevertheless, learn from such things those holy and seasonable lessons which they are manifestly designed to teach. We should learn to judge ourselves and to place more implicit confidence in God —



to set self aside, that He might act in us, through us, and for us. This is the true secret of power.

We have remarked that Moses forfeited the dignity of being Jehovah's sole instrument in that glorious work which He was about to accomplish. But this was not all. "The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses; and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well: and, also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee; and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. *And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth:* and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God. And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs." (Ex. 4: 14-17) This passage contains a mine of most precious practical instruction. We have noted the timidity and hesitation of Moses, notwithstanding the varied promises and assurances with which divine grace had furnished him. And, nom, although there was nothing gained in the way of real power, although there was no more virtue or efficacy in one mouth than in another, although it was Moses after all who was to speak unto Aaron; yet was Moses quite ready to go when assured of the presence and co-operation of a poor feeble mortal like himself; whereas he could not go when assured, again and again, that Jehovah would be with him.

Oh! my reader, does not all this hold up before us a faithful mirror in which you and I can see our hearts reflected? Truly it does. We are more ready to trust anything than the living God. We move along, with bold decision, when we possess the countenance and support of a poor frail mortal like ourselves; but we falter, hesitate, and demur, when we have the light of the Master's countenance to cheer us, and the strength of His omnipotent arm to support us. This should humble us deeply before the Lord, and lead us to seek a fuller acquaintance with Him, so that we might trust Him with a more unmixed confidence, and walk on with a firmer step, as having Him *alone* for our resource and portion.

No doubt, the fellowship of a brother is most valuable — "Two are better than one" — whether in labour, rest, or conflict. The Lord Jesus, in sending forth His disciples, "sent them two by two," — for unity is ever better than isolation — still, if our personal acquaintance with God, and our experience of His presence, be not such as to enable us, if needful, to walk alone, we shall find the presence of a brother of very little use. It is not a little remarkable, that Aaron, whose companionship seemed to satisfy Moses, was the man who afterwards made the golden calf. (Ex. 32: 21) Thus it frequently happens, that the very person whose presence we deem essential to our progress and success, afterwards proves a source of deepest sorrow to our hearts. May we ever remember this!

However, Moses, at length, consents to go; but ere he is fully equipped for his work, he must pass through another deep exercise; yea, he must have the sentence of death inscribed by the hand of God upon his very nature. He had learnt deep lessons at "the backside of the desert;" he is called to learn something deeper still, "by the way in the inn." It is no light matter to be the Lord's servant. No ordinary education will qualify a man for such a position. Nature must be put in the place of death and kept there. "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead. (2 Cor. 1: 9) Every successful servant will need to know something of this. Moses was called to enter into it, in his own experience, ere he was morally qualified. He was about to sound in the ears of Pharaoh the following deeply-solemn message, "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born: and I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn." Such was to be his message to Pharaoh; a message of death, a message of judgement; and, at the same time, his message to Israel was a message of life and salvation. But, be it remembered, that the man who will speak, on God's behalf, of death and judgement, life and salvation, must, ere he does so, enter into the practical power of these things in his own soul. Thus it was with Moses. We have seen him, at the very outset, in the place of death,

typically; but this was a different thing from entering into the experience of death in his own person. Hence we read, "And it came to pass, by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me. So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision." This passage lets us into a deep secret, in the personal and domestic history of Moses. It is very evident that Zipporah's heart had, up to this point, shrunk from the application of *the knife* to that around which the affections of nature were entwined. She had avoided that mark which had to be set in the flesh of every member of the Israel of God. She was not aware that her relationship with Moses was one involving death to nature. She recoiled from the cross. This was natural. But Moses had yielded to her in the matter; and this explains to us the mysterious scene "in the inn." If Zipporah refuses to circumcise her *son*, Jehovah will lay His hand upon her *husband*; and if Moses spares the feelings of his wife, Jehovah will "seek to kill him." The sentence of death must be written on nature; and if we seek to avoid it in one way, we shall have to encounter it in another.

It has been already remarked, that Zipporah furnishes an instructive and interesting type of the Church. She was united to Moses, during the period of his rejection; and from the passage just quoted, we learn that the Church is called to know Christ, as the One related to her "by blood." It is her privilege to drink of his cup, and be baptised with His baptism. Being crucified with Him, she is to be conformed to His death; to mortify her members which are on the earth; to take up the cross daily, and follow Him. Her relationship with Christ is founded upon blood, and the manifestation of the power of that relationship will, necessarily, involve death to nature. "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power; in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." (Col. 2: 10-12)

Such is the doctrine as to the Church's place with Christ — a doctrine replete with the richest privileges for the Church, and each member thereof. Everything, in short, is involved: the perfect remission of sin, divine righteousness, complete acceptance, everlasting security, full fellowship with Christ in all His glory. "Ye are complete in him." This, surely, comprehends everything. What could be added to one who is "complete" Could "philosophy, "the tradition of men," "the rudiments of the world," "meats, drinks, holy days, new moons," "Sabbaths" "Touch not" this, "taste not that, "handle not" the other, "the commandments and doctrines of men," "days and months, and times, and years," could any of these things, or all of them put together, add a single jot or tittle to one whom God has pronounced "complete?" We might just as well enquire, if man could have gone forth upon the fair creation of God, at the close of the six days' work, to give the finishing touch to that which God had pronounced "very good?"

Nor is this completeness to be, by any means, viewed as a matter of attainment, some point which we have not yet reached, but after which we must: diligently strive, and of the possession of which we cannot be sure until we lie upon a bed of death, or stand before a throne of judgement. It is the portion of the feeblest, the most inexperienced, the most unlettered child of God. The very weakest saint is included in the apostolic "ye." All the people of God "are complete in Christ." The apostle does not say, "ye *will* be," "ye *may* be," "*hope* that ye may be," "*pray* that ye may be:" no; he, by the Holy Ghost, states, in the most absolute and unqualified manner, that "ye *are* complete." This is the true Christian starting-post: and for man to make a goal of what God makes a starting-post, is to upset everything.

But, then, some will say, "have we no sin, no failure, no imperfection?" Assuredly we have. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1: 8) We have sin

in us, but no sin on us. Moreover, our standing is not in self, but in Christ. It is "in him" we "are complete." God says the believer in Christ, with Christ, and as Christ. This is his changeless condition, his everlasting standing. "The body of the sins of the flesh" is "put off by the circumcision of Christ." The believer is not in the flesh, though the flesh is in him. He is united to Christ in the power of a new and an endless life, and that life is inseparably connected with divine righteousness in which the believer stands before God. The Lord Jesus has put away everything that was against the believer, and He has brought him nigh to God, in the self-same favour as that which He Himself enjoys. In a word, Christ is his righteousness. This settles every question, answers every objection, silences every doubt. "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified, are all of one." (Heb. 2: 11)

The foregoing line of truth has flowed out of the deeply-interesting type presented to us in the relationship between Moses and Zipporah. We must, now, hasten to close this section, and take our leave, for the present, of "the backside of the desert," though not of its deep lessons and holy impressions, so essential to every servant of Christ, and every messenger of the living God. All who would serve effectually, either in the important work of evangelization, or in the varied ministries of the house of God — which is the Church — will need to imbibe the precious instructions which Moses received at the foot of Mount Horeb, and "by the way in the inn."

Were these things properly attended to, we should not have so many running un-sent — so many rushing into spheres of ministry for which they were never designed. Let each one who stands up to preach, or teach, or exhort, or serve in any way, seriously enquire if, indeed, he be fitted, and taught, and sent of God. If not, his work will neither be owned of God nor blessed to men, and the sooner he ceases, the better for himself and for those upon whom he has been imposing the heavy burden of hearkening to him. Neither a humanly-appointed, nor a self-appointed ministry, will ever suit within the hallowed precincts of the Church of God. All must be divinely gifted, divinely taught, and divinely sent.

"And the Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him." This was a fair and beautiful scene — a scene of sweet brotherly love and union — a scene which stands in marked contrast with many of those scenes which were afterwards enacted in the wilderness-career of these two men. Forty years of wilderness life are sure to make great changes in men and things. Yet it is sweet to dwell upon those early days of one's Christian course, before the stern realities of desert life had, in any measure, checked the gush of warm and generous affections — before deceit, and corruption, and hypocrisy had well-nigh dried up the springs of the heart's confidence, and placed the whole moral being beneath the chilling influences of a suspicious disposition.

That such results have been produced, in many cases, by years of experience, is, alas! too true. Happy is he who, though his eyes have been opened to see nature in a clearer light than that which this world supplies, can, nevertheless, serve his generation by the energy of that grace which flows forth from the bosom of God. Who ever knew the depths and windings of the human heart as Jesus knew them? "He knew *all*, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." (John 2: 24, 25) So well did He know man that He could not commit Himself unto him. He could not accredit man's professions, or endorse his pretensions. And yet, who so gracious as He? Who so loving, so tender, so compassionate, so sympathising? With a heart that understood all, He could feel for all. He did not suffer His perfect knowledge of human worthlessness to keep Him aloof from human need. "He went about doing good." Why? Was it because He imagined that all those who flocked around Him were real? No; but because God was with him." (Acts 10: 38) This is our example. Let us follow it,

though, in doing so, we shall have to trample on *self* and all its interests, at every step of the way.

Who would desire that wisdom, that knowledge of nature, that experience, which only lead men to ensconce themselves within the enclosures of a hard-hearted selfishness, from which they look forth with an eye of dark suspicion upon everybody? Surely such a result could never follow from ought of a heavenly or excellent nature. God gives wisdom; but it is not a wisdom which locks the heart against all the appeals of human need and misery. He gives a knowledge of nature; but it is not a knowledge which causes us to grasp with a selfish eagerness that which we, falsely, call "our own." He gives experience; but it is not an experience which results in suspecting everybody except myself. If I am walking in the footprints of Jesus, if I am imbibing, and therefore manifesting, His excellent spirit, if, in short, I can say, "to me to live is Christ;" then, would I walk through the world, with a knowledge of what the world is; while I come in contact with man, with a knowledge of what I am to expect from him; I am able, through grace, to manifest Christ in the midst of it all. The springs which move me, and the objects which animate me, are all above, where He is, who is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." (Heb. 13: 8) It was this which sustained the heart of that beloved and honoured servant, whose history, even so far, has furnished us with such deep and solid instruction. It was this which carried him through the trying and varied scenes of his wilderness course. And we may safely assert that, at the close of all, notwithstanding the trial and exercise of forty years, Moses could embrace his brother, when he stood on Mount Hor, with the same warmth as he had when first he met him, "in the mount of God." True, the two occasions were very different. At "the mount of God" they met, and embraced, and started together on their divinely-appointed mission. Upon "Mount Hor" they met by the commandment of Jehovah, in order that Moses might strip his brother of his priestly robes, and see him gathered to his fathers, because of an error in which he himself had participated. (How solemn! How touching!) Circumstances vary: men may turn away from one; but with God "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1: 17)

"And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel; and Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped." (Ver. 29-31) When God works, every barrier must give way. Moses had said, "the people will not believe me." But the question was not, as to whether they would believe him, but whether they would believe God. When a man is enabled to view himself simply as the messenger of God, he may feel quite at ease as to the reception of his message. It does not detract, in the smallest degree, from his tender and affectionate solicitude, in reference to those whom he addresses. Quite the contrary; but it preserves him from that inordinate anxiety of spirit which can only tend to unfit him for calm, elevated, steady testimony. The messenger of God should ever remember whose message he bears. When Zacharias said to the angel, "Whereby shall I know this?" was the latter perturbed by the question? Not in the least. His calm, dignified reply was, "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee: these glad tidings." (Luke 1: 18, 19) The angel rises before the doubting mortal, with a keen and exquisite sense of the dignity of his message. It is as if he would say, "How can you doubt, when a messenger has actually been dispatched from the very Presence-chamber of the Majesty of heaven?" Thus should every messenger of God, in his measure, go forth, and, in this spirit, deliver his message.

### **Exodus 5 & 6**

The effect of the first appeal to Pharaoh seemed ought but encouraging. The thought of losing Israel made him clutch them with greater eagerness and watch them with greater vigilance. Whenever

Satan's power becomes narrowed to a point, his rage increases. Thus it is here. The furnace is about to be quenched by the hand of redeeming love; but, ere it is, it blazes forth with greater fierceness and intensity. The devil does not like to let go any one whom he has had in his terrible grasp. He is "a strong man armed," and while he "keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace." But, blessed be God, there is "a stronger than he," who has taken from him "his armour wherein he trusted," and divided the spoils among the favoured objects of His everlasting love.

"And afterward, Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness." (Ex. 5: 3) Such was Jehovah's message to Pharaoh. He claimed full deliverance for the people, on the ground of their being His; and, in order that they might hold a feast to Him in the wilderness. Nothing can ever satisfy God in reference to His elect, but their entire emancipation from the yoke of bondage. "Loose him, and let him go" is, really, the grand motto in God's gracious dealings with those who, though held in bondage by Satan, are, nevertheless, the objects of His eternal love.

When we contemplate Israel amid the brick-kilns of Egypt, we behold a graphic figure of the condition of every child of Adam by nature. There they were, crushed beneath the enemy's galling yoke, and having no power to deliver themselves. The mere mention of the word liberty only caused the oppressor to bind his captives with a stronger fetter, and to lade them with a still more grievous burden. It was absolutely necessary that deliverance should come from without. But from whence has it to come? Where were the resources to pay their ransom? or where was the power to break their chains? And, even were there both the one and the other, where was the *will*? Who would take the trouble of delivering them? Alas! there was no hope, either within or around. They had only to look up, their refuge was in God. He had both the power and the will. He could accomplish a redemption both by price and by power. In Jehovah, and in Him alone, was there salvation for ruined and oppressed Israel.

Thus is it in every case. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4: 12) The sinner is in the hands of one who rules him with despotic power. He is "sold under sin" "led captive by Satan at his will" — fast bound in the fetters of lust, passion, and temper, "without strength" — "without hope" — "without God." Such is the sinner's condition. How, then, can he help himself? What can he do? He is the slave of another, and everything he does is done in the capacity of a slave. His thoughts, his words, his acts, are the thoughts, words, and acts of a slave. Yea, though he should weep and sigh for emancipation, his very tears and sighs are the melancholy proofs of his slavery. He may struggle for freedom; but his very struggle, though it evinces a desire for liberty, is the positive declaration of his bondage.

Nor is it merely a question of the sinner's condition; his very nature is radically corrupt — wholly under the power of Satan. Hence, he not only needs to be introduced into a new condition, but also to be endowed with a new nature. The nature and the condition go together. If it were possible for the sinner to better his condition, what would it avail so long as his nature was irrecoverably bad? A nobleman might take a beggar off the streets and adopt him; he might endow him with a noble's wealth and set him in a noble's position; but he could not impart to him nobility of nature; and thus the nature of a beggarman would never be at home in the condition of a nobleman. There must be a nature to suit the condition; and there must be a condition to suit the capacity, the desires, the affections, and the tendencies of the nature.

Now, in the gospel of the grace of God, we are taught that the believer is introduced into an entirely new condition; that he is no longer viewed as in his former state of guilt and condemnation, but as in a state of perfect and everlasting justification; that the condition in which God now sees him is not

only one of full pardon; but it is such that infinite holiness cannot find so much as a single stain. He has been taken out of his former condition of guilt, and placed absolutely and eternally in a new condition of unspotted righteousness. It is not, by any means, that his old condition is improved. This was utterly impossible. "That which is crooked cannot be made straight." "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" Nothing can be more opposed to the fundamental truth of the gospel than the theory of a gradual improvement in the sinner's condition. He is born in a certain condition, and until he is "born again" he cannot be in any other. We may try to improve. He may resolve to be better for the future turn over a new leaf" — to live a different sort of life; but, all the while, he has not moved a single hair's breadth out of his real condition as a sinner. He may become "religious" as it is called, he may try to pray, he may diligently attend to ordinances, and exhibit an appearance of moral reform; but none of these things can, in the smallest degree, affect his positive condition before God.

The case is precisely similar as to the question of nature. How can a man alter his nature? He may make it undergo a process, he may try to subdue it, to place it under discipline; but it is nature still. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." There must be a new nature as well as a new condition. And how is this to be had? By believing God's testimony concerning His Son. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to *them that believe on his Name*: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1: 12, 13) Here we learn that those who believe on the name of the only-begotten Son of God, have the right or privilege of being sons of God. They are made partakers of a new nature. They have gotten eternal life. "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life." (John 3: 36) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that *heareth* my word, and *believeth* on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (John 5: 24) "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17.3) "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." "He that hath the Son *hath* life." (1 John 5: 11, 12)

Such is the plain doctrine of the Word in reference to the momentous questions of condition and nature. But on what is all this founded How is the believer introduced into a condition of divine righteousness and made partaker of the divine nature? It all rests on the great truth that "JESUS DIED AND ROSE AGAIN." That Blessed One left the bosom of eternal love — the throne of glory — the mansions of unfading light came down into this world of guilt and woe — took upon Him the likeness of sinful flesh; and, having perfectly exhibited and perfectly glorified God, in all the movements of His blessed life here below, He died upon the cross, under the full weight of His people's transgressions. By so doing, He divinely met all that was, or could be, against us. He magnified the law and made it honourable; and, having done so, He became a curse by hanging on the tree. Every claim was met, every enemy silenced, every obstacle removed. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Infinite justice was satisfied, and infinite love can flow, in all its soothing and refreshing virtues, into the broken heart of the sinner; while, at the same time, the cleansing and atoning stream that flowed from the pierced side of a crucified Christ, perfectly meets all the cravings of a guilty and convicted conscience. The Lord Jesus, on the cross, stood in our place. He was our representative. He died, "the just for the unjust." "He was made sin for us." (2 Cor. 5: 21; 2 Peter 3: 18) He died the sinner's death, was buried, and rose again, having accomplished all. Hence, there is absolutely nothing against the believer. He is linked with Christ and stands in the same condition of righteousness. "As he is so are we in this world." (1 John 4: 17)

This gives settled peace to the conscience. If I am no longer in a condition of guilt, but in a condition of justification; if God only sees me in Christ and as Christ, then, clearly, my portion is

perfect peace. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5: 1) The blood of the Lamb has cancelled all the believer's guilt, blotted out his heavy debt, and given him a perfectly blank page, in the presence of that holiness which "cannot look upon sin."

But the believer has not merely found peace with God; he is made a child of God, so that he can taste the sweetness of communion with the Father and the Son, through the power of the Holy Ghost. The cross is to be viewed in two ways: first, as satisfying God's claims; secondly, as expressing God's affections. If I look at my sins in connection with the claims of God as a Judge, I find, in the cross, a perfect settlement of those claims. God, as a Judge, has been divinely satisfied — yea, glorified, in the cross. But there is more than this. God had affections as well as claims; and, in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, all those affections are sweetly and touchingly told out into the sinner's ear; while, at the same time, he is made the partaker of a new nature which is capable of enjoying those affections and of having fellowship with the heart from which they flow. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." (1 Peter 3: 18) Thus we are not only brought into a condition, but unto a *Person*, even God Himself, and we are endowed with a *nature* which can delight in Him. *We also joy in God*, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." (Rom. 5: 11)

What force and beauty, therefore, can we see in those emancipating words, "Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness." "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." (Luke 4: 18) The glad tidings of the gospel announce full deliverance from every yoke of bondage. Peace and liberty are the boons which that gospel bestows on all who believe it, as God has declared it.

And mark, it is "that they may hold a feast to me." If they were to get done with Pharaoh, it was that they might begin with God. This was a great change. Instead of toiling under Pharaoh's taskmasters, they were to feast in company with Jehovah; and, although they were to pass from Egypt into the wilderness, still the divine presence was to accompany them; and if the wilderness was rough and dreary, it was the way to the land of Canaan. The divine purpose was, that they should hold a feast unto the Lord, in the wilderness; and, in order to do this, they should be "*let go*" out of Egypt.

However, Pharaoh was in no wise disposed to yield obedience to the divine mandate. "Who is the Lord," said he, "that I should obey his voice to let Israel go. I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." (Ex. 5: 2) Pharaoh most truly expressed, in these words, his real condition. His condition was one of ignorance and consequent disobedience. Both go together. If God be not known, He cannot be obeyed; for obedience is ever founded upon knowledge. When the soul is blessed with the knowledge of God, it finds this knowledge to be life, (John 17: 3) and life is power; and when I get power I can act, It is obvious that one cannot act without life; and therefore it is most unintelligent to set people upon doing certain things, in order to get that by which alone they can do anything.

But Pharaoh was as ignorant of himself as he was of the Lord. He did not know that he was a poor, vile worm of the earth, and that he had been raised up for the express purpose of making known the glory of the very One whom he said he knew not. (Ex. 9: 16; Rom. 9: 17) "And they said, The God of the Hebrews has met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword, And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their work? Get you unto your burdens . . . . let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and let them not regard vain words." (Ver. 3-9)

What a development of the secret springs of the human heart we have here! What complete incompetency to enter into the things of God! All the divine titles and the divine revelations were, in Pharaoh's estimation, "vain words." What did he know or care about "three days journey into the wilderness," or "a feast to Jehovah?" How could he understand the need of such a journey, or the nature or object of such a feast? Impossible. He could understand burden-bearing and brick-making; these things had an air of reality about them, in his judgement; but as to ought of God, His service, or His worship, he could only regard it in the light of an idle chimera, devised by those who only wanted an excuse to make their escape from the stern realities of actual life.

Thus has it, too often, been with the wise and great of this world. They have ever been the most forward to write folly and vanity upon the divine testimonies. Hearken, for example, to the estimate which the "most noble Feasts" formed of the grand question at issue between Paul and the Jews: "they had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of *one Jesus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.*" (Acts 25: 19) Alas! how little he knew what he was saying! How little he knew what was involved in the question, as to whether "Jesus" was "dead" or "alive!" He thought not of the solemn bearing of that momentous question upon himself and his friends, Agrippa and Bernice; but that did not alter the matter; he and they know somewhat more about it now, though in their passing moment of earthly glory they regarded it as a superstitious question, wholly beneath the notice of men of common sense, and only fit to occupy the disordered brain of visionary enthusiasts. Yes; the stupendous question which fixes the destiny of every child of Adam — on which is founded the present and everlasting condition of the Church and the world which stands connected with all the divine counsels — this question was, in the judgement of Feasts, a vain superstition.

Thus was it in Pharaoh's case. He knew nothing of "the Lord God of the Hebrews" — the great "I AM," and hence he regarded all that Moses and Aaron had said to him, in reference to doing sacrifice to God, as "vain words." The things of God must ever seem vain, profitless, and unmeaning, to the unsanctified mind of man. His name may be made use of as part of the flippant phraseology of a cold and formal religiousness; but He Himself is not known. His precious name, which, to a believer's heart, has wrapped up in it all that he can possibly need or desire, has no significancy, no power, no virtue for an unbeliever. All, therefore, connected with God, His words, His counsels, His thoughts, His ways, everything, in short, that treats of, or refers to, Him, is regarded as "vain words."

However, the time is rapidly approaching when it will not be thus. The judgement-seat of Christ, the terrors of the world to come, the surges of the lake of fire, will not be "Vain words." Assuredly not; and it should be the great aim of all who, through grace, believe them now to be realities, to press them upon the consciences of those who, like Pharaoh, regard the making of bricks as the only thing worth thinking about — the only thing that can be called reel and solid.

Alas! that even Christians should so frequently be found living in the region of sight, the region of earth, the region of nature, as to lose the deep, abiding, influential sense of the reality of divine and heavenly things. We want to live more in the region of faith, the region of heaven, the region of the "new creation." Then we should see things as God sees them, think about them as He thinks; and our whole course and character would be more elevated, more disinterested, more thoroughly separated from earth and earthly things.

But Moses' sorest trial did not arise from Pharaoh's judgement about his mission. The true and Wholehearted servant of Christ must ever expect to be looked on, by the men of this world, as a mere visionary enthusiast. The point of view from which they contemplate him is such as to lead us to look for this judgement and none other. The more faithful he is to his heavenly Master, the more he walks in



His footsteps, the more conformed he is to His image, the more likely he is to be considered, by the sons of earth, as one "beside himself." This, therefore, should neither disappoint nor discourage him. But then it is a far more painful thing when his service and testimony are misunderstood, unheeded, or rejected by those who are themselves the specific objects thereof. When such is the case, he needs to be much with God, much in the secret of His mind, much in the power of communion, to have his spirit sustained in the abiding reality of his path and service. Under such trying circumstances, if one be not fully persuaded of the divine commission, and conscious of the divine presence, he will be almost sure to break down.

Had not Moses been thus upheld, his heart must have utterly failed him when the augmented pressure of Pharaoh's power elicited from the officers of the children of Israel such desponding and depressing words as these: — "The Lord look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us." This was gloomy enough; and Moses felt it so, for "he returned unto the Lord, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? Why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came unto Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all." The aspect of things had become most discouraging, at the very moment when deliverance seemed at hand; just as, in nature, the darkest hour of the night is often that which immediately precedes the dawn of the morning. Thus will it assuredly be, in Israel's history, in the latter day. The moment of most profound darkness and depressing gloom will precede the bursting of "the Sun of Righteousness" from behind the cloud, with healing in His fingers, to heal eternally, "the hurt of the daughter of His people."

We may well question how far genuine faith, or a mortified will, dictated the "*wherefore?*" and the "*why?*" of Moses, in the above quotation. Still, the Lord does not rebuke a remonstrance drawn forth by the intense pressure of the moment. He most graciously replies, "Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land." (Ex. 6: 1) This reply breathes peculiar grace. Instead of reproving the petulance which could presume to call in question the unsearchable ways of the great I AM, that ever gracious One seeks to relieve the harassed spirit of His servant, by unfolding to him what He was about to do. This was worthy of the blessed God — the unupbraiding Giver of every good and every perfect gift. "He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." (Ps. 103: 24)

Nor is it merely in His actings that He would cause the heart to find its solace, but in Himself — in His very name and character. This is full, divine, and everlasting blessedness. When the heart can find its sweet relief in God Himself — when it can retreat into the strong tower which His name affords — when it can find, in His character, a perfect answer to all its need, then truly, it is raised far above the region of the creature-it can turn away from earth's fair promises — it can place the proper value on man's lofty pretensions. The heart which is endowed with an experimental knowledge of God can not only look forth upon earth, and say "all is vanity," but it can also look straight up to Him, and say, "all my springs are in thee."

"And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty; but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant." "JEHOVAH" is the title which He takes as the Deliverer of His people, on the ground of His covenant of pure and sovereign grace He reveals Himself as the great self-existing Source of redeeming love,

establishing His counsels, fulfilling His promises, delivering His elect people from every enemy and every evil. It was Israel's privilege ever to abide under the safe covert of that significant title — a title which displays God acting for His own glory, and taking up His oppressed people in order to show forth in them that glory.

"Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgements. And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land concerning the which I did swear to give it unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the Lord. " (Ver. 6-8.) All this speaks the purest, freest, richest grace. Jehovah presents Himself to the hearts of His people as the One who was to act in them, *for* them, and *with* them, for the display of His own glory. Ruined and helpless as they were, He had come down to show forth His glory, to exhibit His grace, and to furnish a sample of His power, in their full deliverance. His glory and their salvation were inseparably connected. They were afterwards reminded of all this, as we read in the book of Deuteronomy. "The Lord did not set His love upon you nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." (Ex. 7: 7, 8)

Nothing is more calculated to assure and establish the doubting, trembling heart than the knowledge that God has taken us up, *just as we are*, and in the full intelligence of what we are; and, moreover, that He can never make any fresh discovery to cause an alteration in the character and measure of His love. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." (John 13) *Whom* He loves and as He loves, He loves unto the end. This is an unspeakable comfort. God knew all about us — He knew the very worst of us, when He manifested His love to us in the gift of His Son. He knew what we needed, and He provided it. He knew what was due, and He paid it. He knew what was to be wrought, and He wrought it. His own requirements had to be met, and He met them. It is all His own work. Hence, we find Him saying to Israel, as in the above passage, "I will bring you out" — "I will bring you in" — "I will take you to me" — "I will give you the land" — "I am Jehovah." It was all what *He could* do, as founded upon what *He was*. Until this great truth is fully laid hold of, until it enters into the soul, in the power of the Holy Ghost, there cannot be settled peace. The heart can never be happy or the conscience at rest until one knows and believes that all divine requirements have been divinely answered.

The remainder of our section is taken up with a record of "the heads of their fathers' houses," and is very interesting, as showing us Jehovah coming in and numbering those that belonged to Himself, though they were still in the possession of the enemy. Israel was God's people, and He here counts up those on whom He had a sovereign claim. Amazing grace! To find an object in those who were in the midst of all the degradation of Egyptian bondage! This was worthy of God. The One who had made the worlds, who was surrounded by hosts of unfallen angels, ever ready to "do his pleasure," should come down for the purpose of taking up a number of bondslaves with whom He condescended to connect His name. He came down and stood amid the brick-kilns of Egypt, and there beheld a people groaning beneath the lash of the task-masters, and He uttered those memorable accents, "Let my people go;" and, having so said, He proceeded to count them up, as much as to say, "These are mine; let me see how many I have, that not one may be left behind." "He taketh up the beggar from the dunghill, to set him

amongst the princes of his people, and to make him inherit the throne of glory." (1 Sam. 2)

### **Exodus 7 — 11**

These five chapters form one distinct section, the contents of which may be distributed into the three following divisions, namely, the ten judgements from the hand of Jehovah; the resistance of "Jannes and Jambres;" and the four objections of Pharaoh.

The whole land of Egypt was made to tremble beneath the successive strokes of the rod of God. All from the monarch on his throne to the menial at the mill, were made to feel the terrible weight of that rod. "He sent Moses his servant, and Aaron whom he had chosen. They showed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. He sent darkness and made it dark; and they rebelled not against his word. He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish. Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings. He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies and lice in all their coasts. He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land. He smote their vines: also, and their fig-trees; and brake the trees of their coasts. He spake, and their locusts came, and the caterpillars, and that without number, and did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground. He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength. (Ps. 105: 26-36)

Here the inspired Psalmist has given a condensed view of those appalling afflictions which the hardness of Pharaoh's heart brought upon his land and upon his people. This haughty monarch had set himself to resist the sovereign will and course of the Most High God; and, as a just consequence, he was given over to judicial blindness and hardness of heart. "And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had spoken unto Moses. And the Lord said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh: and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. For now I will stretch out my hand that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." (Ex. 9: 12-16)

In contemplating Pharaoh and his actings, the mind is carried forward to the stirring scenes of the Book of Revelation, in which we find the last proud oppressor of the people of God bringing down upon his kingdom and upon himself the seven vials of the wrath of the Almighty. It is God's purpose that Israel shall be pre-eminent in the earth; and, therefore, every one who presumes to stand in the way of that pre-eminence must be set aside. Divine grace must find its object; and every one who would act as a barrier in the way of that grace must be taken out of the way. Whether it be Egypt, Babylon, or "the beast that was, is not, and shall be present," it matters not. Divine power will clear the channel for divine grace to flow, and eternal woe be to all who stand in the way. They shall taste, throughout the everlasting course of ages, the bitter fruit of having exalted themselves against "the Lord God of the Hebrews." He has said to His people, "no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper," and His infallible faithfulness will assuredly make good what His infinite grace hath promised.

Thus, in Pharaoh's case, when he persisted in holding, with an iron grasp, the Israel of God, the vials of divine wrath were poured forth upon him; and the land of Egypt was covered, throughout its entire length and breadth, with darkness, disease, and desolation. So will it be, by and by, when the last great oppressor shall emerge from the bottomless pit, armed with Satanic power, to crush beneath his "foot of pride" the favoured objects of Jehovah's choice. His throne shall be overturned, his kingdom devastated by the seven last plagues, and, finally, he himself plunged, not in the Red Sea, but "in the

lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." (Comp. Rev. 17: 8; Rev. 20: 10)

Not one jot or one tittle of what God has promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, shall fail. He will accomplish all. Notwithstanding all that has been said and done to the contrary, God remembers His promises, and He will fulfil them. They are all "yea and amen in Christ Jesus." Dynasties have risen and acted on the stage of this world; thrones have been erected on the apparent ruins of Jerusalem's ancient glory; empires have flourished for a time, and then fallen to decay; ambitious potentates have contended for the possession of "the land of promise" — all these things have taken place; but Jehovah has said concerning Palestine, "the land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine." (Lev. 25: 23) No one, therefore, shall ever finally possess that land but Jehovah Himself, and He will inherit it through the seed of Abraham. One plain passage of scripture is quite sufficient to establish the mind in reference to this or any other subject. The land of Canaan is for the seed of Abraham, and the seed of Abraham for the land of Canaan; nor can any power of earth or hell ever reverse this divine order. The eternal God has pledged His word, and the blood of the everlasting covenant has flowed to ratify that word. Who, then, shall make it void? "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but that word shall never pass away." Truly, "there is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms, and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places." (Deut. 33: 46-29)

We shall now consider, in the second place, the opposition of "Jannes and Jambres," the magicians of Egypt. We should not have known the names of these ancient opposers of the truth of God, had they not been recorded by the Holy Ghost, in connection with "the perilous times" of which the Apostle Paul warns his son Timothy. It is important that the Christian reader should clearly understand the real nature of the opposition given to Moses by those magicians, and in order that he may have the subject fully before him, I shall quote the entire passage from St. Paul's Epistle to Timothy. It is one of deep and awful solemnity.

"This know, also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all, as theirs also was." (2 Tim. 3: 1-9)

Now, it is peculiarly solemn to mark the nature of this resistance to the truth. The mode in which "Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses" was simply by imitating, so far as they were able, whatever he did. We do not find that they attributed his actings to a false or evil energy, but rather that they sought to neutralise their power upon the conscience, by doing the same things. What Moses did they could do, so that, after all there was no great difference. One was as good as the other. A miracle is a miracle. If Moses wrought miracles to get the people out of Egypt, they could work miracles to keep them in; so where was the difference?

From all this we learn the solemn truth that the most Satanic resistance to God's testimony, in the world, is offered by those who, though they imitate the effects of the truth, have but "the form of godliness," and "deny the power thereof." Persons of this class can do the same things, adopt the same habits and forms, use the same phraseology, profess the same opinions as others. If the true Christian, constrained by the love of Christ, feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, visits the sick, circulates the scriptures, distributes tracts, supports the gospel, engages in prayer, sings praise, preaches the gospel, the formalist can do every one of these things; and this, be it observed, is the special character of the resistance offered to the truth "in the last days" — this is the spirit of "Jannes and Jambres." How needful to understand this! How important to remember that, "as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do" those self-loving, world-seeking, pleasure-hunting professors, "resist the truth!" They would not be without "a form of godliness;" but, while adopting "the form," because it is customary, they hate "the power," because it involves self-denial. "The power" of godliness involves the recognition of God's claims, the implanting of His kingdom in the heart, and the consequent exhibition thereof in the whole life and character; but the formalist knows nothing of this. "The power" of godliness could never comport with any one of those hideous features set forth in the foregoing quotation; but "the form," while it covers them over, leaves them wholly unsubdued; and this the formalist likes. He does not want his lusts subdued, his pleasures interfered with, his passions curbed, his affections governed, his heart purified. He wants just as much religion as will enable him "to make the best of both worlds." He knows nothing of giving up the world that is, because of having; found "the world to come."

In marking the forms of Satan's opposition to the truth of God, we find that his method has ever been, first, to oppose it by open violence; and then, if that did not succeed, to corrupt it by producing a counterfeit. Hence, he first sought to slay Moses, (Ex. 2: 15), and having failed to accomplish his purpose, he sought to imitate his works.

Thus, too, has it been in reference to the truth committed to the Church of God. Satan's early efforts showed themselves in connection with the wrath of the chief priests and elders, the judgement-seat, the prison, and the sword. But, in the passage just quoted from 2 Timothy, we find no reference to any such agency. Often violence has made way for the far more wily and dangerous instrumentality of a powerless form, an empty profession, a human counterfeit. The enemy, instead of appearing with the sword of persecution in his hand, walks about with the cloak of profession on his shoulders. He professes and imitates that which he once opposed and persecuted; and, by so doing, gains most appalling advantages, for the time being. The fearful forms of moral evil which, from age to age, have stained the page of human history, instead of being found only where we might naturally look for them, amid the dens and caves of human darkness, are to be found carefully arranged beneath the drapery of a cold, powerless, uninfluential profession; and this is one of Satan's grand masterpieces.

That man, as a fallen, corrupt creature, should love himself, be covetous, boastful, proud, and the like, is natural; but that he should be all these, beneath the fair covering of "a form of godliness," marks the special energy of Satan in his resistance to the truth in "the last days." That man should stand forth in the bold exhibition of those hideous vices, lusts, and passions, which are the necessary results of departure from the source of infinite holiness and purity, is only what might be expected, for man will be what he is to the end of the chapter. But on the other hand, when we find the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ connected with man's wickedness and deadly evil — when we find holy principles connected with unholy practices — when we find all the characteristics of Gentile corruption, referred to in the first chapter of Romans, associated with "a form of godliness," then, truly, we may say, these are the terrible features of "the last days" — this is the resistance of "Jannes and Jambres."

However, there were only three things in which the magicians of Egypt were able to imitate the

servants of the true and living God, namely, in turning their rods into serpents, (Ex. 7: 12) turning the water into blood, (Ex. 7: 29) and bringing up the frogs; (Ex. 8: 7) but, in the fourth, which involved the exhibition of life, in connection with the display of nature's humiliation, they were totally confounded, and obliged to own, "this is the finger of God." (Ex. 8: 16-19) Thus it is also with the latter-day resisters of the truth. All that they do is by the direct energy of Satan, and lies within the range of his power. Moreover, its specific object is to "resist the truth."

The three things which "Jannes and Jambres" were able to accomplish were characterised by Satanic energy, death, and uncleanness; that is to say, the serpents, the blood, and the frogs. Thus it was they "withstood Moses;" and "so do these also resist the truth," and hinder its moral weight and action upon the conscience. There is nothing which so tends to deaden the power of truth as the fact that persons who are not under its influence at all, do the self-same things as those who are. This is Satan's agency just now. He seeks to have all regarded as Christians. He would fain make us believe ourselves surrounded by "a Christian world;" but it is counterfeit Christianity, which, so far from being a testimony to the truth, is designed by the enemy of the truth, to withstand its purifying and elevating influence.

In short, the servant of Christ and the witness for the truth is surrounded, on all sides, by the spirit of "Jannes and Jambres;" and it is well for him to remember this — to know thoroughly the evil with which he has to grapple — to bear in mind that it is Satan's imitation of God's reality, produced, not by the wand of an openly-wicked magician, but by the actings of false professors, who have "a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof," who do things apparently right and good, but who have neither the life of Christ in their souls, the love of God in their hearts, nor the power of the word in their consciences.

"But," adds the inspired apostle, "they shall proceed no further, for their folly shall be manifested unto all, as theirs also was." Truly the "folly" of "Jannes and Jambres" was manifest unto all, when they not only failed to imitate the further actings of Moses and Aaron, but actually became involved in the judgements of God. This is a solemn point. The folly of all who are merely possessed of the form will, in like manner, be made manifest. They will not only be quite unable to imitate the full and proper effects of divine life and power, but they will themselves become the subjects of those judgements which will result from the rejection of that truth which they have resisted.

Will any one say that all this has no voice for a day of powerless profession? Assuredly, it has. It should speak to each conscience in living power; it should tell on each heart, in accents of impressive solemnity. It should lead each one to enquire seriously whether he is testifying for the truth, by walking in the power of godliness, or hindering it, and neutralising its action, by having only the form. The effect of the power of godliness will be seen by our "continuing in the things which we have learned." None will continue, save those who are taught of God; those, by the power of the Spirit of God, have drunk in divine principle, at the pure fountain of inspiration.

Blessed be God, there are many such throughout the various sections of the professing Church. There are many, here and there, whose consciences have been bathed in the atoning blood of "the Lamb of God," whose hearts beat high with genuine attachment to His Person, and whose spirits are cheered by "that blessed hope" of seeing Him as He is, and of being eternally conformed to His image. It is encouraging to think of such. It is an unspeakable mercy to have fellowship with those who can give a reason of the hope that is in them, and for the position which they occupy. May the Lord add to their number daily. May the power of godliness spread far and wide in these last days, so that a bright and well-sustained testimony may be raised to the name of Him who is worthy.

The third point in our section yet remains to be considered, namely, Pharaoh's four subtle objections to the full deliverance and complete separation of God's people from the land of Egypt. The first of these we have in Ex. 8: 25. "And Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, *Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land.*" It is needless to remark here, that whether the magicians withstood, or Pharaoh objected, it was in reality, Satan that stood behind the scenes; and his manifest object, in this proposal of Pharaoh, was to hinder the testimony to the Lord's name — a testimony connected with the thorough separation of His people from Egypt. There could, evidently, be no such testimony had they remained in Egypt, even though they were to sacrifice to Him. They would have taken common ground with the uncircumcised Egyptians, and put Jehovah on a level with the gods of Egypt. In this case an Egyptian could have said to an Israelite, "I see no difference between us; you have your worship and we have ours; it is all alike."

As a matter of course, men think it quite right for every one to have a religion, let it be what it may. Provided we are sincere, and do not interfere with our neighbour's creed, it does not matter what shape our religion may happen to wear. Such are the thoughts of men in reference to what they call religion; but it is very obvious that the glory of the name of Jesus finds no place in all this. The demand for separation is that which the enemy will ever oppose, and which the heart of man cannot understand. The heart may crave religiousness because conscience testifies that all is not right; but it craves the world as well. It would like to "sacrifice to God in the land;" and Satan's object is gained when people accept of a worldly religion, and refuse to "come out and be separate." (2 Cor. 6) His unvarying purpose, from the beginning, has been to hinder the testimony to God's name on the earth. Such was the dark tendency of the proposal, "Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land." What a complete damper to the testimony, had this proposal been acceded to! God's people in Egypt and God Himself linked with the idols of Egypt! Terrible blasphemy!

Reader, we should deeply ponder this. The effort to induce Israel to worship God in Egypt reveals a far deeper principle than we might, at first sight, imagine. The enemy would rejoice, at any time, by any means, or under any circumstances, to get even the semblance of divine sanction for the world's religion. He has no objection to such religion. He gains his end as effectually by what is termed "the religious world" as by any other agency; and, hence, when he can succeed in getting a true Christian to accredit the religion of the day, he gains a grand point. As a matter of actual fact, one knows that nothing elicits such intense indignation as the divine principle of separation from this present evil world. You may hold the same opinions, preach the same doctrines, do the same work; but if you only attempt, in ever so feeble a manner, to act upon the divine commands, "from such turn away," (2 Tim. 3: 5) and "come out from among them," (2 Cor. 6: 17) you may reckon assuredly upon the most vigorous opposition. Now how is this to be accounted for? Mainly by the fact that Christians, in separation from this world's hollow religiousness, bear a testimony for Christ which they never can bear while connected with it.

There is a very wide difference between human religion and Christ. A poor, benighted Hindu might talk to you of his religion, but he knows nothing of Christ. The apostle does not say, "if there be any consolation in religion;" though, doubtless, the votaries of each kind of religion find what they deem consolation therein. Paul, on the other hand, found his consolation in Christ, having fully proved the worthlessness of religion, and that too, in its fairest and most imposing form. (Comp. Gal. 1: 13, 14; Phil. 3: 4-11)

True, the Spirit of God speaks to us of "pure religion and undefiled;" but the unregenerate man cannot, by any means, participate therein; for how could he possibly take part in ought that is "pure and undefiled?" This religion is from heaven, the source of all that is pure and lovely; it is exclusively

before the eye of "God and the Father:" it is for the exercise of the functions of that new name, with which all are endowed who believe on the name of the Son of God. (John 1: 12, 13; James 1: 18; 1 Peter 1: 23; 1 John 5: 1) Finally, it ranges itself under the two comprehensive heads of active benevolence and personal holiness; "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1: 27)

Now if you go through the entire catalogue of the genuine fruits of Christianity, you will find them all classed under these two heads; and it is deeply interesting to observe that, whether we turn to the eighth of Exodus or to the first of James, we find separation from the world put forward as an indispensable quality in the true service of God, Nothing could be acceptable before God — nothing could receive from His hand the stamp of "pure and undefiled," which was polluted by contact with an "evil world." "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. 6: 17, 18)

There was no meeting-place for Jehovah and His redeemed in Egypt; yes, with them, redemption and separation from Egypt were one and the same thing. God had said, "I am come down to deliver them," and nothing short of this could either satisfy or glorify Him. A salvation which would have left them still in Egypt, could not possibly be God's salvation. Moreover, we must bear in mind that Jehovah's purpose, in the salvation of Israel, as well as in the destruction of Pharaoh, was, that "His name might be declared throughout all the earth;" and what declaration could there be of that name or character, were His people to attempt to worship Him in Egypt? Either none whatever or an utterly false one. Wherefore, it was essentially necessary, in order to the full and faithful declaration of God's character, that His people should be wholly delivered and completely separated from Egypt, and it is as essentially necessary now, in order to a clear and unequivocal testimony for the Son of God, that all who are really His should be separated from this present world. Such is the will of God; and for this end Christ gave Himself. "Grace unto you, and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."(Gal. 1: 3-5)

The Galatians were beginning to accredit a carnal and worldly religion — a religion of ordinances — a religion of "days, and months, and times, and years;" and the apostle commences his epistle by telling them that the Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself for the purpose of delivering His people from that very thing. God's people must be separate, not, by any means, on the ground of their superior personal sanctity, but because they are His people, and in order that they may rightly and intelligently answer His gracious end in taking them into connection with Himself, and attaching His name to them. A people, still amid the defilements and abominations of Egypt, could not have been a witness for the Holy One; nor can any one, now, while mixed up with the defilements of a corrupt worldly religion, possibly be a bright and steady witness for a crucified and risen Christ.

The answer given by Moses to Pharaoh's first objection was a truly memorable one. "And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God; lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us? We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God, as he shall command us." (Ex. 8: 26, 27) Here is true separation from Egypt — "three days journey." Nothing less than this could satisfy faith. The Israel of God must be separated from the land of death and darkness, in the power of resurrection. The waters of the Red Sea must roll between God's redeemed and Egypt, ere they can properly sacrifice to Jehovah. Had they remained in Egypt, they would have to sacrifice to the Lord the very objects of Egypt's abominable worship.\* This would never do. There could be no



tabernacle, no temple, no altar, in Egypt. It had no site, throughout its entire limits, for ought of that kind. In point of fact, as we shall see further on, Israel never presented so much as a single note of praise, until the whole congregation stood, in the full power of an accomplished redemption, on Canaan's side of the Red Sea. Exactly so is it now. The believer must know where the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ have, for ever, set him, ere he can be an intelligent worshipper, an acceptable servant, or an effectual witness.

{\*The word "abominations" has reference to that which the Egyptians worshipped.}

It is not a question of being a child of God, and, as such, a saved person. Many of the children of God are very far from knowing the full results, as regards themselves, of the death and resurrection of Christ. They do not apprehend the precious truth, that the death of Christ has made an end of their sins for ever, and that they are the happy partakers of His resurrection life, with which sin can have nothing whatever to do. Christ became a curse for us, not, as some would teach us, by being born under the curse of a broken law, but by hanging on a tree. (Compare attentively Deut. 21: 23; Gal. 3: 13) We were under the curse, because we had not kept the law; but Christ, the perfect Man, having magnified the law and made it honourable, by the very fact of His obeying it perfectly, became a curse for us, by hanging on the tree. Thus, in His life He magnified God's law; and in His death He bore our curse. There is, therefore, now, no guilt, no curse, no wrath, no condemnation for the believer; and, albeit, he must be manifested before the judgement-seat of Christ, he will find that judgement-seat every hit as friendly by and by, as the mercy-seat is now. It will make manifest the truth of his condition, namely, that there is nothing against him; what he is, it is God "that hath wrought him." He is God's workmanship. He was taken up in a state of death and condemnation, and made just what God would have him to be. The Judge Himself has put away all his sins, and is his righteousness, so that the judgement-seat cannot but be friendly to him; yea, it will be the full, public, authoritative declaration to heaven, earth, and hell, that the one who is washed from his sins in the blood of the Lamb, is as clean as God can make him. (See John 5: 24; Rom. 8: 1; 2 Cor. 5: 5, 10, 11; Eph. 2: 10.) All that had to be done, God Himself has done it. He surely will not condemn His own work. The righteousness that was required, God Himself has provided it. He, surely, will not find any flaw therein. The light of the judgement seat will be bright enough to disperse every mist and cloud which might tend to obscure the matchless glories and eternal virtues which belong to the cross, and to show that the believer is "clean every whit." (John 13: 10; John 15: 3; Eph. 5: 27)

It is because these foundation-truths are not laid hold of in the simplicity of faith that many of the children of God complain of their lack of settled peace — the constant variation in their spiritual condition — the continual ups and downs in their experience. Every doubt in the heart of a Christian is a dishonour done to the word of God and the sacrifice of Christ. It is because he does not, even now, bask in the light which shall shine from the judgement-seat, that he is ever afflicted with a doubt or a fear. And yet those things which so many have to deplore — those fluctuation's and waverings are but trifling consequences, comparatively, inasmuch as they merely affect their experience. The effect produced upon their worship, their service, and their testimony, is far more serious, inasmuch as the Lord's honour is concerned. But, alas ! this latter is but little thought of, generally speaking, simply because personal salvation is the grand object — the aim and end, with the majority of professing Christians. We are prone to look upon everything that affects ourselves as *essential*; whereas, all that merely affects the glory of Christ in and by us is counted *non-essential*.

However, it is well to see with distinctness, that the same truth which gives the soul settled peace, puts it also into the position of intelligent worship, acceptable service, and effectual testimony. In the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, the apostle sets forth the death and resurrection of Christ as the grand

foundation of everything. "Moreover brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." (Ver. 1-4) Here is the gospel, in one brief and comprehensive statement. A dead and risen Christ is the ground-work of salvation. "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." (Rom. 4: 25) To see Jesus, by the eye of faith, nailed to the cross, and seated on the throne, must give solid peace to the conscience and perfect liberty to the heart. We can look into the tomb and see it empty; we can look up to the throne, and see it occupied, and go on our way rejoicing. The Lord Jesus settled everything on the cross on behalf of His people; and the proof of this settlement is that He is now at the right hand of God. A risen Christ is the eternal proof of an accomplished redemption; and if redemption is an accomplished fact, the believer's peace is a settled reality. We did not make peace and never could make it; indeed, any effort on our part to make peace could only tend more fully to manifest us as peace breakers. But Christ, having made peace by the blood of His cross, has taken His seat on high, triumphant over every enemy. By Him God preaches peace. The Lord of the gospel conveys this peace; and the soul that believes the gospel has peace — settled peace before God, for Christ is his peace. (See Acts 10: 36; Rom. 5: 1; Eph. 2: 14; Col. 1: 20.) In this way, God has not only satisfied His own claims, but, in so doing, He has found out a divinely-righteous vent through which His boundless affections may flow down to the guiltiest of Adam's guilty progeny.

Then, as to the practical result of all this. The cross of Christ has not only put away the believer's sins, but also dissolved for ever His connection with the world; and, on the ground of this, he is privileged to regard the world as a crucified *thing*, and to be regarded by it as a crucified one. Thus it stands with the believer and the world. It is crucified to him and he to it. This is the real, dignified position of every true Christian. The world's judgement about Christ was expressed in the position in which it deliberately placed Him. It got its choice as to whether it would have a murderer or Christ. It allowed the murderer to go free, but nailed Christ to the cross, between two thieves. Now, if the believer walks in the footprints of Christ — if he drinks into, and manifests, His spirit, he will occupy the very same place in the world's estimation; and, in this way, he will not merely know that, as to standing before God, he is crucified with Christ, but be led to realise it in his walk and experience every day.

But while the cross has thus effectually cut the connection between the believer and the world, the resurrection has brought him into the power of new ties and associations. If, in the cross, we see the world's judgement about Christ, in resurrection we see God's judgement. The world crucified Him; but "God hath highly exalted him." Man gave Him the very lowest, God the very highest, place; and, inasmuch as the believer is called into full fellowship with God, in his thoughts about Christ, he is enabled to turn the tables upon the world, and look upon it as a crucified thing. If, therefore, the believer is on one cross and the world on another, the moral distance between the two is vast indeed. And if it is vast in principle, so should it be in practice. The world and the Christian should have absolutely nothing in common; nor will they, except so far as he denies his Lord and Master. The believer proves himself false to Christ, to the very same degree that he has fellowship with the world.

All this is plain enough; but, my beloved Christian reader, where does it put us as regards this world? Truly, it puts us outside and that completely. We are dead to the world and alive with Christ. We are at once partakers of His rejection by earth and His acceptance in heaven; and the joy of the latter makes us count as nothing the trial connected with the former. To be cast out of earth, without knowing

that I have a place and a portion on high, would be intolerable; but when the glories of heaven fill the soul's vision, a little of earth goes a great way.

But some may feel led to ask, "What is the world?" It would be difficult to find a term more inaccurately defined than "world," or "worldliness;" for we are generally disposed to make worldliness begin a point or two above where we are ourselves. The Word of God, however, has, with perfect precision, defined what "the world" is, when it marks it as that which is "not of the Father." Hence, the deeper my fellowship with the Father, the keener will be my sense of what is worldly. This is the divine way of teaching. The more you delight in the Father's love, the more you reject the world. But who reveals the Father The Son. How? By the power of the Holy Ghost. Wherefore, the more I am enabled, in the power of an ungrieved Spirit, to drink in the Son's revelation of the Father, the more accurate does my judgement become as to what is of the world. It is as the limits of God's kingdom expand in the heart, that the judgement as to worldliness becomes refined. You can hardly attempt to define worldliness. It is, as some one has said, "shaded off gradually from white to jet black." This is most true. You cannot place a bound and say, "here is where worldliness begins;" but the keen and exquisite sensibilities of the divine nature recoil from it; and all we need is, to walk in the power of that nature, in order to keep aloof from every form of worldliness. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." Walk with God, and ye shall not walk with the world. Cold distinctions and rigid rules will avail nothing. The power of the divine life is what we want. We want to understand the meaning and spiritual application of the "three days' journey into the wilderness" whereby we are separated for ever, not only from Egypt's brick-kilns and taskmasters, but also from its temples and altars.

Pharaoh's second objection partook very much of the character and tendency of the first. "And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; *only ye shall not go very far away.*" (Ex. 8: 28) If he could not keep them *in* Egypt, he would at least seek to keep them *near* it, so that he might act upon them by its varied influences. In this way, they might be brought back again. and the testimony more effectually quashed than if they had never left Egypt at all. There is always much more serious damage done to the cause of Christ by persons seeming to give up the world and returning to it again, than if they had remained entirely of it; for they virtually confess that, having tried heavenly things, they have discovered that earthly things are better and more satisfying.

Nor is this all. The moral effect of truth upon the conscience of unconverted people is sadly interfered with, by the example of professors going back again into those things which they seemed to have left. Not that such cases afford the slightest warrant to any one for the rejection of God's truth, inasmuch as each one is personally responsible and will have to give account of himself to God. Still, however, the effect in this, as well as in everything else, is bad. "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.(2 Peter 2: 20, 21.)

Wherefore, if people do not "go very far away," they had better not go at all. The enemy knew this well; and hence his second objection. The maintenance of a border position suits his purpose amazingly. Those who occupy this ground are neither one thing nor the other; and, in point of fact, whatever influence they possess, tells entirely in the wrong direction.

It is deeply important to see that Satan's design, in all these objections, was to hinder that

testimony to the name of the God of Israel, which could only be rendered by a "three days' journey into the wilderness." This was, in good truth, going "very far away." It was much farther than Pharaoh could form any idea of, or than he could follow them. And oh! how happy it would be if all who profess to set out from Egypt would really, in the spirit of their minds and in the tone of their character, go thus far away from it if they would intelligently recognise the cross and grave of Christ as forming the boundary between them and the world! No man, in the mere energy of nature, can take this ground. The Psalmist could say, "Enter not into judgement with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." (Ps. 143: 2) So also is it with regard to true and effectual separation from the world. "*No man living*" can enter into it. It is only as "*dead with Christ,*" and "*risen again with him, through faith of the operation of God,*" that any one can either be "justified" before God, or separated from the world. This is what we may all going "very far away. May all who profess and call themselves Christians go thus far! Then will their lamp yield a steady light. Then would their trumpet give a certain sound. Their path would be elevated; their experience deep and rich. Their peace would flow as a river; their affections would be heavenly and their garments unspotted. And, far above all, the name of the Lord Jesus Christ would be magnified in them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, according to the will of God their Father.

The third objection demands our most special attention. "And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, go, serve the Lord your God; but who are they that shall go? And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds, will we go: for we must hold a feast unto the Lord. And he said unto them, Let the Lord be so with you, as I will let you go and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you. Not so; go now ye that are men, and serve the Lord; for that ye did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence." (Ex. 10: 8-11) Here again we have the enemy aiming a deadly blow at the testimony to the name of the God of Israel. Parents in the wilderness and their children in Egypt! Terrible anomaly! This would only have been a half deliverance, at once useless to Israel and dishonouring to Israel's God. This could not be. If the children remained in Egypt, the parents could not possibly be said to have left it, inasmuch as their children were part of themselves. The most that could be said in such a case was, that in part they were serving Jehovah, and in part Pharaoh. But Jehovah could have no part with Pharaoh. He should either have all or nothing. This is a weighty principle for Christian parents. May we lay it deeply to heart! It is our happy privilege to count on God for our children, and to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6) We should not be satisfied with any other portion for "Our little ones" than that which we ourselves enjoy.

Pharaoh's fourth and last objection had reference to the flocks and herds. "And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you." (Ex. 10: 24.) With what perseverance did Satan dispute every inch of Israel's way out of the land of Egypt! He first sought to keep them in the land, then to keep them near the land, next to keep part of themselves in the land, and, finally, when he could not succeed in any of these three, he sought to send them forth without any ability to serve the Lord. If he could not keep the servants, he would seek to keep their ability to serve, which would answer much the same end. If he could not induce them to sacrifice in the land, he would send them out of the land without sacrifices.

In Moses' reply to this last objection, we are furnished with a fine statement of the Lord's paramount claim upon His people and all pertaining to them. "And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God. Our cattle also shall go with us; *there shall not an hoof be left behind*: for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God; and we know not with what we must serve the Lord until we come thither." (Ver. 25, 26) It is only when

the people of God take their stand, in simple Childlike faith, upon that elevated ground, on which death and resurrection set them, that they can have anything like an adequate sense of His claims upon them. "We know not with what we must serve the Lord until we come thither." That is, they had no knowledge of the divine claim or their responsibility, until they had gone "three days' journey." These things could not be known amid the dense and polluted atmosphere of Egypt. Redemption must be known as an accomplished fact, ere: there can be any just or full perception of responsibility. All this is perfect and beautiful. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." I must be up out of Egypt, in the power of death and resurrection, and then, but not until then, shall I know what the Lord's service really is. It is when we take our stand, by faith, in that "large room," that wealthy place into which the precious blood of Christ introduces us; when we look around us and survey the rich, rare, and manifold results of redeeming love; when we gaze upon the Person of Him who has brought us into this place, and endowed us with these riches, then we are constrained to say, in the language of one of our own poets,

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were an offering far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my heart, my life, my all."

"There shall not an hoof be left behind." Noble words! Egypt is not the place for ought that pertains to God's redeemed. He is worthy of all, "body, soul, and spirit;" all we are and all we have belongs to Him. "We are not our own, we are bought with a price;" and it is our happy privilege to consecrate ourselves and all that we possess to Him whose we are, and whom we are called to serve. There is nought of a legal spirit in this. The words, "until we come thither," furnish a divine guard against this horrible evil. We have travelled the "three days' journey," ere a word concerning sacrifice can be heard or understood. We are put in full and undisputed possession of resurrection life and eternal righteousness. We have left that land of death and darkness; we have been brought to God Himself, so that we may enjoy Him, in the energy of that life with which we are endowed, and in the sphere of righteousness in which we are placed: thus it is our joy to serve. There is not an affection in the heart of which He is not worthy; there is not a sacrifice in all the flock too costly for His altar. The more closely we walk with Him, the more we shall esteem it to be our meat and drink to do His blessed will. The believer counts it his highest privilege to serve the Lord. He delights in every exercise and every manifestation of the divine nature. He does not move up and down with a grievous yoke upon his neck, or an intolerable weight upon his shoulder. The yoke is broken "because of the anointing," the burden has been for ever removed, by the blood of the cross, while he himself walks abroad, "redeemed, regenerated, and disenthralled," in pursuance of those soul-stirring words, "LET MY PEOPLE GO."

NOTE. — We shall consider the contents of Ex. 11 in connection with the security of Israel, under the shelter of the blood of the paschal lamb.

## **Exodus 12**

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether." (Ex. 11: 1) One more heavy blow must fall upon this hard-hearted monarch and his land, ere he will be compelled to let go the favoured objects of Jehovah's sovereign grace.

How utterly vain it is for man to harden and exalt himself against God; for, truly, He can grind to powder the hardest heart, and bring down to the dust the haughtiest spirit. "Those that walk in pride he

is able to abase." (Dan. 4: 37) Man may fancy himself to be something; he may lift up his head, in pomp and vain glory, as though he were his own master. Vain man how little he knows of his real condition and character He is but the tool of Satan, taken up and used by him, in his malignant efforts to counteract the purposes of God. The most splendid intellect, the most commanding genius, the most indomitable energy, if not under the direct control of the Spirit of God, are but so many instruments in Satan's hand to carry forward his dark designs. No man is his own master; he is either governed by Christ or governed by Satan. The king of Egypt might fancy himself to be a free agent, yet was he but a tool in the hands of another. Satan was behind the throne; and, as the result of Pharaoh's having set himself to resist the purposes of God, he was judicially handed over to the blinding and hardening influence of his self-chosen master.

This will explain to us an expression occurring very frequently throughout the earlier chapters of this book. "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart." There is no need, whatever, for any one to seek to avoid the full, plain sense of this most solemn statement. If man resists the light of divine testimony, he is shut up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart. God leaves him to himself, and then Satan comes in and carries him headlong to perdition. There was abundant light for Pharaoh, to show him the extravagant folly of his course in seeking to detain those whom God had commanded him to let go. But the real disposition of his heart was to act against God, and therefore God left him to himself, and made him a monument for the display of His glory "through all the earth." There is no difficulty in this to any, save those whose desire is to argue against God — "to rush upon the thick bosses of the shield of the Almighty" — to ruin their own immortal souls.

God gives people, at times, according to the real bent of their hearts' desire. ". . . . because of this, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but *had pleasure in unrighteousness.*" (2 Thess. 2: 11, 12) If men will not have the truth when it is put before them, they shall, assuredly, have a lie. If they will not have Christ, they shall have Satan; if they will not have heaven, they shall have hell.\* Will the infidel mind find fault with this? Ere it does so, let it prove that all who are thus judicially dealt with have fully answered their responsibilities. Let it, for instance, prove, in Pharaoh's case, that he acted, in any measure, up to the light he possessed. The same is to be proved in every case. Unquestionably, the task of proving rests on those who are disposed to quarrel with God's mode of dealing with the rejecters of His truth. The simple-hearted child of God will justify Him, in view of the most inscrutable dispensations; and even if he cannot meet and satisfactorily solve the difficult questions of a sceptical mind, he can rest perfectly satisfied with this word, "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" There is far more wisdom in this method of settling an apparent difficulty, than in the most elaborate argument; for it is perfectly certain that: the heart which is in a condition to reply against God," will not be convinced by the arguments of man.

{\*There is a vast difference between the divine method of dealing with the heathen (Rom. 1) and with the rejecters of the gospel. (2 Thess. 1, 2) In reference to the former, we read, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind:" but with respect to the latter the word is "because they received not the love of *the truth* that they might be *saved*, . . . God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe *a lie*; that they all might be *damned.*" The heathen refuse the testimony of creation, and are, therefore, left to themselves. The rejecters of the gospel refuse the full blaze of light which shines from the cross, and, therefore, "a strong delusion" will, ere long, be sent from God upon them. This is deeply solemn for an age like this, in the which there is so much light and so much profession. }

However, it is God's prerogative to answer all the proud reasonings, and bring down the lofty

imaginings of the human mind. He can write the sentence of death upon nature, in its fairest forms. "It is appointed unto men once to die." This cannot be avoided. Man may seek to hide his humiliation in various ways to cover his retreat through the valley of death, in the most heroic manner possible; to call the last humiliating stage of his career by the most honourable titles he can devise; to gild the bed of death with a false light; to adorn the funeral procession and the grave with the appearance of pomp, pageantry, and glory; to arise above the mouldering ashes a splendid monument, on which are engraven the records of human shame. all these things he may do; but death is death after all, and he cannot keep it off for a moment, or make it ought else than what it is, namely, "the ravages of sin."

The foregoing thoughts are suggested by the opening verse of Ex. 11. "One plague more!" Solemn word! It signed the death-warrant of Egypt's firstborn — "the chief of all their strength." "And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt; and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more." (Ex. 11: 4-6) This was to be the final plague — death in every house. "But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast; that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel." It is the Lord alone who can "put a difference" between those who are His and those who are not. It is not our province to say to any one, "stand by thyself, I am holier than thou:" this is the language of a Pharisee. "But when God puts a difference!" we are bound to enquire what that difference is; and, in the case before us, we see it to be a simple question of *life or death*. This is God's grand "difference." He draws a line of demarcation, and on one side of this line is "life," on the other "death." Many of Egypt's firstborn might have been as fair and attractive as those of Israel, and much more so; but Israel had life and light, founded upon God's counsels of redeeming love, established, as we shall see presently, by the blood of the lamb. This was Israel's happy position; while, on the other hand, throughout the length and breadth of the land of Egypt, from the monarch on the throne to the menial behind the mill, nothing was to be seen but death; nothing to be heard but the cry of bitter anguish, elicited by the heavy stroke of Jehovah's rod. God can bring down the haughty spirit of man. He can make the wrath of man to praise Him, and restrain the remainder. "And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves-unto me, saying, Get thee out and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out." God will accomplish His own ends. His schemes of mercy must be carried out at all cost, and confusion of face must be the portion of all who stand in the way. "O! give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for His mercy endureth for ever..... To him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for his mercy endureth for ever: and brought out Israel from among them; for his mercy endureth for ever: with a strong hand, and with a stretched-out arm; for his mercy endureth for ever." (Psalm 136)

"And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you." (Ex. 12: 1, 2) There is, here, a very interesting change in the order of time. The common or civil year was rolling on in its ordinary course, when Jehovah interrupted it in reference to His people, and thus, in principle, taught them that they were to begin a new era in company with Him. Their previous history was, henceforth, to be regarded as a blank. Redemption was to constitute the first step in *real life*.

This teaches a plain truth. A man's life is really of no account until he begins to walk with God, in the knowledge of full salvation and settled peace, through the precious blood of the Lamb. Previous to this he is, in the judgement of God, and in the language of scripture, "dead in trespasses and sins;" "alienated from the life of God." His whole history is a complete blank, even though, in man's account,

it may have been one uninterrupted scene of bustling activity. All that which engages the attention of the man of this world, the honours, the riches, the pleasures, the attractions, of life, so called — all, when examined in the light of the judgement of God, when weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, must be accounted as a dismal blank, a worthless void, utterly unworthy of a place in the records of the Holy Ghost. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life." (John 3: 36) Men speak of "seeing life," when they launch forth into society, travel hither and thither, and see all that is to be seen; but they forget that the only true, the only real, the only divine way to "see life," is to "believe on the Son of God."

How little do men think of this! They imagine that "real life" is at an end when a man becomes a Christian, in truth and reality, not merely in name and outward profession; whereas God's word teaches us that it is only then we can see life and taste true happiness. "He that hath the Son hath life." (1 John 5: 12) And, again, "Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." (Ps. 32: 1) We can get life and happiness *only* in Christ. Apart from Him, all is death and misery, in Heaven's judgement, whatever the outward appearance may be. It is when the thick veil of unbelief is removed from the heart, and we are enabled to behold, with the eye of faith, the bleeding Lamb, bearing our heavy burden of guilt upon the cursed tree, that we enter upon the path of life, and partake of the cup of divine happiness — a life which begins at the cross, and flows onward into an eternity of glory — a happiness which, each day, becomes deeper and purer, more connected with God and founded on Christ, until we reach its proper sphere, in the presence of God and the Lamb. To seek life and happiness in any other way, is vainer work by far than seeking to make bricks without straw.

True, the enemy of souls spreads a gilding over this passing scene, in order that men may imagine it to be all gold. He sets up many a puppet-show to elicit the hollow laugh from a thoughtless multitude, who will not remember that it is Satan who is in the box, and that his object is to keep them from Christ, and drag them down into eternal perdition. There is nothing real, nothing solid, nothing satisfying, but in Christ. Outside of Him, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." In Him alone true and eternal joys are to be found; and we only begin to live when we begin to live *in*, live *on*, live *with*, and live *for* Him. "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. "The time spent in the brick-kilns and by the flesh-pots must be ignored. It is, henceforth, to be of no account save that the remembrance thereof should, ever and anon, serve to quicken and deepen their sense of what divine grace had accomplished on their behalf.

"Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house . . . Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year; ye shall take it out from the sheep or from the goats: and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. "Here we have the redemption of the people founded upon the blood of the lamb, in pursuance of God's eternal purpose. This imparts to it all its divine stability. Redemption was no after-thought with God. Before the world was, or Satan, or sin — before ever the voice of God was heard breaking the silence of eternity, and calling worlds into existence, He had His deep counsels of love; and these counsels could never find a sufficiently solid basis in creation. All the blessings, the privileges, and the dignities of creation were founded upon a creature's obedience, and the moment that failed, all was gone. But, then, Satan's attempt to mar creation only opened the way for the manifestation of God's deeper purposes of redemption.

This beautiful truth is typically presented to us in the circumstance of the lamb's being "kept up" from the "tenth" to "the fourteenth day." That this lamb pointed to Christ is unquestionable. 1 Cor 5: 7, settles the application of this interesting type beyond all question; "for even Christ our Passover is



sacrificed for us." We have, in the first epistle of Peter, an allusion to the keeping up of the lamb: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was *foreordained before the foundation of the world*, but was *manifest in these last times for you*.(Ex. 1: 18-20)

All God's purposes, from everlasting, had reference to Christ; and no effort of the enemy could possibly interfere with those counsels: yea, his efforts only tended to the display of the unfathomable wisdom and immovable stability thereof. If the "Lamb without blemish and without spot" was "foreordained before the foundation of the world," then, assuredly, redemption must have been in the mind of God before the foundation of the world. The Blessed One had not to pause in order to devise some plan to remedy the terrible evil which the enemy had introduced into His fair creation. No, He had only to bring forth, from the unexplored treasury of His precious counsels, the truth concerning the spotless Lamb, who was foreordained from everlasting, and to be "manifest in these last times for us."

There was no need for the blood of the Lamb in creation, as it came fresh from the hand of the Creator, exhibiting in every stage, and every department of it, the beautiful impress of His hand — "the infallible proofs" of "His eternal power and Godhead." (Rom. 1) But when, "by one man," sin was introduced into the world, then came out the higher, richer, fuller, deeper thought of redemption by the blood of the Lamb. This glorious truth first broke through the thick clouds which surrounded our first parents, as they retreated from the garden of Eden; its glimmerings appear in the types and shadows of the Mosaic economy; it burst upon the world in full brightness, when "the dayspring from on high" appeared in the Person of "God manifest in the flesh;" and its rich and rare results will be realised when the white-robed, palm-bearing multitude shall cluster round the throne of God and the Lamb, and the whole creation shall rest beneath the peaceful sceptre of the Son of David.

Now, the lamb taken on the tenth day, and kept up until the fourteenth day, shows us Christ foreordained of God, from eternity, but manifest for us, in time. God's eternal purpose in Christ becomes the foundation of the believer's peace. Nothing short of this would do. We are carried back far beyond creation, beyond the bounds of time, beyond the entrance in of sin, and everything that could possibly affect the ground-work of our peace. The expression, "fore-ordained before the foundation of the world," conducts us back into the unfathomed depths of eternity, and shows us God forming His own counsels of redeeming love, and basing them all upon the atoning blood of His own precious, spotless Lamb. Christ was ever the primary thought in the divine mind; and, hence, the moment He began to speak or act, He took occasion to shadow forth that One who occupied the highest place in His counsels and affections; and, as we pass along the current of inspiration, we find that every ceremony, every rite, every ordinance, and every sacrifice pointed forward to "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," and not one more strikingly than the Passover. The paschal lamb, with all the attendant circumstances, forms one of the most profoundly interesting and deeply instructive types of Scripture.

In the interpretation of Exodus 12 we have to do with one assembly and one sacrifice. "The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening." (Ver. 6) It is not so much a number of families with several lambs — a thing quite true in itself — as one assembly and one lamb. Each house was but the local expression of the whole assembly gathered round the lamb. The antitype of this we have in the whole Church of God, gathered by the Holy Ghost, in the name of Jesus, of which each separate assembly, wherever convened, should be the local expression.

"And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts, and on the upper door posts

of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof." (Ver. 7-9) We have to contemplate the paschal lamb in two aspects, namely, as the ground of peace and the centre of unity. The blood on the lintel secured Israel's peace. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." (Ver. 13) There was nothing more required, in order to enjoy settled peace, in reference to the destroying angel, than the application of the blood of sprinkling. Death had to do its work in every house throughout the land of Egypt. "It is appointed unto men once to die. But God, in His great mercy, found an unblemished substitute for Israel on which the sentence of death was executed. Thus God's claims and Israel's need were met by one and the same thing, namely, the blood of the lamb. That blood outside proved that all was perfectly, because divinely, settled; and therefore perfect peace reigned within. A shade of doubt in the bosom of an Israelite, would have been a dishonour offered to the divinely-appointed ground of peace—the blood of atonement.

True it is that each one within the blood-sprinkled door would, necessarily, feel that were he to receive his due reward, the sword of the destroyer should, most assuredly, find its object in him; but then the lamb was treated in his stead. This was the solid foundation of his peace. The judgement that was due to him fell upon a divinely-appointed victim; and believing this, he could feed in peace within. A single doubt would have made Jehovah a liar; for He had said, "when I see the *blood*, I will pass over you." This was enough. It was no question of personal worthiness. Self had nothing whatever to do in the matter. All under the cover of the blood were safe. They were not merely in a saveable state, they were *saved*. They were not hoping or praying to be saved, they knew it as an assured fact, on the authority of that word which shall endure throughout all generations. Moreover, they were not partly saved and partly exposed to judgement; they were wholly saved. The blood of the lamb and the word of the Lord formed the foundation of Israel's peace on that terrible night in which Egypt's firstborn were laid low. If an hair of an Israelite's head could be touched, it would have proved Jehovah's word void, and the blood of the lamb valueless.

It is most needful to be simple and clear as to what constitutes the ground of a sinner's peace, in the presence of God. So many things are mixed up with the finished work of Christ, that souls are plunged into darkness and uncertainty, as to their acceptance. They do not see the absolutely-settled character of redemption through the blood of Christ, in its application to themselves. They seem not to be aware that full forgiveness of sins rests upon the simple fact that a full atonement has been offered — a fact attested in the view of all created intelligence, by the resurrection of the sinner's Surety from the dead. They know that there is no other way of being saved but by the blood of the cross — but the devils know this, yet it avails them nought. What is so much needed is to know that *we are saved*. The Israelite not merely knew that there was safety in the blood; he knew that *he was safe*. And why safe? Was it because of anything that he had done, or felt, or thought? By no means, but because God had said, "when I see the blood I will pass over you." He rested upon God's testimony. He believed what God said, because God said it. "He set to his seal that God was true."

And, observe, my reader, it was not upon his own thoughts, feelings, or experiences, respecting the blood, that the Israelite rested. This would have been a poor sandy foundation to rest upon. His thoughts and feelings might be deep or they might be shallow; but deep or shallow, they had nothing to do with the ground of his peace. It was not said, "when you see the blood, and value it as you ought, I will pass over you." This would have been sufficient to plunge him in dark despair about himself, inasmuch as it was quite impossible that the human mind could ever sufficiently appreciate the precious blood of the Lamb. What gave peace was the fact that Jehovah's eye rested upon the blood,

and that He knew its worth. This tranquillised the heart. The blood was outside, and the Israelite inside, so that he could not possibly see it; but God saw it, and that was quite enough.

The application of this to the question of a sinner's peace is very plain. The Lord Jesus Christ, having shed His precious blood, as a perfect atonement for sin, has taken it into the presence of God, and sprinkled it there; and God's testimony assures the believing sinner, that everything is settled on his behalf — settled not by his estimate of the blood, but by the blood itself which God estimates so highly, that because of it, without a single jot or tittle added thereto, He can righteously forgive all sin, and accept the sinner as perfectly righteous in Christ. How can any one ever enjoy settled peace, if his peace depends upon his estimate of the blood? Impossible. The loftiest estimate which the human mind can form of the blood must fall infinitely short of its divine preciousness; and, therefore, if our peace were to depend upon our valuing it as we ought, we could no more enjoy settled peace than if we were seeking it by "works of law." There must either be a sufficient ground of peace in the blood alone, or we can never have peace. To mix up our estimate with it, is to upset the entire fabric of Christianity, just as effectually as if we were to conduct the sinner to the foot of mount Sinai, and put him under a covenant of works. Either Christ's atoning sacrifice is sufficient or it is not. If it is sufficient, why those doubts and fears? The words of our lips profess that the work is finished; but the doubts and fears of the heart declare that it is not. Every one who doubts his full and everlasting forgiveness, denies, so far as he is concerned, the completeness of the sacrifice of Christ.

But there are very many who would shrink from the idea of deliberately and avowedly calling in question the efficacy of the blood of Christ, who, nevertheless, have not settled peace. Such persons profess to be quite assured of the sufficiency of the blood, if only *they* were sure of an interest therein — *if only* they had the right kind of faith. There are many precious souls in this unhappy condition. They are occupied with their interest and their faith, instead of with Christ's blood, and God's word. In other words, they are looking in at self, instead of out at Christ. This is not faith; and, as a consequence, they have not peace. An Israelite within the blood-stained lintel could teach such souls a most seasonable lesson. He was not saved by his interest in, or his thoughts about, the blood, but simply by the blood. No doubt, he had a blessed interest in it; and he would have his thoughts, likewise; but, then, God did not say, "When I see your interest in the blood, I will pass over you." Oh! no; THE BLOOD, in all its solitary dignity and divine efficacy, was set before Israel; and had they attempted to place even a morsel of unleavened bread beside the blood, as a ground of security: they would have made Jehovah a liar, and denied the sufficiency of His remedy.

We are ever prone to look at something in or connected with ourselves as necessary, in order to make up, with the blood of Christ, the groundwork of our peace. There is a sad lack of clearness and soundness on this vital point, as is evident from the doubts and fears with which so many of the people of God are afflicted. We are apt to regard the fruits of the Spirit in us, rather than the work of Christ *for* us, as the foundation of peace. We shall see, presently, the place which the work of the Holy Spirit occupies in Christianity; but it is never set forth in Scripture as being that on which our peace reposes. The Holy Ghost did not make peace, but Christ did. The Holy Ghost is not said to be our peace, but Christ is. God did not send preaching peace by the Holy Ghost, but by Jesus Christ. (Compare Acts 10: 36; Eph. 2: 14, 17; Col. 1: 20) My reader cannot be too simple in his apprehension of this important distinction. It is the blood of Christ which gives peace, imparts perfect justification, divine righteousness, purges the conscience, brings us into the holiest of all, justifies God in receiving the believing sinner, and constitutes our title to all the joys, the dignities, and the glories of heaven. (See Rom. 3: 24-28; Rom. 5: 9; Eph. 2: 13-18; Col. 1: 20-22; Heb. 9: 14; Heb. 10: 19; 1 Peter 1: 19; 1 Peter 2: 24; 1 John 1: 7; Rev. 7: 14-17)

It will not, I fondly hope, be supposed that, in seeking to put "the precious blood of Christ" in its divinely-appointed place, I would write a single line which might seem to detract from the value of the Spirit's operations. God forbid. The Holy Ghost reveals Christ; makes us to know, enjoy, and feed upon Christ; He bears witness to Christ; He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. He is the power of communion, the seal, the witness, the earnest, the unction. In short, His blessed operations are absolutely essential. Without Him, we can neither see, hear, know, feel, experience, enjoy, nor exhibit ought of Christ. This is plain. The doctrine of the Spirit's operations is clearly laid down in the word, and is understood and admitted by every true and rightly instructed Christian.

Yet, notwithstanding all this, the work of the Spirit is not the ground of peace; for, if it were, we could not have settled peace until Christ's coming, inasmuch as the work of the Spirit, in the Church, will not, properly speaking, be complete till then. He still carries on His work in the believer. "He maketh intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered." (Rom 8) He labours to bring us up to the predestinated standard, namely, perfect conformity, in all things, to the image of "the Son." He is the sole Author of every right desire, every holy aspiration, every pure affection, every divine experience, every sound conviction; but, clearly, His work in us will not be complete until we have left this present scene and taken our place with Christ in the glory. Just as, in the case of Abraham's servant, his work was not complete, in the matter of Rebecca, until he had presented her to Isaac.

Not so the work of Christ FOR us. That is absolutely and eternally complete. He could say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." (John 17: 4) And, again, "It is finished." (John 19: 30) The Holy Ghost cannot yet say He has finished His work. As the true Vicar of Christ upon earth, He still labours amid the varied hostile influences which surround the sphere of His operations. He works in the hearts of the people of God to bring them up, practically and experimentally, to the divinely-appointed standard. But He never teaches a soul to lean on His work for peace in the presence of God. His office is to speak of Jesus. "He," says Christ, "shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you." (John 16: 13, 14) If, then, it is only by the Spirit's teaching that any one can understand the true ground of peace, it is obvious that He can only present Christ's work as the foundation on which the soul must rest for ever; yea, it is in virtue of that work that He takes up His abode and carries on His marvellous operations in the believer. He is not our title, though He reveals that title and enables us to understand and enjoy it.

Hence, therefore, the paschal lamb, as the ground of Israel's peace, is a marked and beautiful type of Christ as the ground of the believer's peace. There was nothing to be added to the blood on the lintel; neither is there anything to be added to the blood on the mercy-seat. The "unleavened bread" and "bitter herbs" were necessary, but not as forming, either in whole or in part, the ground of peace. They were for the inside of the house and formed the characteristics of the communion there; but THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB WAS THE FOUNDATION OF EVERYTHING. It saved them from death and introduced them into a scene of life, light, and peace.' It formed the link between God and His redeemed people. As a people linked with God, on the ground of accomplished redemption, it was their high privilege to meet certain responsibilities; but these responsibilities did not form the link, but merely flowed out of it.

And I would further remind my reader that the obedient *life* of Christ is not set forth in Scripture as the procuring cause of our forgiveness. It was His death upon the cross that opened those everlasting floodgates of love which else should have remained pent up for ever. If he had remained to this very hour, going through the cities of Israel, "doing good," the veil of the temple would continue unrent, to bar the worshipper's approach to God. It was His death that rent that mysterious curtain "from top to bottom." It is "by *His stripes*," not by His obedient life, that "we are healed;" and those "stripes" He

endured *on the cross*, and nowhere else. His own words, during the progress of His blessed life, are quite sufficient to settle this point. "I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." (Luke 12: 50) To what does this refer but to His death upon the cross, which was the accomplishment of His baptism and the opening up of a righteous vent through which His love might freely flow out to the guilty sons of Adam? Again, He says, "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone." (John 12: 24) He was that precious "corn of wheat:" and He should have remained for ever "alone," even though incarnate, had He not, by His death upon the accursed tree, removed out of the way everything that could have hindered the union of his people with Him in resurrection. "If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

My reader cannot too carefully ponder this subject. It is one of immense weight and importance. He has to remember two points in reference to this entire question, namely, that there could be no union with Christ, save in resurrection; and that Christ *only* suffered for sins on the cross. We are not to suppose that incarnation was, by any means, Christ taking us into union with Himself. This could not be. How could sinful flesh be thus united? The body of sin had to be destroyed by death. Sin had to be put away, according to the divine requirement; all the power of the enemy had to be abolished. How was all this to be done? Only by the precious, spotless Lamb of God submitting to the death of the cross. "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect *through sufferings*." (Heb. 2: 10) "Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and *the third day I shall be perfected*." (Luke 13: 32) The expressions "perfect" and "perfected" in the above passages do not refer to Christ in His own Person abstractedly, for He was perfect from all eternity, as Son of God; and as to His humanity, He was absolutely perfect likewise. But then, as "the captain of salvation" — as "bringing many sons unto glory" — as "bringing forth much fruit" — as associating redeemed people with Himself, He had to reach "the third day" in order to be "perfected." He went down *alone* into the "horrible pit, and miry clay;" but, directly He plants His "foot on the rock" of resurrection, He associates with Himself the "many sons." (Ps 40: 1-3) He fought the fight alone; but, as the mighty Conqueror, He scatters around Him, in rich profusion, the spoils of victory, that we might gather them up and enjoy them for ever.

Moreover, we are not to regard the cross of Christ as a mere circumstance in a life of sin-bearing. It was the grand and only scene of sin-bearing. "His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." (1 Peter 2: 14) He did not bear them anywhere else. He did not bear them in the manger, nor in the wilderness, nor in the garden; but ONLY "ON THE TREE." He never had ought to say to sin, save on the cross; and there He bowed His blessed head, and yielded up His precious life, under the accumulated weight of His people's sins. Neither did He ever suffer at the hand of God save on the cross; and there Jehovah hid His face from Him because He was "made sin." (2 Cor. 5)

The above train of thought, and the various passages of scripture referred to, may, perhaps, enable my reader to enter more fully into the divine power of the words, "*When I see The blood* I will pass over you." The lamb needed to be without blemish, no doubt, for what else could meet the holy eye of Jehovah? But, had the blood not been shed, there could have been no passing over, for "without shedding of blood is no remission." (Heb. 9: 22) This subject will, the Lord permitting, come more fully and appropriately before us in the types of Leviticus. It demands the prayerful attention of every one who loves our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

We shall now consider the second aspect of the Passover, as the centre round which the assembly was gathered, in peaceful, holy, happy fellowship. Israel, saved by the blood, was one thing; and Israel, feeding on the lamb, was quite another. They were saved *only* by the blood; but the object round which they were gathered was, manifestly, the roasted lamb. This is not, by any means, a distinction without a

difference. The blood of the Lamb forms the foundation both of our connection with God, and our connection with one another. It is as those who are washed in that blood, that we are introduced to God and to one another. Apart from the perfect atonement of Christ, there could obviously be no fellowship either with God or His assembly. Still we must remember that it is to a living Christ in heaven that believers are gathered by the Holy Ghost. It is with a living Head we are connected — to "a living stone" we have come. He is our centre. Having found peace, through His blood, we own Him as our grand gathering point and connecting link. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18: 20) The Holy Ghost is the only Gatherer; Christ Himself is the only object to which we are gathered; and our assembly, when thus convened, is to be characterised by holiness, so that the Lord our God may dwell among us. The Holy Ghost can only gather to Christ. He cannot gather to a system, a name, a doctrine, or an ordinance. He gathers to a Person, and that Person is a glorified Christ in heaven. This must stamp a peculiar character on God's assembly. Men may associate, on any ground, round any centre, or for any object they please; but, when the Holy Ghost associates, it is on the ground of accomplished redemption, around the Person of Christ, in order to form a holy dwelling place for God. (1 Cor. 3: 16, 17; 1 Cor. 6: 19; Eph. 2: 21, 22; 1 Peter 2: 4, 5)

We shall now look in detail at the principles brought before us in the paschal feast. The assembly of Israel, as under the cover of the blood, was to be ordered by Jehovah in a manner worthy of Himself. In the matter of safety from judgement, as we have already seen, nothing was needed but the blood; but in the fellowship which flowed out of this safety, other things were needed which could not be neglected with impunity.

And first, then, we read, "They shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof." (Ver. 8, 9) The lamb, round which the congregation was assembled, and on which it feasted, was a roasted lamb—a lamb which had undergone the action of fire. In this we see "Christ our Passover" presenting Himself to the action of the fire of divine holiness and judgement which found in Him a perfect material. He could say, "Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress." (Ps. 17: 3) All in Him was perfect. The fire tried Him and there was no dross. "His head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof." That is to say, the seat of His understanding; His outward, walk with all that pertained thereto — all was submitted to the action of the fire, and all was entirely perfect. The process of roasting was therefore deeply significant, as is every circumstance in the ordinances of God. Nothing should be passed over, because all is pregnant with meaning.

Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water." Had it been eaten thus, there would have been no expression of the great truth which it was the divine purpose to shadow forth; namely, that our paschal Lamb was to endure, on the cross, the fire of Jehovah's righteous wrath — a truth of infinite preciousness to the soul. We are not merely under the eternal shelter of the blood of the Lamb, but we feed, by faith, upon the Person of the Lamb. Many of us come short here. We are apt to rest satisfied with being saved by what Christ has done for us, without cultivating holy communion with Himself. His loving heart could never be satisfied with this. He has brought us nigh to Himself, that we might enjoy Him, that we might feed on Him, and delight in Him. He presents Himself to us as the One who has endured, to the uttermost, the intense fire of the wrath of God, that He may, in this wondrous character, be the food of our ransomed souls.

But how was this lamb to be eaten? "With unleavened bread and bitter herbs." Leaven is, invariably, used, throughout scripture, as emblematical of evil. Neither in the Old nor in the New

Testament is it ever used to set forth anything pure, holy, or good. Thus, in this chapter, "the feast of unleavened bread" is the type of that practical separation from evil which is the proper result of being washed from our sins in the blood of the Lamb, and the proper accompaniment of communion with His sufferings. Nought but perfectly unleavened bread could at all comport with a roasted lamb. A single particle of that which was the marked type of evil, would have destroyed the moral character of the entire ordinance. How could we connect any species of evil with our fellowship with a suffering Christ? Impossible. All who enter by the power of the Holy Ghost, into the meaning of the cross will, assuredly, by the same power, put away leaven from all their borders. "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: *therefore* let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Cor. 5: 7, 8) The feast spoken of in this passage is that which, in the life and conduct of the Church, corresponds with the feast of unleavened bread. This latter lasted "seven days;" and the Church collectively, and the believer individually, are called to walk in practical holiness, during the seven days, or entire period, of their course here below; and this, moreover, as the direct result of being washed in the blood, and having communion with the sufferings of Christ.

The Israelite did not put away leaven in order to be saved, but because he was saved; and if he failed to put away leaven, it did not raise the question of security through the blood, but simply of fellowship with the assembly. "Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land." (Ver. 19) The cutting off of an Israelite from the congregation answers precisely to the suspension of a Christian's fellowship, if he be indulging in that which is contrary to the holiness of the divine presence. God cannot tolerate evil. A single unholy thought will interrupt the soul's communion; and until the soil contracted by any such thought is got rid of by confession, founded on the advocacy of Christ, the communion cannot possibly be restored. (See 1 John 1: 9-10) The true-hearted Christian rejoices in this. He can ever "give thanks at the remembrance of God's holiness." He would not, if he could, lower the standard a single hair's breadth. It is his exceeding joy to walk in company with one who will not go on, for a moment, with a single jot or tittle of leaven."

Blessed be God, we know that nothing can ever snap asunder the link which binds the true believer to Him. We are "saved in the Lord," not with a temporary or conditional, but "with an everlasting salvation." But then salvation and communion are not the same thing. Many are saved, who do not know it; and many, also, who do not enjoy it. It is quite impossible that I can enjoy a blood-stained lintel if I have leavened borders. This is an axiom in the divine life. May it be written on our hearts! Practical holiness, though not the basis of our *salvation*, is intimately connected with our *enjoyment* thereof. An Israelite was not saved by unleavened bread, but by the blood; and yet leaven would have cut him off from communion. And as to the Christian, he is not saved by his practical holiness, but by the blood; but if he indulges in evil, in thought, word, or deed, he will have no true enjoyment of salvation, and no true communion with the Person of the Lamb.

This, I cannot doubt, is the secret of much of the spiritual barrenness and lack of settled peace which one finds amongst the children of God. They are not cultivating holiness; they are not keeping "the feast of unleavened bread." The blood is on the lintel, but the leaven within their borders keeps them from enjoying the security which the blood provides. The allowance of evil destroys our fellowship, though it does not break the link which binds our souls eternally to God. Those who belong to God's assembly must be holy. They have not only been delivered from the guilt and consequences of sin, but- also from the practice of it, the power of it, and the love of it. The very fact of being delivered

by the blood of the paschal lamb, rendered Israel responsible to put away leaven from all their quarters. They could not say, in the frightful language of the antinomian, "now that we are delivered, we may conduct ourselves as we please." By no means. If they were saved by grace, they were saved to holiness. The soul that can take occasion, from the freedom of divine grace, and the completeness of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, to "continue in sin," proves very distinctly that he understands neither the one nor the other.

Grace not only saves the soul with an everlasting salvation, but also imparts a nature which delights in everything that belongs to God, because it is divine. We are made partakers of the divine nature, which cannot sin, because it is born of God. To walk in the energy of this nature is, in reality, to keep the feast of unleavened bread. There is no "old leaven" nor "leaven of malice and wickedness" in the new nature, because it is of God, and God is holy, and "God is love." Hence it is evident that we do not put away evil from us in order to better our old nature, which is irremediable; nor yet to obtain the new nature, but because we have it. We have life, and, in the power of that life, we put away evil. It is only when we are delivered from the guilt of sin that we can understand or exhibit the true power of holiness. To attempt it in any other way is hopeless labour. The feast of unleavened bread can only be kept beneath the perfect shelter of the blood.

We may perceive equal significancy and moral propriety in that which was to accompany the unleavened bread, namely, the "bitter herbs." We cannot enjoy communion with the sufferings of Christ, without remembering what it was which rendered those sufferings needful, and this remembrance must necessarily produce a chastened and subdued tone of spirit, which is aptly expressed by the bitter herbs in the paschal feast. If the roasted lamb expressed Christ's endurance of the wrath of God in His own Person, on the cross, the bitter herbs express the believer's recognition of the truth that He "suffered *for us*." "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." (Is 53: 5) It is well, owing to the excessive levity of our hearts, to understand the deep meaning of the bitter herbs. Who can read such Psalms as the 6, 22, 38, 49, 88, and 109, and not enter, in some measure, into the meaning of the unleavened bread with bitter herbs? Practical holiness of life with deep subduedness of soul must flow from real communion with Christ's suffering, for it is quite impossible that moral evil and levity of spirit can exist in view of those sufferings.

But, it may be asked, is there not a deep joy for the soul in the consciousness that Christ has borne our sins; that He has fully drained, on our behalf, the cup of God's righteous wrath? Unquestionably. This is the solid foundation of all our joy. But can we ever forget that it was for "*our sins*" He suffered? Can we ever lose sight of the soul-subduing truth that the blessed Lamb of God bowed His head beneath the weight of our transgressions. Surely not. We must eat our lamb with bitter herbs, which, be it remembered, do not set forth the tears of a worthless and shallow sentimentality, but the deep and real experiences of a soul that enters, with spiritual intelligence and power, into the meaning and into the practical effect of the cross.

In contemplating the cross, we find in it that which cancels all our guilt. This imparts sweet peace and joy. But we find in it also the complete setting aside of nature, the crucifixion of "the flesh," the death of "the old man." (See Rom. 6: 6; Gal. 2: 20; Gal. 6: 14; Col 2: 11) This, in its practical results, will involve much that is "bitter" to nature. It will call for self-denial, the mortification of our members which are on the earth, (Col. 3: 5) the reckoning of self to be dead indeed unto sin. (Rom. 6) All these things may seem terrible to look at; but when one gets inside the bloodstained door-post he thinks quite differently. The very herbs which, to an Egyptian's taste, would, no doubt, have seemed so bitter, formed an integral part of Israel's redemption feast. Those who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, who know the joy of fellowship with Him, esteem it a "feast" to put away evil and to keep nature in the



place of death.

"And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire." (Ver. 10) In this command, we are taught that the communion of the congregation was, in no wise, to be separated from the sacrifice on which that communion was founded. The heart must ever cherish the vivid remembrance that all true fellowship is inseparably connected with accomplished redemption. To think of having communion *with God*, on any other ground is to imagine that He could have fellowship with our evil; and to think of fellowship *with man*, on any other ground, is but to form an unholy club, from which nothing could issue but confusion and iniquity. In a word, all must be founded upon, and inseparably linked with, the blood. This is the simple meaning of eating the paschal lamb the same night on which the blood was shed. The fellowship must not be separated from its foundation.

What a beautiful picture, then, we have in the blood-sheltered assembly of Israel, feeding peacefully on the roasted lamb, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs! No fear of judgement, no fear of the wrath of Jehovah, no fear of the terrible hurricane of righteous vengeance which was sweeping vehemently over the land of Egypt, at the midnight hour. All was profound peace within the blood-stained lintel. They had no need to fear anything from without; and nothing within could trouble them, save leaven, which would have proved a death-blow to all their peace and blessedness. What a picture for the Church! What a picture for the Christian! May we gaze upon it with an enlightened eye and a teachable spirit!

However, we are not yet done with this most instructive ordinance. We have been looking at Israel's position, and Israel's food, let us now look at Israel's habit.

"And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste; it is the Lord's Passover." (Ver. 11) They were to eat it as a people prepared to leave behind them the land of death and darkness, wrath and judgement, to move onward toward the land of promise — their destined inheritance. The blood which had preserved them from the fate of Egypt's firstborn was also the foundation of their deliverance from Egypt's bondage; and they were now to set out and walk with God toward the land that flowed with milk and honey. True, they had not yet crossed the Red Sea; they had not yet gone the "three days' journey." Still they were, in principle, a redeemed people, a separated people, a pilgrim people, an expectant people, a dependent people; and their entire habit was to be in keeping with their present position and future destiny. The girded loins bespoke intense separation from all around them, together with a readiness to serve. The shod feet declared their preparedness to leave that scene; while the staff was the expressive emblem of a pilgrim people, in the attitude of leaning on something outside themselves. Precious characteristics! Would that they were more exhibited by every member of God's redeemed family.

Beloved Christian reader, let us "meditate on these things." We have tasted, through grace, the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Jesus; as such it is our privilege to feed upon His adorable Person and delight ourselves in His "unsearchable riches;" to have fellowship in His sufferings and be made conformable to His death. Oh! let us, therefore, be seen with the unleavened bread and bitter herbs, the girded loins, the shoes and staff. In a word, let us be marked as a holy people, a crucified people, a watchful and diligent people — a people manifestly "on our way to God" — on our way to glory — "bound for the kingdom." May God grant us to enter into the depth and power of all these things; so that they may not be mere theories in our intellects mere principles of scriptural knowledge and interpretation; but living, divine realities, known by experience, and exhibited in the life, to the glory of God.

We shall close this section by glancing, for a moment, at verses 43-49. Here we are taught that while it was the place and privilege of every true Israelite to eat the Passover, yet no uncircumcised stranger should participate therein. "There shall no stranger eat thereof ...all the congregation of Israel shall keep it." Circumcision was necessary ere the Passover could be eaten. In other words, the sentence of death must be written upon nature ere we can intelligently feed upon Christ, either as the ground of peace or the centre of unity. Circumcision has its antitype in the cross. The male alone was circumcised. The female was represented in the male. So, in the cross, Christ represented His Church, and, hence, the Church is crucified with Christ; nevertheless, she lives by the life of Christ, known and exhibited on earth, through the power of the Holy Ghost. "And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the Passover unto the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof." "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Rom. 8: 8)

The ordinance of circumcision formed the grand boundary line between the Israel of God and all the nations that were upon the face of the earth; and the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ forms the boundary between the church and the world. It matters not, in the smallest degree, what advantages of person or position a man possessed, he could have no part with Israel until he submitted to that flesh-cutting operation. A circumcised beggar was nearer to God than an uncircumcised king. So, also, now, there can be no participation in the joys of God's redeemed, save by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that cross sweeps away all pretensions, levels all distinctions, and unites all in one holy congregation of blood-washed worshippers. The cross forms a boundary so lofty, and a defence so impenetrable, that not a single atom of earth or of nature can cross over or pass through to mingle itself with "the new creation." *All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself.*" (2 Cor 5: 18)

But, not only was Israel's separation from all strangers strictly maintained, in the institution of the Passover; Israel's unity was also as clearly enforced. "*In one house* shall it be eaten: thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house. neither shall ye break a bone thereof." (Ver. 46) Here is as fair and beautiful a type as we could have of the "one body and one Spirit. The Church of God is one. God sees it as such, maintains it as such, and will manifest it as such, in the view of angels, men, and devils, notwithstanding all that has been done to interfere with that hallowed unity. Blessed be God, the unity of His Church is as much in His keeping as is her justification, acceptance, and eternal security. "He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken." (Ps. 34: 20) And, again, "a bone of him shall not be broken." (John 19: 36) Despite the rudeness and hard-heartedness of Rome's soldiery, and despite all the hostile influences which have been set to work, from age to age, the body of Christ is one and its divine unity can never be broken. "THERE IS ONE BODY AND ONE SPIRIT;" and that, moreover, down here, on this very earth. Happy are they who have got faith to recognise this precious truth, and faithfulness to carry it out, in these last days; notwithstanding the almost insuperable difficulties which attend upon their profession and their practice! I believe God will own and honour such.

The Lord deliver us from that spirit of unbelief which would lead us to judge by the sight of our eyes, instead of by the light of His changeless Word!

### **Exodus 13**

In the opening verses of this chapter, we are taught, clearly and distinctly, that personal devotedness and personal holiness are fruits which redeeming love produces in those who are the happy subjects thereof. The dedication of the firstborn and the feast of unleavened bread are here set forth in their immediate connection with the deliverance of the people out of the land of Egypt.

"Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine. And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten." And again, "Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the Lord. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days: and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee: neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters."

Then we have the reason of both these significant observances laid down. "And thou shalt show thy son in that day, saying, This is done *because of that* which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt." And, again, "It shall be, when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage. and it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the Lord slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast: *therefore* I sacrifice to the Lord all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem."

The more fully we enter, by the power of the Spirit of God, into the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, the more decided will be our separation, and the more whole-hearted will be our devotedness. The effort to produce either the one or the other, until redemption is known, will prove the most hopeless labour possible. All our doings must be "because of that which the Lord hath done," and not in order to get anything from Him. Efforts after life and peace prove that we are, as yet, strangers to the power of the blood; whereas the pure fruits of an experienced redemption are to the praise of Him who has redeemed us. "For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works lest Any man should boast; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2: 8, 10) God has already prepared a path of good works for us to walk in; and He, by grace, prepares us to walk therein. It is only as saved that we can walk in such a path. Were it otherwise, we might boast; but seeing that we ourselves are as much God's workmanship as the path in which we walk, there is no room whatever for boasting.

True Christianity is but the manifestation of the life of Christ, implanted in us by the operation of the Holy Ghost, in pursuance of God's eternal counsels of sovereign grace; and all our doings, previous to the implantation of this life, are but "dead works," from which we need to have our consciences purged just as much as from "wicked works." (Heb. 9: 14) The term "dead works," comprehends all works which men do with the direct object of getting life. If a man is seeking for life, it is very evident that he has not yet gotten it. He may be very sincere in seeking it, but his very sincerity only makes it the more obvious that, as yet, he has not consciously reached it. Hence, therefore, everything done in order to get life is a dead work, inasmuch as it is done without life — the life of Christ, the only true life, the only source from whence good works can flow. And, observe, it is not a question of "wicked works;" no one would think of getting life by such. No; you will find, on the contrary, that persons continually have recourse to "dead works," in order to ease their consciences, under the sense of "wicked works," whereas divine revelation teaches us that the conscience needs to be purged from the one as well as the other.

Again, as to righteousness, we read that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." It is not said that "all our wickednesses," merely, "are as filthy rags." This would, at once, be admitted. But the fact is, that the very best fruit which we can produce, in the shape of religiousness and righteousness, is represented, on the page of eternal truth, as "dead works," and "filthy rags." Our very efforts after life, do but prove us to be dead; and our very efforts after righteousness do but prove us to be enwrapped in

filthy rags. It is only as the actual possessors of eternal life and divine righteousness that we can walk in the divinely-prepared path of good works. Dead works and filthy rags could never be suffered to appear in such a path. None but "the redeemed of the Lord" can walk therein. It was as a redeemed people that Israel kept the feast of unleavened bread, and dedicated their firstborn to Jehovah. The former of these observances we have already considered; as to the latter, it contains a rich mine of instruction.

The destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt to destroy all the firstborn; but Israel's firstborn escaped through the death of a divinely-provided substitute. Accordingly, these latter appear before us, in this chapter, as a living people, dedicated to God. Saved by the blood of the lamb, they are privileged to consecrate their ransomed life to Him who had ransomed it. Thus it was only as redeemed that they possessed life. The grace of God alone had made them to differ, and had given them the place of living men in His presence. In their case, assuredly, there was no room for boasting; for, as to any personal merit or worthiness, we learn from this chapter that they were put on a level with an unclean and worthless thing. "Every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck; and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem." (Ver. 13) There were two classes, the clean and the unclean; and man was classed with the latter. The lamb was to answer for the unclean; and if the ass were not redeemed, his neck was to be broken; so that an unredeemed man was put upon a level with an unclean animal, and that, moreover, in a condition than which nothing could be more worthless and unsightly. What a humiliating picture of man in his natural condition! Oh! that our poor proud hearts could enter more into it. Then should we rejoice more unfeignedly in the happy privilege of being washed from our guilt in the blood of the Lamb, and having all our personal vileness left behind for ever, in the tomb where our Surety lay buried.

Christ was the Lamb — the clean, the spotless Lamb. We are unclean. But for ever adored be His matchless name! He took our position; and, *on the cross*, was made sin, and treated as such. That which we should have endured throughout the countless ages of eternity, He endured for us on the tree. He bore *all* that was due to us, there and then, in order that we might enjoy what is due to Him, for ever. He got our deserts that we might get His. The clean took, for a time, the place of the unclean, in order that the unclean might take for ever the place of the clean. Thus, whereas, by nature, we are represented by the loathsome figure of an ass with his neck broken; by grace we are represented by a risen and glorified Christ in heaven. Amazing contrast! It lays man's glory in the dust and magnifies the riches of redeeming love. It silences man's empty boastings and puts into his mouth a hymn of praise to God and the Lamb, which shall swell throughout the courts of heaven during the everlasting ages.\*

{\*It is interesting to see that by nature we are ranked with an unclean animal; by grace we are associated with Christ the spotless Lamb. There can be nothing lower than the place which belongs to us by nature; nothing higher than that which belongs to us by grace. Look, for example, at an ass with his neck broken; there is what an unredeemed man is worth. Look at "the precious blood of Christ;" there is what a redeemed man is worth. "Unto you that believe is the preciousness." That is, all who are washed in the blood partake of Christ's preciousness. As He is "a living stone," they are "living stones;" as He is "a precious stone, they are "precious stones." They get life and preciousness all from Him and in Him. They are as He is. Every stone in the edifice is precious, because purchased at no less a price than "the blood of the Lamb." May the people of God know more fully their place and privileges in Christ!}

How forcibly is one here reminded of the apostle's memorable and weighty words to the Romans, "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; knowing that Christ being

raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Rom. 6: 8-14) We are not only ransomed from the power of death and the grave, but also united to Him who has ransomed us at the heavy cost of His own precious life, that we might, in the energy of the Holy Ghost, dedicate our new life, with all its powers, to His service, so that His worthy name may be glorified in us according to the will of God and our Father.

We are furnished, in the last few verses of Exodus 13 with a touching and beautiful example of the Lord's tender consideration of His people's need. "He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." (Psalm 103: 14) When He redeemed Israel and took them into relationship with Himself, He, in His unfathomed and infinite grace, charged Himself with all their need and weakness. It mattered not what they were or what they needed, when I AM was with them, in all the exhaustless treasures of that name. He had to conduct them from Egypt to Canaan, and we here find Him occupying Himself in selecting a suitable path for them. "And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: but God led the people about through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea." (Ver. 17, 18)

The Lord, in His condescending grace, so orders for His people, that they do not, at their first setting out, encounter heavy trials which might have the effect of discouraging their hearts and driving them back. "The way of the wilderness" was a much more protracted route; but God had deep and varied lessons to teach His people, which could only be learnt in the desert. They were, afterwards, reminded of this fact, in the following passage: "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee, these forty years, in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years." (Deut. 8: 2-4) Such precious lessons as these could never have been learnt in "the way of the land of the Philistines." In that way, they might have learnt what war was, at an early stage of their career; but "in the way of the wilderness," they learnt what flesh was, in all its crookedness, unbelief, and rebellion. But I AM was there, in all His patient grace, unerring wisdom, and infinite power. None but Himself could have met the demand. None but He could endure the opening up of the depths of a human heart. To have my heart unlocked anywhere, save in the presence of infinite grace, would plunge me in hopeless despair. The heart of man is but a little hell. What boundless mercy, then, to be delivered from its terrible depths!

"Oh! to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be;  
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,  
Bind my wandering heart to thee!"

"And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the

wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: he took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." Jehovah not only selected a path for His people, but He also came down to walk with them therein, and make Himself known to them according to their need. He not only conducted them safely outside the bounds of Egypt, but He also came down, as it were, in His travelling chariot, to be their companion through all the vicissitudes of their wilderness journey. This was divine grace. They were not merely delivered out of the furnace of Egypt and then allowed to make the best of their way to Canaan. Such was not God's manner toward them. He knew that they had a toilsome and perilous journey before them, through serpents and scorpions, snares and difficulties, drought and barrenness; and He, blessed be His name for ever, would not suffer them to go alone. He would be the companion of all their toils and dangers; yea, "He went before them." He was "a guide, a glory, a defence, to save from every fear. Alas! that they should ever have grieved that Blessed One by their hardness of heart. Had they only walked humbly, contentedly, and confidingly with Him, their march would have been a triumphant one from first to last. With Jehovah in their forefront, no power could have interrupted their onward progress from Egypt to Canaan. He would have carried them through and planted them in the mountain of His inheritance, according to His promise, and by the power of His right hand; nor should as much as a single Canaanite have been allowed to remain therein to be a thorn in their side. Thus will it be, by and by, when Jehovah shall set His hand, a second time, to deliver His people from under the power of all their oppressors. day the Lord hasten the time!

#### **Exodus 14**

"They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep." (Ps. 107: 23, 24) How true is this! and yet our coward hearts do so shrink from those "great waters!" We prefer carrying on our traffic in the shallows, and, as a result, we fail to see "the works" and "wonders" of our God; for these can only be seen and known "in the deep."

It is in the day of trial and difficulty that the soul experiences something of the deep and untold blessedness of being able to count on God. Were all to go on smoothly, this would not be so. It is not in gliding along the surface of a tranquil lake that the reality of the Master's presence is felt; but actually when the tempest roars, and the waves roll over the ship. The Lord does not hold out to us the prospect of exemption from trial and tribulation; quite the opposite: He tells us we shall have to meet both the one and the other; but He promises to be with us in them; and this is infinitely better. God's presence in the trial is much better than exemption *from* the trial. The sympathy of His heart *with us* is sweeter far than the power of His hand *for us*. The Master's presence with His faithful servants, while passing through the furnace, was better far than the display of His power to keep them out of it. (Dan. 3) We would frequently desire to be allowed to pass on our way without trial, but this would involve serious loss. The Lord's presence is never so sweet as in moments of appalling difficulty.

Thus it was in Israel's case, as recorded in this chapter. They were brought into an overwhelming difficulty. They are called to "do business in great waters." "They are at their wit's end." Pharaoh, repenting himself of having let them go out of his land, determines to make one desperate effort to recover them. "And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them..... And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid; and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord." Here was a deeply-trying scene - one in which human effort could avail nothing. As well might they have attempted to put back with a straw the ocean's mighty tide, as seek to extricate themselves by ought that they could do.

The sea was before them, Pharaoh's hosts behind them, and the mountains around them. And all this, be it observed, permitted and ordered of God. He had marked out their position before "Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon." Moreover, He permitted Pharaoh to come upon them, And why? Just to display Himself in the salvation of His people, and the total overthrow of their enemies. "To him that divided the Red Sea into parts; for his mercy endureth for ever. And made Israel to pass through the midst of it; for his mercy endureth for ever: but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea; for his mercy endureth for ever." (Ps. 136)

There is not so much as a single position in all the desert-wanderings of God's redeemed, the boundaries of which are not marked off, with studious accuracy, by the hand of unerring wisdom and infinite love. The special bearings and peculiar influences of each position are carefully arranged. The Pi-hahiroths and the Migdols are all ordered with immediate reference to the moral condition of those whom God is conducting through the windings and labyrinths of the wilderness, and also to the display of His own character. Unbelief may oftentimes suggest the enquiry, "why is it thus?" God knows why; and He will, without doubt, reveal the why, whenever the revelation would promote His glory and His people's good. How often do we feel disposed to question as to the why and the wherefore of our being placed in such and such circumstances! How often do we perplex ourselves as to the reason of our being exposed to such and such trials! How much better to bow our heads in meek subjection, and say, 'it is well,' and 'it shall be well' When God fixes our position for us, we may rest assured it is a wise and salutary one; and even when we foolishly and wilfully choose a position for ourselves, He most graciously overrules our folly, and causes the influences of our self-chosen circumstances to work for our spiritual benefit.

It is when the people of God are brought into the greatest straits and difficulties, that they are favoured with the finest displays of God's character and actings; and for this reason He oftentimes leads them into a trying position, in order that He may the more markedly show Himself. He could have conducted Israel through the Red Sea, and far beyond the reach of Pharaoh's hosts, before ever the latter had started from Egypt; but that would not have so fully glorified His own name, or so entirely confounded the enemy, upon whom He designed to "get him honour." We too frequently lose sight of this great truth, and the consequence is that our hearts give way in the time of trial. If we could only look upon a difficult crisis as an occasion of bringing out, on our behalf, the sufficiency of divine grace, it would enable us to preserve the balance of our souls, and to glorify God, even in the deepest waters.

We feel disposed, it may be, to marvel at Israel's language, on the occasion now before us. We may feel at a loss to account for it; but the more we know of our own evil hearts of unbelief, the more we shall see how marvellously like them we are. They would seem to have forgotten the recent display of divine power on their behalf. They had seen the gods of Egypt judged, and the power of Egypt laid prostrate beneath the stroke of Jehovah's omnipotent hand. They had seen the iron chain of Egyptian bondage riven, and the furnace quenched by the same hand. All these things they had seen, and yet the moment a dark cloud appeared upon their horizon, their confidence gave way, their hearts failed, and they gave utterance to their unbelieving murmurings in the following language: Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt! .....It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness." (Ver. 11, 12) Thus is "blind unbelief," ever, "sure to err, and scan God's ways in vain." This unbelief is the same in all ages. It led David, in an evil hour, to say, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul; there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines." (1 Sam. 27: 1) And how did it turn out? Saul fell on Mount Gilboa; and David's throne was established for ever. Again, it led Elijah the Tishbite, in a moment of deep depression, to

flee for his life, from the wrathful threatenings of Jezebel. How did it turn out? Jezebel was dashed to pieces on the pavement, and Elijah was taken in a chariot of fire to heaven.

So it was with Israel in their very first moment of trial. They really thought that the Lord had taken such pains to deliver them out of Egypt merely to let them die in the wilderness. They imagined that they had been preserved by the blood of the paschal lamb, in order that they might be buried in the wilderness. Thus it is that unbelief ever reasons. It leads us to interpret God in the presence of the difficulty, instead of interpreting the difficulty in the presence of God. Faith gets behind the difficulty, and there finds God, in all His faithfulness, love, and power. It is the believer's privilege ever to be in the presence of God. He has been introduced thither by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and nothing should be suffered to take him thence. The place itself he never can lose, inasmuch as his Head and Representative, Christ, occupies it on His behalf. But although he cannot lose the thing itself, he can, very easily, lose all enjoyment of it, the experience and power of it. Whenever his difficulties come between his heart and the Lord, he is, evidently, not enjoying the Lord's presence, but suffering in the presence of his difficulties. Just as when a cloud comes between us and the sun, it robs us, for the time, of the enjoyment of his beams. It does not prevent him from shining, it merely hinders our enjoyment of him. Exactly so is it when we allow trials and sorrows, difficulties and perplexities, to hide from our souls the bright beams of our Father's countenance, which ever shine, with changeless lustre, in the face of Jesus Christ. There is no difficulty too great for our God; yea, the greater the difficulty, the more room there is for Him to act in His proper character, as the God of all power and grace. No doubt, Israel's position, in the opening of our chapter, was a deeply trying one — to flesh and blood perfectly overwhelming. But, then, the Maker of heaven and earth was there, and they had but to use Him.

Yet, alas! my reader, how speedily we fail when trial arises! These sentiments sound very nicely on the ear, and look very well upon paper; and, blessed be God, they are divinely true but, then, the thing is to practise them, when opportunity offers. It is in the practice of them that their power and blessedness are really proved. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." (John 7: 17)

"And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you today; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." (Ver. 13, 14) Here is the first attitude which faith takes in the presence of a trial. "*Stand still.*" This is impossible to flesh and blood. All who know in any measure, the restlessness of the human heart, under anticipated trial and difficulty, will be able to form some conception of what is involved in standing still. Nature must be doing something. It will rush hither and thither. It would fain have some hand in the matter. And although it may attempt to justify and sanctify its worthless doings, by bestowing upon them the imposing and popular title of "a legitimate use of means," yet are they the plain and positive fruits of unbelief which always shuts out God, and sees nought save the dark cloud of its own creation. Unbelief creates or magnifies difficulties, and then sets us about removing them by our own bustling and fruitless activities, which, in reality, do but raise a dust around us, which prevents our seeing God's salvation.

Faith, on the contrary, raises the soul above the difficulty, straight to God Himself, and enables one to "stand still." We gain nothing by our restless and anxious efforts. "We cannot make one hair white or black," nor "add one cubit to our stature." What could Israel do at the Red Sea? Could they dry it up? Could they level the mountains? Could they annihilate the hosts of Egypt Impossible. There they were, enclosed within an impenetrable wall of difficulties, in view of which nature could but tremble and feel its own perfect impotency. But this was just the time for God to act. When unbelief is driven from the scene, then God can enter; and, in order to get a proper view of His actings, we must "stand



still." Every movement of nature is, so far as it goes, a positive hindrance to our perception and enjoyment of divine interference on our behalf.

This is true of us in every single stage of our history. It is true of us as sinners when, under the uneasy sense of sin upon the conscience, we are tempted to resort to our own doings, in order to obtain relief. Then, truly, we must "stand still" in order to "see the salvation of God." For what could we do in the matter of making an atonement for sin? Could we have stood with the Son of God upon the cross? Could we have accompanied Him down into the "horrible pit and the miry clay?" Could we have forced our passage upward to that eternal rock on which, in resurrection, He has taken His stand? Every right mind will at once pronounce the thought to be a daring blasphemy. God is alone in redemption; and as for us, we have but to "stand still and see the salvation of God." The very fact of its being God's salvation proves that man has nought to do in it.

The same is true of us, from the moment we have entered upon our Christian career. In every fresh difficulty, be it great or small, our wisdom is to stand still — to cease from our own works, and find our sweet repose in God's salvation. Nor can we make any distinction as to difficulties. We cannot say that there are some trifling difficulties which we ourselves can compass; while there are others in which nought save the hand of God can avail. No; all are alike beyond us. We are as little able to change the colour of a hair as to remove a mountain — to form a blade of grass as to create a world. All are alike to us, and all are alike to God. We have only, therefore, in confiding faith, to cast ourselves on Him who "humbleth himself (alike) to behold the things that are in heaven and on earth." We sometimes find ourselves carried triumphantly through the heaviest trials, while at other times, we quail, falter, and break down under the most ordinary dispensations. Why is this? Because, in the former, we are constrained to roll our burden over on the Lord; whereas, in the latter, we foolishly attempt to carry it ourselves. The Christian is, in himself, if he only realised it, like an exhausted receiver, in which a guinea and a feather have equal moments.

"The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." Precious assurance How eminently calculated to tranquillise the spirit in view of the most appalling difficulties and dangers! The Lord not only places Himself between us and our sins, but also between us and our circumstances. By doing the former, He gives us peace of conscience; by doing the latter, He gives us peace of heart. That the two things are perfectly distinct, every experienced Christian knows. Very many have peace of conscience, who have not Peace of heart. They have, through grace and by faith, found Christ, in the divine efficacy of His blood, between them and all their sins; but they are not able, in the same simple way, to realise Him as standing, in His divine wisdom, love, and power, between them and their circumstances. This makes a material difference in the practical condition of the soul, as well as in the character of one's testimony. Nothing tends more to glorify the name of Jesus than that quiet repose of spirit which results from having Him between us and everything that could be a matter of anxiety to our hearts. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee."

But some feel disposed to ask the question, "Are we not to do anything?" This may be answered by asking another, namely, what can we do? All who really know themselves must answer, nothing. If, therefore, we can do nothing, had we not better "stand still" If the Lord is acting for us, had we not better stand back? Shall we run before Him? Shall we busily intrude ourselves upon His sphere of action! Shall we come in His way? There can be no possible use in two acting, when one is so perfectly competent to do all. No one would think of bringing a lighted candle to add brightness to the sun at mid-day: and yet the man who would do so might well be accounted wise, in comparison with him who attempts to assist God by his bustling officiousness.

However, when God, in His great mercy, opens the way, faith can walk therein. It only ceases from man's way in order to walk in God's. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." It is only when we have learnt to "stand still" that we are able effectually to go forward. To attempt the latter, until we have learnt the former, is sure to issue in the exposure of our folly and weakness. It is, therefore, true wisdom, in all times of difficulty and perplexity, to "stand still" — to wait only upon God, and He will, assuredly, open a way for us; and then we can peacefully we happily "go forward." There is no uncertainty when God makes a way for us; but every self-devised path must prove a path of doubt and hesitation. The unregenerate man may move along with great apparent firmness and decision in his own ways; but one of the most distinct elements, in the new creation, is self distrust, and the element which answers thereto is confidence in God. It is when our eyes have seen God's salvation that we can walk therein; but this can never be distinctly seen until we have been brought to the end of our own poor doings.

There is peculiar force and beauty in the expression, "see the salvation of God." The very fact of our being called to "see" God's salvation, proves that the salvation is a complete one. It teaches that salvation is a thing wrought out and revealed by God, to be seen and enjoyed by us. It is not a thing made up partly of God's doing, and partly of man's. Were it so, it could not be called *God's* salvation. In order to be His, it must be wholly divested of everything pertaining to man. The only possible effect of human efforts is to raise a dust which obscures the view of God's salvation.

"Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward." Moses himself seems to have been brought to a stand, as appears from the Lord's question, "Wherefore criest thou to me?" Moses could tell the people to "stand still and see the salvation of God," while his own spirit was giving forth its exercises in an earnest cry to God. However, there is no use in crying when we ought to be acting; just as there is no use in acting when we ought to be waiting. Yet such is, ever, our way. We attempt to move forward when we ought to stand still, and we stand still when we ought to move forward. In Israel's case, the question might spring up in the heart, "whither are we to go?" To all appearance there is an insurmountable barrier in the way of any movement forward. How were they to go through the sea? This was the point. Nature never could solve this question. But we may rest assured that God never gives a command without, at the same time, communicating the power to obey. The real condition of the heart may be tested by the command; but the soul that is, by grace, disposed to obey, receives power from above to do so. When Christ commanded the man with the withered hand to stretch it forth, the man might naturally have said, "How can I stretch forth an arm which hangs dead by my side?" But he did not raise any question whatever, for with the command, and from the same source, came the power to obey.

Thus, too, in Israel's case, we see that with the command to go forward came the provision of grace. "But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thy hand over the sea, and divide it; and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea." Here was the path of faith. The hand of God opens the way for us to take the first step, and this is all that faith ever God never gives guidance for two steps at a time. I must take one step, and then I get light for the next. This keeps the heart in abiding dependence upon God. "By faith they Passed through the Red Sea as by dry Land." It is evident that the sea was not divided throughout, at once. Had it been so, it would have been "sight" and not "faith." It does not require faith to begin a journey when I can see all the way through; but to begin when I can merely see the first step, this is faith. The sea opened as Israel moved forward, so that for every fresh step, they needed to be cast upon God. Such was the path along which the redeemed of the Lord moved, under His own conducting hand. They passed through the dark waters of death, and found these very waters to be "a wall unto them, on their right hand and on their left."

The Egyptians could not move in such a path as this. They moved on because they saw the way open before them: with them it was sight, and not faith — "Which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned." When people *assay* to do what faith alone can accomplish, they only encounter defeat and confusion. The path along which God calls His people to walk is one which nature can never tread — "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. 15: 50) Neither can it walk in the ways of God. Faith is the great characteristic principle of God's kingdom, and faith alone can enable us to walk in God's ways. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." (Heb. 11) It glorifies God exceedingly when we move on with Him, as it were, blindfold. It proves that we have more confidence in His eyesight than in our own. If I know that God is looking out for me, I may well close my eyes, and move on in holy calmness and stability. In human affairs we know that when there is a sentinel or watchman at his post, others can sleep quietly. How much more may we rest in perfect security, when we know that He who neither slumbers nor sleeps has His eye upon us, and His everlasting arms around us!

"And the angel of God which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them. And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these; so that the one came not near the other all the night." (Ver. 19, 20) Jehovah placed Himself right between Israel and the enemy — this was protection indeed. Before ever Pharaoh could touch a hair of Israel's head, he should make his way through the very pavilion of the Almighty — yea, through the Almighty Himself. Thus it is that God ever places Himself between His people and every enemy, so that "no weapon formed against them can prosper." He has placed Himself between us and our sins; and it is our happy privilege to find Him between us and every one and every thing that could be against us. This is the true way in which to find both peace of heart and peace of conscience. The believer may institute a diligent and anxious search for his sins, but he cannot find them. Why? Because God is between him and them. He has cast all our sins behind His back; while, at, the same time, He sheds forth upon us the light of His reconciled countenance.

In the same manner, the believer may look for his difficulties, and not find them, because God is between him and them. If, therefore, the eye, instead of resting on our sins and sorrows, could rest only upon Christ, it would sweeten many a bitter cup, and enlighten many a gloomy hour. But one finds constantly that nine-tenths of our trials and sorrows are made up of anticipated or imaginary evils, which only exist in our own disordered, because unbelieving, minds. May my reader know the solid peace both of heart and conscience which results from having Christ, in all His fullness, between him and all his sins, and all his sorrows.

It is, at once, most solemn and interesting to note the double aspect of the "pillar," in this chapter. "It was a cloud and darkness" to the Egyptians, but "it gave light by night" to Israel. How like the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! Truly that cross has a double aspect, likewise. It forms the foundation of the believer's peace; and, at the same time, seals the condemnation of a guilty world. The self-same blood which purges the believer's conscience and gives him perfect peace, stains this earth and consummates its guilt. The very mission of the Son of God which strips the world of its cloak, and leaves it wholly without excuse, clothes the Church with a fair mantle of righteousness, and fills her month with ceaseless praise. The very same Lamb who will terrify, by His unmitigated wrath, all tribes and classes of earth, will lead, by His gentle hand, His blood-bought flock, through the green pastures, and beside the still waters for ever. (Compare Rev. 6: 15-17, with Rev. 7: 13-17)

The close of our chapter shows us Israel triumphant on the shore of the Red Sea, and Pharaoh's hosts submerged beneath its waves. The fears of the former and the boastings of the latter had both alike been proved utterly groundless. Jehovah's glorious work had annihilated both the one and the

other. The same waters which formed a wall for God's redeemed, formed a grave for Pharaoh. Thus it is ever: those who walk by faith, find a path to walk in, while all who assay to do so find a grave. This is a solemn truth which is not, in any wise, weakened by the fact that Pharaoh was acting in avowed and positive hostility to God, when he "assayed" to pass through the Red Sea. It will ever be found true that all who attempt to imitate faith's actings will be confounded. Happy are they who are enabled, however feebly, to walk by faith. They are moving along a path of unspeakable blessedness — a path which, though it may be marked by failure and infirmity, is, nevertheless, "begun, continued, and ended in God." Oh! that we may all enter more fully into the divine reality, the calm elevation, and the holy independence of this path.

We ought not to turn from this fruitful section of our book without a reference to 1 Cor. 10 in which we have an allusion to "the cloud and the sea." "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were *under the cloud*, and all passed *through the sea*; and were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." (Ver. 1, 2) There is much deep and precious instruction for the Christian in this passage. The apostle goes on to say, "now these things were our types," thus furnishing us with a divine warrant for interpreting Israel's baptism "in the sea and in the cloud," in a typical way; and, assuredly, nothing could be more deeply significant or practical. It was as a people thus baptised that they entered upon their wilderness journey, for which provision was made in "the spiritual meat" and "spiritual drink," provided by the hand of love. In other words, they were, typically, a people dead to Egypt and all pertaining thereto. The cloud and the sea were to them what the cross and grave of Christ are to us. The cloud secured them from their enemies; the sea separated them from Egypt: the cross, in like manner, shields us from all that could be against us, and we stand at heaven's side of the empty tomb of Jesus. Here we commence our wilderness journey. Here we begin to taste the heavenly manna and to drink of the streams which emanate from "that spiritual Rock," while, as a pilgrim people, we make our way onward to that land of rest of the which God has spoken to us.

I would further add here, that my reader should seek to understand the difference between the Red Sea and Jordan. They both have their antitype in the death of Christ. But, in the former, we see separation from Egypt; in the latter, introduction into the land of Canaan. The believer is not merely separated from this present evil world, by the cross of Christ; but he is quickened out of the grave of Christ, "raised up together, and made to sit together with Christ, in the heavenlies." (Eph. 2: 5, 6) Hence, though surrounded by the things of Egypt, he is, as to his actual experience, in the wilderness; while, at the same time, he is borne upward, by the energy of faith, to that place where Jesus sits, at the right hand of God. Thus, the believer is not merely "forgiven all trespasses;" but actually associated with a risen Christ in heaven. He is not merely saved by Christ, but linked with Him, for ever. Nothing short of this could either satisfy God's affections or actualise His purposes, in reference to the Church.

Reader, do we understand these things? Do we believe them? Are we realising them? Do we manifest the power of them? Blessed be the grace that has made them unalterably true with respect to every member of the body of Christ, whether it be an eye or an eye-lash, a hand or a foot. Their truth, therefore, does not depend upon our manifestation, our realisation, or our understanding, but upon "THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST," which has cancelled all our guilt and laid the foundation of all God's counsels respecting us. Here is true rest for every broken heart and every burdened conscience.