

*The Walk
That Pleases God.*

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The walk that pleases God

The Walk that Pleases God.

BY THE REV.

EVAN H. HOPKINS,

Author of "The Holy Life," "Thoughts on Life and Godliness,"

"The Law of Liberty in the Spiritual Life," etc., etc.

"Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us HOW YE OUGHT TO WALK AND TO PLEASE GOD, so ye would abound more and more."—1 *Thess.* iv. 1.

SIXTH EDITION.

LONDON :
MARSHALL BROTHERS,
5A, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1895.

BUTLER & TANNER,
THE SELWOOD PRINTING WORKS,
FROME, AND LONDON.

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THE WALK THAT PLEASES GOD.

Walking in Newness of Life.

IT is of the first importance that we should clearly see, not only the destination of this walk, but

ITS STARTING POINT.

One great characteristic of all Holy Ghost teaching is that He always leads us to Christ—to some fact in which Christ is the centre. And in the passage where the words occur, that we should “walk in newness of life,” our thoughts are directed to the *historical fact* of Christ’s crucifixion. But is it not to the same fact we are directed in the previous chapters? True ;

Rom. vi. 4.

but then it was with another object—namely to show the source and cause of our justification. But in the sixth chapter the Apostle passes on to the believer's conduct in relation to sin. He points us to the same central truth, but with another purpose—namely to show the source and secret of our practical deliverance from the service of sin.

In the former case the Apostle sets forth Christ's death in relation to God's righteous claims. In the present it is Christ's death in relation to sin's appeals. In the first His death was a death *for* sin—propitiation; in the second it was a death *unto* sin—separation. Christ not only endured the penalty as a sinless sufferer—He identified Himself with us in our sinfulness. He who was altogether sinless, absolutely pure, spotless, and knew no sin—was willing to be regarded in the eye of God as if He were the sinner. Our Lord could not repent—He had no sins to confess—and yet so truly did He

identify Himself with us in our fallen condition that He submitted to John's baptism, which was a baptism of repentance—for those who came confessing their sins. Though He was never for a single instant under the power of sin, yet it is declared He not only died *for*, but *unto* sin.

The believer is identified with Christ in His death. It was not simply that Christ took your death, and you take His life. That is the first lesson. The second lesson is that you recognise your complete identification with Him in His death. When He died you died. In the eye of God every believer—nay, the whole Church—was crucified with Christ. We died with Christ; that is true, in what is called a judicial sense. But this is not enough. There must be *experimental oneness with Christ in His death*. The historical fact must become an experimental reality. That which is true *for* us, must become true *in* us. For real prac-

1 Pet. iv. 1.

tical holiness there must be personal identification—heart-sympathy with Christ in His death. This means a oneness of spirit, having the same mind as Christ in reference to sin—"Arm yourselves with the same mind." To have sympathy with Christ in His death unto sin, is to cease to have sympathy with sin. And when that takes place sin's power is broken. You now look out upon sin, and the world, and Satan, from the standpoint of Christ's death, and you are delivered from the power of all of them.

The Apostle would remind them that *Baptism supposes this oneness with Christ in His death.* He appeals to them—you have been baptized into Jesus Christ! What did that baptism mean? It represented your profession. It was an outward confession of your faith in Christ. It was your open avowal of your discipleship—that henceforth you are a follower of Christ. True; but what did it mean in reference to the Cross? It was your personal

identification with Christ in His death. You were baptized “unto His *death*” with a view to your complete oneness of heart and mind with Him in that death. Do you know what that death meant? Do you understand its import? It was to place Him in an altogether new relation to His former life. It terminated that life—but it introduced Him into a new life. “Thou wilt show me the path of life.” Those words belong primarily to Christ. They refer to the path of resurrection life.

Ps. xvi. II.

Now, if you enter into the meaning of your baptism, it will be “even so” with you. If you are brought into experimental oneness with Him in His death, you too shall find it the portal of the new life. And your own spiritual instinct will at once give the true answer to the question which opens this chapter—“Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” You will answer, not simply from a sense of rightness, from a sense of the moral

Rom. vi. I.

obligation, the duty, of having nothing more to do with sin ; but from a feeling of hatred to sin, from a heart-desire at once and for ever to renounce it. “How shall we who died to sin live any longer therein ?” Impossible !

The Lord's Supper sets forth the same truth. The conditions essential to holy walking at the start are essential also all along the way to the end of the journey. To maintain this sympathy with Christ in His death unto sin—nay, to deepen it—is one of the chief benefits to be derived from a right partaking of this sacred ordinance.

What is it we show forth in the Lord's Supper ? Ye do show forth *His death*, till He come. It is only out of His death that the new life springs. How are we to know, experimentally and practically, how are we to know the power of Christ's resurrection ? The Apostle gives us the essential condition in the words that follow : “ *being made conformable unto His*

death." It is by a daily conformity, an experimental and ever-deepening oneness of heart and soul with the dying Christ, that we are brought to know and manifest the power of His risen life.

ITS CHARACTERISTICS.

"Even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Rom. vi. 4.

This newness of life does not consist in the self-life improved, reformed, or refined, but in the old life replaced, superseded. Another life is substituted.

"Newness of life." Not new in the sense of a fresh beginning of the same life, just as a tree may get new vigour and stability through being transplanted into a better soil, or into a better situation ; but new in the sense of getting another life, just as a branch grafted on another tree partakes of its sap, and consequently becomes possessed of new properties and powers—a new life. It is new as to its

nature—a fresh source of life. It is life from another root.

To walk in newness of life is not making a fresh effort on the old resources, putting forth fresh energy from the same source of vitality, but going forth in the energy of a new supply of life in union with a new source. But this involves the termination of the old life.

Such a life has marvellous possibilities. Because it is Divine life, the life that God lives. *The* holy life, the only holy life; the only life that can glorify God and bring forth fruit acceptable unto Him.

Col. i. 29.

It is a life of intense activity. “Whereunto I also labour,” says the Apostle, “striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily.”

Not a life that makes us passive or slothful, but which calls into activity every faculty of our renewed being. “*Walk* in newness of life.” The figure suggests the thought of activity, progress, manifesta-

tion. It is a life unto God. It is from Him, and it is also unto Him.

ITS LESSONS.

If it is in this new life all our service is to be wrought, then let us cease to build our hopes on the old. Let us cease to expect anything from it but failure and disappointment. Let us cease to cultivate it. Let us for ever have done with it.

And yet how many have all their thoughts centred upon improving the old self-life. How many earnest and religious people belong to "the Old Adam Improvement Society." It is the recognition of the Christ-life ; it is union with the risen Christ, that men need instead of the culture of the religious self-life.

Then again, let us learn that the source of our pardon is also the spring of our holiness.

We need, not only forgiveness for the guilt, but also separation from the love of

sin. The death of Christ is the fountain of both these blessings.

The first need experienced in the matter of the walk, after justification is known and realized, is deliverance from the power, activity, and tyranny of the self-life principle. Nothing but the power of Christ's death can set us free from this hindrance. We need that power in continual exercise. It is not by its being put forth once for all that we enjoy a continuous freedom. It is by a constant and ever-deepening conformity to His death that we get the momentary deliverance from the self-life. And as we are freed from the old life, so we are filled with the new. "Always bearing about in the body the dying"—the putting to death—"of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

2 Cor. iv. 10.

Deliverance by Faith.

SOME of the chief difficulties experienced by the child of God in the daily life arise from a want of knowledge. He has not seen clearly the extent of the deliverance which has been obtained for him by Christ on the cross.

Pardon for the sin of the past, complete and free, has been seen and grasped. A present perfect acceptance in Christ before God, is known and realized. But sin as a power, and too often as an overcoming power, is keenly felt as a terrible reality nevertheless.

The believer now tries to do his best to meet this power and to set himself free

from it. He has seen God's way of forgiveness, but he has yet to learn God's way of deliverance from the power of sin. And being ignorant of God's way, he earnestly tries his own way of deliverance.

Perhaps he seeks to obtain freedom from sin's dominion by setting himself to do something in the Lord's service. He tries

DELIVERANCE BY WORKING.

He hopes that by taking up definite and regular work, being occupied in some religious effort, he will find himself set free from the tyranny and service of sin.

For a time he fancies things are better—he persuades himself his experience is brighter and more hopeful. So he perseveres in this course—seeking deliverance from the power of sin by means of Christian work. But after a time he is convinced of his mistake. He is bitterly disappointed with the results in his actual experience. He feels more and more this is not God's

way, but he hardly knows where the mistake lies.

He reads a passage of Scripture like this—"That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life." This reveals to him the fact that deliverance comes not after, but before service—that it is not to be the effect, or the fruit of our service, but the essential condition of it.

Then he tries another plan. He seeks emancipation from sin's dominion by his own efforts to overcome sin. He seeks

Luke i. 74.

DELIVERANCE BY FIGHTING.

Suppose the angel had said to Peter when he came to him in the prison, "Peter, thou art free. The chains which kept thee bound have fallen from thy hands. Gird thyself and bind on thy sandals. Take this sword, and fight thy way out of the prison. There are many foes yet to be overcome. Conquer them all, and

Acts xii. 10.

thou shalt be free indeed." Deliverance for Peter would have been partly by grace, and partly by his own efforts. But we see it was all of grace. The angel brought a full and complete deliverance. It reached from the innermost part of the prison to the street of the city. Peter realized something of that freedom when he saw the chains fall off, but he did not know the extent of it until he went forth in the path of simple obedience. The angel said, "Follow me." And Peter "went forth and followed him." It was as he pursued the path marked out for him, step by step, that he saw how complete, how truly of grace was that deliverance which God had sent him. "When they were past the first and second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord."

So it is with the believer now. Christ has purchased for us deliverance from the power, as well as from the penalty of sin.

We realize something of that freedom when we first apprehend the truth—when first we see that salvation is full, present, and free. The chains instantly fall off, but how little comparatively do we yet see of the extent and completeness of the liberty wherewith Christ by His death has made us free !

DELIVERANCE BY GROWTH.

Once more, how many suppose that deliverance can only come by growth? It is, therefore, just a question of time. Being only young believers, they are, of course, very weak, but the evil nature is strong within them. The new nature must have time to grow and become strengthened. In the meantime, as the old nature is so strong, victory over sin cannot be expected. Failure is regarded as inevitable, and as a consequence a sad and dark experience follows.

How serious is the mistake thus made !

Deliverance from sin's power does not come by working, nor by self-efforts, nor by spiritual growth.

DELIVERANCE IS THE PURCHASE OF
CHRIST'S DEATH, AND IS TO BE
CLAIMED BY FAITH,

just as we claim pardon.

The mistakes many of us made when seeking forgiveness are often repeated when we seek deliverance.

God's way of deliverance from sin is by Christ through faith that it may be of grace. It is the Spirit alone that can communicate this knowledge to us or enable us to appropriate it; just as it is He alone who can reveal to us God's way of justification. It is as we walk in the Spirit that we live above sin's power.

We may at once by faith step into this path of freedom and by faith abide therein.

"Sin shall not have dominion over you."
"Now being made free from sin (*i.e.* from its power and service as the context shows),

Rom. vi.
14, 22.

and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life." Let us not suppose that this freedom is to be accepted gradually. It is to be claimed and received as an immediate privilege, though it can be known and enjoyed experimentally only progressively. As Professor Godet observes, on the eleventh verse of the sixth of Romans, "The believer does not get disentangled from sin gradually. He breaks with it in Christ once for all." We are delivered by Christ's death completely from sin's authority. Sin has no right to lord it over us any longer. Claim your right, then, to be free. "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."

Gal. v. i.

Following Christ.

Matt. viii.
19.

“MASTER, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.” Such were the words that were addressed to our Lord by a certain scribe. From our Lord’s reply it would seem that the man had scarcely realized their full import. Or perhaps there was a lack of real sincerity. Did the scribe understand what he was saying? Had he really counted the cost?

The words might have been the outburst of a mere passing emotion—a temporary impulse—rather than the deliberate decision of a calm and intelligent estimate of spiritual realities. He had

been listening to Christ's preaching. Perhaps he was captivated by the marvellous wisdom and exquisite tenderness of His words; and as he listened his heart was touched, his enthusiasm was kindled, and he felt at the moment that he was ready to go anywhere with such a Teacher.

But whatever might have been the motive that prompted their utterance, the words considered in themselves do express the feelings of a truly devoted disciple. They are the true expression of a soul wholly consecrated to Christ.

Taking them in this sense, let us ask what do they imply? If we can say them truly—if this is the calm and deliberate decision to which we have come, having been brought to see the infinite preciousness of Christ, and the glorious privilege of being under His guidance, direction, and control—if we can say from our hearts, "Master, I will follow THEE—I will follow Thee whithersoever

Thou goest,"—then we have been brought into a very intimate relationship with Christ. What does it imply?

I. THE RECOGNITION OF CHRIST'S CLAIMS. It is possible to realize much of the benefits of His death—pardon, peace, acceptance—and yet but very imperfectly recognise Christ's lordship over us. If He is Christ Jesus, anointed to save, so He is Christ the Lord anointed to rule. He is "Lord of all." In all things He must have the pre-eminence. Christ does not want our patronage. He comes claiming our submission. He must take the place of absolute supremacy.

Acts x. 36.

1. Cor. vi.
19.

He is your Proprietor. "Ye are not your own." The Apostle Paul fully and constantly recognised this truth. It was to him the essential condition of all true service. It was because he could say "Whose I am," that he could add, "and Whom I serve."

Acts xxvii.
23.

No one has a right to take possession of our natures and to use us but Christ.

We belong to Him. The world, or Satan, or self, have no right to our spirits, souls, and bodies. These are all usurpers.

You may be under the power of one who has no authority over you—no right to lord it over you. A burglar may break into your house, bind you hand and foot, and then rob you of your goods. He has no right, no authority, thus to deal with you, yet you are powerless to resist him.

So with the believer. Though it is perfectly true that he has been delivered out of the authority of darkness, still if he is not abiding under the authority of Christ, and in the keeping power of God, Satan may have dominion over him. He may fall under the power of evil.

We are only safe as we recognise Christ's claims. He claims the right of taking possession of the whole man, of managing every part of our being, and inseparable from His power to control is His power to defend and to keep.

Col. i. 13.

In proportion to the thoroughness with which we submit to Christ's sway, to the same degree shall we be brought to enjoy Christ's rest. Anxiety and strain cease just as we practically recognise that the government of our whole beings, and of everything connected with us, has been laid upon Christ's shoulder.

It is because in some subtle way or other we fancy we are our own masters, that we are oppressed by care and weighed down with anxiety.

Imagine a cabin boy deluding himself with the notion that the whole responsibility of navigating the ship and providing for the passengers rested upon his shoulders. The captain would soon tell him to look after his own business and do what he was told : " I am commander here, my boy."

So it is with us. It is because we fail to recognise Christ's Lordship that we often get burdened with anxiety and hampered with care.

But to say these words from the heart implies also—

II. OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST'S COMMANDS. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it," were the words of the mother of our Lord to the servants who waited on them at the feast.

Christ has much more to say to us than "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Jesus spake the word as they were able to hear it.

Obedience is conformity to a revealed will. Divine obedience is conformity to the revealed will of God.

Christ claims our obedience, step by step, as He reveals to us His will and gives us His commands. "His Commandments are not grievous." That is to say, they may be fulfilled.

All His followers have been redeemed, set free, for this purpose, that they might follow Him. To follow Him is to obey Him. To follow Christ is not the same thing as to have a religion, or a system of

John ii. 5.

1 John v. 3.

morality. It implies that we have come to a Person.

It is the obedience of the heart. It is not the service of a mere outward compliance, a service of compulsion. A convict performs his task, goes through his labours ; but it is not true service, for it is not voluntary. There is all the difference between the compulsory labour of a convict and the willing and loving obedience of a child. "Thanks be to God, that whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered."

Rom. vi. 17.

Lastly, the words imply—

III. LIKENESS TO CHRIST'S CHARACTER.

—Followers of Christ are imitators of God. "Be ye therefore imitators of God, as dear children." To follow Christ is to walk in His steps.

Eph v. 1.

This likeness is not confined to the actions of a man's life: it is something that lies deeper. Outward conformity to Christ

can only come by union and fellowship with Him in the secret springs of one's being. The root of every true act of service lies in the hidden principle which prompted it.

Christ has revealed to us the secret of His obedience. He not only says, "Follow Me," do as I have done, imitate Me in the visible acts of My life, but He says "Follow Me" in the spiritual conditions which were essential even to My own obedience. "The branch cannot bear fruit *from* itself." As one has said, here is "the imperative of a natural law," *cannot*. So is it also the imperative of a spiritual law, the law of true service. And because He had taken the place of a servant, the place of dependence—of a branch—He voluntarily submits to the same law which He bids us to observe. He says, "I can of Mine own self do nothing." Again, "I do nothing from Myself." "I speak not from Myself."

Well, then, we have to be imitators of

John xv. 4.

John v. 30;
viii. 28;
xiv. 10.

Hos. xiv. 8

Christ, followers of Him in this respect.
To work, to speak, to bear fruit, not *from*
ourselves, but from *Him* who liveth in us.
“From Me is thy fruit found.”

Divine Manifestations.

PROGRESS in the spiritual life depends upon growth in our knowledge of Christ. It has been well said, "Tell me what you see of Christ, and I will tell you where you stand." There can be no doubt that is a sound principle.

But how is it that many of us who had blessed manifestations of the Lord Jesus Christ at our conversion, and in the days that followed, are no longer enjoying those blessings, or have but a feeble sense of them to-day?

Before God can show Himself to us, often He has first to do a work in us. There are hindrances that come between

Num. xiii.
26-33.

us and God, that act as a veil, and obscure the vision of His presence. It was so with the children of Israel. Before the Lord manifested Himself to them, there was a work of preparation that had to be done in them. What was their condition? Read Josh. v. 13-15. Their hearts were hardened. They were really unfit to receive either correction or instruction, either comfort or reproof. All the glorious unfoldings of God's grace were simply thrown away upon them. They were in a state of disobedience. You know how and where it happened. It was at Kadesh-Barnea. Through unbelief they refused to obey God. They turned aside from the path of implicit obedience because they were afraid of men—of the giants that were in the land. They thought more of the power of the foe than of the omnipotence of God. So they refused to obey God. And we find from that time for more than thirty-eight years they wandered about in the wilder-

ness or "provocation." Now we are not surprised to learn what followed. They neglected to obey one of God's clear commands—keeping the Passover. It was God's distinct command that they should keep the Passover year by year continually. But what do we find?—that from the time they left Sinai there is no record of their having kept the Passover for thirty-eight or thirty-nine years. There is no mention of the commemoration of the Passover during the whole of that time. We have three passovers mentioned, or rather one passover and two commemorations—first in Egypt, then at Horeb, and then here on the borders of Canaan. So that they were in a back-sliding state; they had forsaken God. But God in His infinite love had not forsaken them. Still He could not unfold His treasures. He could not manifest Himself in His fulness to them.

That is practically the condition of many Christians to-day. There has been

a point in their spiritual life when they feared man more than they trusted God. And so they turned aside out of the path of His will, and one act of disobedience led to another, all through unbelief, and where are they to-day? If God were to open the eyes of some of us, how amazed should we be to discover that we had wandered so far away from God! We are satisfied it may be with a cold orthodoxy; we read our portion every day, say our prayers, and, with the consciousness that our conversion was clear and distinct, we console ourselves with the thought that we hold sound doctrine. But how about our lives and our communion with God? how about the manifestation of His presence to our soul? You come to the word of God, but you no longer know what it is to hear His voice speaking to you. Here you are to-day, feeling cold and dead and formal. You want to lead a better life. You have struggled and striven; you have said, "I will now turn

over a new leaf; I will ask God to give me more grace to enable me to overcome this or that temptation." That is not the life that God wants ^{us} you to lead. He calls ^{us} you to a victorious, free, and spontaneous life. Something must be wrong somewhere, and it must be in ourselves. What do ^{you} you need? Just as Israel needed preparation of heart, and to have the hindrances removed, before God could reveal Himself to them, so it is with many of God's people to-day.

Consider first—

ISRAEL'S PREPARATION FOR THE DIVINE MANIFESTATION.

The first thing they had to do was to observe the two old Testament rites—Circumcision and the keeping of the Passover. What did that mean? The first meant separation from everything that was evil, from all iniquity; the second, taking up redemption ground before God. In its application to our-

Acts xx. 21.

selves it means the cleansing of ourselves from all that is contrary to the mind of God, and then taking up the ground of simple faith of our acceptance in Jesus Christ. In other words—repentance and faith.

There are some people who seem to look upon repentance as if it were an act done once for all at their conversion. But surely it is not merely an *act*, but a condition of mind that is to be maintained throughout the whole Christian life. It means the continuous separation from, and renunciation of, everything that is contrary to the mind of God; and a deepening work, as God reveals more to you of yourself and the sinfulness of sin. An attitude to be maintained throughout together with simple faith in Christ. Have you taken up that position to-day? Take your stand upon redemption ground upon the finished work of Christ. Taking our stand there, then the Lord, in the stillness of our souls as we wait upon

Him, will manifest Himself to us as He did to Israel.

Consider secondly—

THE NATURE OF THE MANIFESTATION.

Standing upon the border of the land, the wilderness past, and the land flowing with milk and honey spread out before them, what a happy moment this was in their history ! Is that the position of your soul to-day—taking your stand there (the provocation over, the wandering over, the self-life over), you have the land of promise, all the glorious promises of the word of God, spread out before you.

But there was something more. They had in prospect the subduing of seven nations mightier and stronger than they. They were called to a life of conflict. God had given them the land ; and yet God says, “Go, and claim it.” And, if there is one word that God seems to be emphasizing in connection with this teaching, it is that little word *claim*.

Josh. i. 3 ;
xiv. 9.
Deut. xi. 24

When you are brought into the right attitude of separation from all known evil, then the promise is yours. Do not simply look at it hesitating whether you *may* have it, but go up and *claim* it. "Every place that the sole of your feet shall tread upon, that I have given you." How many promises have you claimed? How many promises have been translated into your experience, so that you can say, "I know the truth of that promise; I have found it a reality in my life; I have proved it"?

Take, for instance, the promise of God's keeping. "I believe He can do it," you say. "I believe that He is able to do it." Yes; but can you ^{say} say, "The Lord Jesus is keeping me just at this moment"? Now it was at this crisis that there was a fresh manifestation to Israel. What was the nature of this manifestation? Joshua went on to reconnoitre the place. He wanted to make himself acquainted with its surroundings. He

did not yet know God's mind as to the plan of attack. When standing there a stranger appears, one in human form. Was he a mere man or angel? Was it a natural or supernatural manifestation?

What was the nature of it? Notice two or three things about it. It was *Divine*. It was the Lord Himself. It was none other than the Angel of the Covenant—none other than He who had appeared to Jacob at Peniel, where the patriarch cried, "I have seen God face to face." It was He who had appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and gave His name "I Am." It was the second person of the Godhead, the Lord Himself. This is clearly shown by the fact that the ground upon which he stood was holy ground. It was none other than God Himself, for a mere angel would not have received the homage that Joshua gave. When the Apostle John would worship the angel, as recorded in the Book of Revelation, the angel said, "See

Gen. xxxii.
30.

Ex. iii. 14.

Rev. xix. 10.

thou do it not ; worship God." But here is Joshua prostrate at His feet, at this fresh manifestation of Jehovah to His people.

Then notice that it was *progressive*. It was part of a complete revelation, in advance of what had gone before, and preparatory to that which had yet to be revealed. The Lord appeared to His people not only at sundry times, but in divers manners. He did not unfold His character all at once, but in many parts, and each manifestation had its place in the Divine plan. There was a purpose and there was a design in the order of their occurrence.

He appeared in Egypt as the Deliverer, the Redeemer ; by the blood of the Lamb and by the power of His arm bringing them out. He had appeared to Israel at Sinai as their Teacher. There they were gathered round His footstool, and He communicated His mind ; He taught them. Then He guided them and

provided for them, taking up His place in their midst. But here He says, "As Captain of the host of the Lord am I *now* come," as Moses sang, "The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name." He had come to fulfil the precious promise which we have: "Dread not, neither be afraid of them. The Lord your God which goeth before you, He shall fight for you according to all that He did for you in Egypt before your eyes."

Josh. v. 14

Ex. xv. 3.

Deut. i. 29.

Once more, the manifestation was *seasonable*. It was just at the right time, just what they needed—a new revelation meeting a new need—a new need being met by a new unfolding of the Divine Name. What was this new need? Not the bondage of a cruel master, not the scarceness of a barren waste, not the uncertainty of a trackless desert—but the peril of a fierce conflict. They were standing face to face with an entrenched and powerful foe. They wanted the Captain of the Lord's host. So it is with

the believer to-day. Spiritual progress means getting fresh views and unfoldings of the Lord Jesus Christ to your soul, and th's comes in the line of His will, as you are led along, and as the need^t arises you are brought to experience more and more of your need, so you see how the Lord Jesus, by the power of the Holy Ghost, just meets that need. That is true progress.

Consider lastly—

THE FRESH CLAIMS THE MANIFESTATION INVOLVED.

And what did the Lord now demand of Joshua?

1. *Absolute authority.* He reveals Himself as Prince of the Lord's host. He did not come out as an ally. Joshua said unto Him, "Art Thou for us or for our adversaries?" which meant:—Are you going to take their side or ours? And He said, Nay, I am not going to take this side or that side. I am not

come to render you a little assistance. I am come to take the supreme command. I am come to supersede you altogether. The battle is not yours, but the Lord's. I am come to take the whole responsibility of the conflict into My own hands. You must hand over to Me the command of the whole campaign. Joshua at once obeyed.

Here, then, there was a crisis. Have you been brought to that point? Have you put the government upon His shoulder? It belongs to Him. Have you fallen in with God's mind in the matter, and has it become a reality in your own mind and experience? "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" I am Thy servant; command me.

And then you see what followed as a natural result. 2. *Profound reverence*. Beloved, if we are really making progress in holiness, we shall be making progress in humility—that is, downwards—growing in grace. Did it ever occur to you what

Rev. i. 17.

Phil. ii. 12,
13.

that meant—growing in grace? What is grace? I may give just two definitions of grace. It is the opposite of merit; it is the complement of need. It is the opposite of merit—getting what you don't deserve. We are saved by grace. Now we have to grow in grace—not only to be saved by grace. What does that mean? It means growing in a sense of our indebtedness to the Lord. That is true humility; and it is just a view of the Lord Jesus that brings us down. "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." It was so with Moses, Joshua, Isaiah, and with John at Patmos. "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground"—a blessed spot—never quit it, for God is there, and there it is that He is working in you, both to will and to do. You are always to occupy holy ground, and therefore always to be in the dust.

3. The Lord required of him *implicit trust*. How foolish in the estimation of

the world are some of God's commands. I fancy I see some of those men in Israel smiling as they were told the way they were to take Jericho. Nothing could seem more absurd than marching round and round and using nothing but rams'-horns. But it was the Divine command—that is where the trial of faith comes in ; and as they followed the path of God's command, there was the victory. So it will be with us in the fight of faith. The principles and laws unfolded in the Old Testament are precisely those that are to be carried into practice in the New.

Now if indeed we have been brought to His feet, and brought to see something of ourselves, if we have been stripped of our self-confidence, and in the depths of our hearts have renounced every known evil way, taking our stand upon the completed work of Christ, and conscious of our acceptance in Christ before God—on redemption ground—then we are in the line of His blessing ; and He will come

to us just where we are. He knows our need, and He will manifest Himself to us in answer to that need.

**All Blessings
Found in a Knowledge of God.**

JOB xxii. 21-30.

SCRIPTURE is its own interpreter.

It is by comparing one passage with another that we arrive at its meaning. Sometimes a flood of light is thrown upon a text by studying it simply in connection with the context. The passage before us is a case in point. The twenty-first verse is the text, the verses that follow, right on to the end of the chapter, we may call the sermon. They are just an unfolding of the truth contained in the text.

Two questions are suggested by the opening words of this passage. 1st. How

is God to be known? 2nd. In what does the "good" here promised consist?

I. HOW IS GOD TO BE KNOWN?

Can God be known? Is it possible for finite creatures to comprehend the infinite, the eternal God? No man can know God as He is in Himself. We can only know God in relation to ourselves. We can only know Him so far as He has been pleased to reveal Himself to us.

If God had not sent us a revelation, all our thoughts and conceptions of Him would be nothing more than mere speculation. But in the Holy Scriptures we have an unveiling of His character, a manifestation of His name. God may be known. "Acquaint now thyself with Him." "But how?" you ask; "what are the means to be used?" The twenty-second verse gives us the answer. "Receive, I pray thee, the law from His mouth."

God is to be known by a humble re-

Read

ception of the inspired word, the message He has sent. *Simplicity of faith in*

*the divine
heart.*

“Receive.” Man’s first thought when he begins to seek God is not receiving, but giving, or doing. He thinks, “What shall I bring to God? How may I propitiate my way into His favour? What shall I do to obtain eternal life? How shall I construct a ladder by which I may climb to heaven?” God says, “Receive.” His first word is, Accept. It is not a ladder for you to climb, but a message for you to receive. It is not, in the first place, man ascending, but God descending. God sends you His word, like a ray of light from heaven. Take it in, let it penetrate into your soul. Take down the shutters, and let the light flood your whole being. It comes to tell you what God is. It comes to unveil the truth; not to create what does not exist, but to disclose what is already a fact. It comes to make God known to us, to declare His Name, His Character. To show us Himself.

2 Cor. v. 17.

Now such a revelation revolutionizes all our thoughts. It changes all our pre-conceived notions. It removes our prejudices and adjusts all our conceptions of things. "Behold, all things become new."

1 Thess ii.
13.

Receive it "from His mouth." That is, take it directly from Him. Take it as the word of the living God. The Apostle tells the Thessalonian converts that it was this that caused him so much joy. "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." But more than this, we must know what it is to meditate upon it—we must inwardly digest it. "Lay up His words in thine heart." Perhaps it is this that is especially needed in this busy age. There is much hearing, but how little there is of meditation and of prayerful thought!

God's word is like seed. Every grain of wheat has a germ of life in it. But how is that life to be called forth into activity? It must be sown. It is not the earth that gives it life. It is not the moisture that quickens it. The life is there already. All it needs is to call it forth. Bury it, and the latent life will begin to manifest itself. The imprisoned life will burst forth. So it is with the word of God.

It is full of life. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." But the word needs to be sown in a human heart. It needs to be buried in the minds and affections of men. Hide it there, and it will make itself felt and seen. "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee." In that quickening, living, and active word, we shall see a revelation of God. We get to know God by receiving the living Word.

But, again, we acquaint ourselves with

John vi. 63.

Ps. cxix. 11.

*John the Baptist
1 Kings 19:29
Blessed are they
that hear the word
and keep it*

God by entering into a right relation to God.

2 Cor. v. 20.

“Be at peace.” That is, take the place of a reconciled soul. Be at peace, not make your peace with God. Christ has done that. Peace is already made—accept it. Fall in with God’s terms. “Be ye reconciled to God.” Don’t propose any conditions of your own. Come over on His side. This is to return. Don’t argue with God. Confession becomes us rather than controversy.

10. 23 “Put away iniquity far from thy tents.” Separation unto God means separation from all unrighteousness. God and sin are eternally opposed. If we love the one we shall hate the other. Put away iniquity—that is, put away the secret spoils and unrighteous gains, things acquired by violence and extortion and unfair means. You cannot bring them to the light, and ask God’s blessing on them. Well then, put them away.

Renounce all false grounds of trust,

and let God alone be thy confidence. This comes out in the words of the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth verses. Mark the contrast. "Lay thou thy treasure in the dust. . . . And the Almighty shall be thy treasure." Consider what thy treasure might be. Treasures represent anything which we prize highly, that we value dearly. It may be worldly position ; it may be material wealth ; it may be natural gifts ; it may be intellectual or spiritual powers. ✕ All these things, good as they are in themselves, are not to occupy the place that belongs to God alone. The Almighty God Himself is to be thy treasure. All your resources must be in Him. "All my springs are in Thee." All this will lead to a fuller and deeper knowledge of God. These are the conditions of a true acquaintanceship with God.

Ps. lxxxvii.
7.

7

Ps iv. 6.

II. IN WHAT DOES THE "GOOD" HERE PROMISED CONSIST?

"Thereby good shall come unto thee." There be many that say, "Who will show us any good?" That is what every man professes to be seeking—"good." We may trace the blessings in the verses that follow.

1. Joy in God Belief in God, and reverence for Him there may be without any real delight in the Lord. "For then," that is, when you have obeyed the directions, fulfilled the conditions, "then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty." No greater blessing can come upon the soul than this. It is then that the duty-life becomes transformed into the love-life of willing and joyous obedience.

God undertakes to bring it about. He engages to bestow this blessing upon those who fulfil the conditions.

"Thou shalt lift up thy face unto God." The soul no longer goes about with a condemned conscience, dejected and disheartened. But in conscious, loving fellowship the believer now looks up into God's face, realizing that there is "nothing between."

2. Power in Prayer. The spirit of prayer is a Divine gift. We may observe the practice and habit of prayer without really enjoying the gift of prayer. "Thou shalt make thy prayer unto Him, and He shall hear thee; and thou shalt pay thy vows."

3. Success in Service. "Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee; and the light shall shine upon thy ways." ⁸ Good success was promised to Joshua. ⁹ It was granted to Joseph. ¹⁰ And also to Daniel. ¹¹ To Nehemiah. Success, however, must not be judged of by outward appearances. It is the smile of God that is the true evidence of real prosperity. This is the

Josh. i. 8.
Gen. xxxix.
3. 23.
Dan. vi. 28.
Neh. i. 11.

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9
10
11

essence or all true blessedness, and this the consecrated soul may always have. It may be always true of the submissive and obedient believer, "Light shall shine upon thy ways.

4. Faith in Trial. "And when they cast thee down thou shalt say, There is lifting up, and the humble person He shall save." Confidence, and joy, and hope, in seasons of trouble and adversity, are God's special gifts. They are included in the "good" here promised.

Lastly. Blessings that shall come through us to others. "He shall deliver even him that is not innocent; yea, he shall be delivered through the cleanness of thine hands" (New Version).

A godly man is not only a restful and peaceful man; he is a public good. Such are the salt of the earth. Let any one be true to God, live near Him, and abide in Christ, and He will become, without any special effort of his own, a channel of blessing to others.

If he is himself in close contact with the Divine Fountain, if the living stream is flowing freely into his own soul, he will not only become a vessel filled, he will overflow, and others will reap the benefit.

"Thereby good shall come unto thee." How many are trying to seek the good who do not seek God. Of course they fail. But the man who seeks God wholly will find that good will overtake him. It is the same thought we have in Deut. xxviii. 2: "All these blessings shall come upon thee, and overtake thee." That is, the "good" shall pursue thee as the waters of a flood. You shall be inundated with the blessings of God.

It is when we can say truly, the Lord is my Shepherd, that is when we are following Him, that "goodness and mercy" will follow us, not by following "goodness and mercy," but by following the Lord, and then they will follow us all our days.

What, then, is it we have to do? Seek

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Ps. xxiii. 1, 6.

13.

4. Matt. 25

15. 2 Tim. 3

16. Luke 13

17. 3. 0

to know God. Be at peace with Him. Get right with Him. All the blessings and gifts we so much prize, and which only He can bestow, will then come unto us. We need not pursue them—they will overtake us.

Abundance of Peace.

“I will reveal unto them the abundance of peace.”

JER. xxxiii. 6.

WHAT is the nature of this blessing? not only peace, but *the abundance of peace*; that is to say, Peace without limit, without scarcity, without restraint—Peace in all its fulness. Abundance in its depth and duration. A Peace which fully meets our needs, perfectly satisfies our desires—*abundant Peace*.

Now, let us consider it in three aspects: in connection with Christ's work; in connection with Christ's rule; and then in connection with Christ's presence.

I. PEACE IN CONNECTION WITH CHRIST'S
WORK.

The peace of reconciliation. This is not an experience so much as a state of relationship; not something wrought *in* me, but something wrought *for* me. We may call it the work of peace. It is, indeed, a fact: one of the grand facts of Christianity. In Christ there *is* Peace with God. Peace already made. "Having made Peace through the blood of His Cross;" *i.e.*, Peace between God and man. Not a feeling in my heart, but something wrought, apart from me, by Christ; something accomplished for me by Christ on the cross. True, when I am brought to a knowledge of my relationship, and of what He has wrought for me, there will be Peace in my heart. I shall have the feeling of Peace; but that is the *effect*, not the *cause*. The external fact, that Peace is accomplished, is the cause, and that is

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Col. i. 20.

Christ's work alone. On the subject of this Peace it is not my purpose now to dwell, for I am especially addressing those who, being justified by faith, have peace with God. We may not be as happy as we should like, and our experience may not be exactly what it ought to be; but, nevertheless, we have received by faith our sentence of justification from God, and we find ourselves transferred in relation to Him into a state of Peace. And the things which secure it to us, bring it within our reach, and make it permanent and abiding, we may say, with truth, are abundant—there is ABUNDANCE OF PEACE.

II. PEACE IN CONNECTION WITH CHRIST'S RULE.

“Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end.” That is true now spiritually as it will be literally hereafter. In a very real sense Christ's reign begins in the heart of the believer

Isa. ix. 7.

Isa. xxvi. 3.

now. If we would know the blessedness of Christ's keeping, we must begin by knowing the reality of His reign. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee." What does this imply? That there has been entire submission to Christ's control. A man's heart is like a city. Is there peace or tumult? Is there order or confusion? Is there loyal submission or rebellion? That depends upon whose shoulders the government rests. If the believer is trying to manage himself, to take the government into his own hands, peace can never be established or abiding. There may be seasons of comparative tranquillity, but how often the rebels will be in revolt, and sin will be found to be too strong even for the renewed man. But if the Prince of Peace has come in—if the gates of the city have been thrown open to receive and welcome Him—if He has been enthroned in the heart—the city is at peace. Every-

thing within will be under His control, and there will be *abundance of peace*.

How many who understand all about a right *position*, are very far from enjoying a right *condition*. They see and recognise their standing in peace, but they know little practically of an abiding experience of peace. Let me trace some of the causes of this. First, there is rebellion within. Our desires, though perhaps to some extent sanctified, have not been brought wholly under Christ's control, and hence they are continually overstepping their legitimate bounds. Our wills, though to some extent subdued, are not wholly yielded to Christ—to His keeping and direction. Hence there is every now and again more or less resistance to the appointments, and purposes, and leadings of God. So long as this goes on there may be a kind of peace at times, but the heart will never know what is implied in the expression the *abundance of Peace*.

Take another point — the matter of

2 Cor. xii.
9, 10.

temper—only a few seconds of ebullition of temper, and our condition of inward peace is destroyed. Up to that point you seemed to be making some progress, but that wretched temper got the mastery and spoilt it all! The grief and sorrow which follow do not put you back where you were before. What is to be done? You may say, “I have tried hard to control my temper; I have struggled and striven against it, but to no avail. The truth is, it is constitutional. It is my infirmity. I read that Paul had a thorn in the flesh, and I suppose that this is my thorn.” Not so, brother. Stop a moment. Paul’s infirmity was a weakness, but it was not a *sin*, or he could never have gloried in it. That temper of yours is a sin. Call it by its right name. You ask, “What am I to do?” Well, instead of trying to control yourself, put yourself and your temper under Christ’s control. Get down in the dust before Him. Do not strain to keep your temper under; that

is what you have tried to do, but have found it too strong for you. Seek to get under Christ's controlling power. "Humble yourselves *under* the mighty hand of God." If you want to feel the benefit of the power of God's hand, get under it. Humble yourself under it. We do not mind trusting; but we do not like the humbling process that often has to precede the trusting. If necessary, acknowledge your need before others. And the greater the humbling, the greater will be your realization of the abundance of peace. Christ is able to control that temper and to fill up with His strength the place where you are the weakest. When He takes possession, He controls, keeps under, and reigns as the Prince of Peace; and you then understand what is *meant* by the *abundance of peace*.

Again, many are strangers to peace on account of the *anxieties*, the worries, the trials of daily life. Now what are you to do with these things? What is your pre-

1 Pet. v. 6.

Phil. iv. 4-7

sent habit of life in reference to them? Are you trying to manage your own affairs, and carry your own cares and burdens? You will not know what it is to be kept in perfect peace unless you fulfil the threefold command contained in the fourth chapter to the Philippians: "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." "Let your moderation" — gentleness — "be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." "Be careful"—or anxious—"for nothing." Do you rejoice in Him? Is your moderation or gentleness known? And then, are you anxious about nothing? If so, what then? "And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds"—thoughts—"in Christ Jesus."

You have reversed this order, it may be, and have been trying to keep God's peace; but if you do what He bids you, He will undertake to do what He promises. His peace will keep you. The very things which you say it is impossible to keep,

God undertakes to keep, namely, your heart (the seat of your affections) and your mind (the seat of your thoughts). He will control our thoughts, and so garrison them in Christ that they are brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. It is in Him as in a fortress that we find *abundance of peace*.

But once more. Peace is often lost owing to *conflict*. Not necessarily owing to the conflict itself, but owing to the way in which the believer engages in it. How often the believer engages in the warfare on wrong principles, and uses wrong methods.

The good fight is the fight of *faith*. Nothing is easier than to step out of faith into feeling; out of faith into sight or sense. What follows? At once there is a failure. It is no longer a fight of faith. But when we are in our true position—in Christ, under Christ's control—we have the benefit of His Almighty power, and the force of the

2 Chron.
xiv. 11.

assault is borne by Him. He takes the strain and the burden ; whilst the believer passes into his triumphs, and is kept in perfect peace through it all. The child of God then understands the meaning of Asa's words : " Lord, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power ; help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, Thou art our God ; let not man prevail against Thee." Against *us* ? No ; against *Thee* ! Why ! because the battle is the Lord's. How often we have looked at the battle as *ours*, and have asked that man shall not prevail against *us*. But perhaps you are not wholly on the Lord's side ; and this may be the secret of your failure. If you want continuous victory, you must be on the side of Him who knows no defeat. " Art thou for us or for our adversaries ? " said Joshua. " Nay ; but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come."

Joshua v.
13, 14.

The question is not whether the Lord is on your side, but whether you are on the Lord's side.

III. Once more, PEACE IN CONNECTION WITH CHRIST'S PRESENCE.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that *in Me* ye might have Peace." *In Me*, not through Me, out of Me, or *from* Me, but in Me.

The soul's dwelling-place is the very presence of Christ, the secret place of God's tabernacle. It is in that dwelling-place that the deepest, truest, and most satisfying peace is found.

It is not so much what He gives as what He is. "He is our peace," and He says, "Lo, I am WITH you alway, even unto the end of the world." See how David testified to this fact: "Thou art my hiding-place; Thou shalt preserve me from trouble; Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance."

"My hiding-place," that is *safety*;

John xvi.
33.

Eph. ii. 14.

Matt. xxviii.
20.

Ps. xxxii.
7.

Isa. xii. 2.

“Thou shalt preserve me from trouble,” *strength*; “Songs of deliverance,” *gladness*. And Isaiah says, “Behold, God is my *salvation*; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my *strength* and my *song*.” “My strength and my *song*.” Many see the salvation and the strength, but they forget the song. If you have Christ formed in you the hope of glory, you should have the song. Let there be gladness in all you do and say.

We read in the 72nd Psalm: “*In his days* shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.”

No doubt that has an important prophetic application, but with that I am not now concerned. I believe it has a very important spiritual significance. Do you give your days to Jesus as well as your talents? You say, “I am going to give this day to the Lord; but to-morrow I have some special business

for myself!" Exactly. Oh to have every day a day of the Son of man upon earth! That is the secret of continuous peace. To give Him always the pre-eminence. Every day the Lord's day, in which we say, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" "Thou shalt have full control." "Fulfil Thy good pleasure in me." Then shall we have *abundance of peace*. Let the presence of the Lord in His people become a living, bright reality, then we shall find abundant and abiding peace.

Let us now endeavour to answer the question, "How am I to enjoy this peace?" There are conditions. Some people object to conditions. But there are conditions in the matter of salvation. Faith is a condition. And so, when we come to the matter of holiness, and progress in holiness, there are conditions all along the way. First, then, I would say, Let there be *no reserves*. In the end of the ninth chapter of Luke we

Luke ix.
61.

read of a man who came to Jesus, and said, "Lord, I will follow Thee ; *but*—" Many people go as far as that, and there they stop. They get the blessing only when the *but* is removed. "One says, "Lord, I will follow Thee ; *but* I do not want others to know it. The fact is, I am afraid of being thought peculiar : I am afraid I shall be misunderstood. There are friends whose good opinion and esteem I greatly prize, and I am afraid that, if I am out-and-out for Christ, they will shun and avoid me." Now what does God say to such an one ? "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect." Another says, "Lord, I will follow Thee ; *but* I am not willing to give up one thing. In the first place, I am not sure that there is any harm in it." Has any one asked you to give it up ? "No," you say ; "but I have not felt comfortable about it." Then it may be the Lord is dealing with you about it. And God bids you lay aside not only sins, but

Gen. xvii.
1.

every *weight*, in running the race set before you. It may not be a sin ; but is it a weight ? Is it hindering your progress, or marring your influence. If so, that settles the point. You must let it go. Then, after all, oftentimes it is not the thing itself that stands in the way, but the *act of clinging* to it. Sometimes God puts His finger upon some object very dear to you to bring you out into a sphere of greater usefulness. Look at Abraham and Isaac. I do not read that Abraham idolised his son ; but the time came when God said, "I want you to give Me your son, your only son Isaac, to offer him up as a burnt offering." What did Abraham do ? At once he responded to God's call, and gave him to the Lord ; but the Lord gave him back again to Abraham. And so God may be putting his finger upon something in which there is neither any harm nor any hindrance, neither a sin, nor a weight, in order that you may consecrate your will to Him. Yield it to

Gen. xxii. 2.

the Lord, and He will bless you with the abundance of peace.

Once more. Another says, "Lord, I will follow Thee, *but* I am afraid that I shall be called to suffer." This is to have hard thoughts of God. You think that, if you put yourself wholly into His hands, He will be cruel! Why, He is your Father. Whatsoever is loving and tender in an earthly parent is just a faint reflection of the infinite love that dwells in our Father in heaven.

Secondly, let there be *no distrust*. God wants you to give yourself to Him that He might fulfil His good pleasure in you, that His will may be done in you. His will is your truest happiness. Let us say, "Lord, take me, and do Thy will in me; use me as Thou wilt." What God requires is that you should be at His disposal, without any conditions.

Lastly, let there be *no delay*. Some here may be saying, "When I get to my room I will give myself wholly to the Lord."

Nay, let it be now. A few moments may be sufficient. Just look up into His face, and say, "Yes, Lord, yes; I will go all lengths with Thee—and *now*—Here I am." "I see now," said one, not long since, "the secret of abundance, the secret of always having a full supply. It is simply to live in the land; for my Father says, "*Dwell* in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." It is in the land the "abundance" is to be found. Simply abide there. Abide in Him, in whom all fulness dwells, and you will have enough and to spare. Yield yourself to Him now for this; give yourself to Him without reserve, unconditionally, cheerfully, promptly, and then the Lord will undertake to meet all your need, and you shall know what it is, day by day, and right on to the end, to live in the ABUNDANCE OF PEACE.

Ps. xxvii
3.

The Christian's Ideal.

"I press toward the mark."—*Phil.* iii. 14.

ST. PAUL gives us here a sketch of his own spiritual history. He tells us what he once was—what he had gloried in, what he had trusted to. He tells us how all this had been changed. He tells us what was now the ground of his confidence, what was now the ruling principle of his life—the one great aim of all his spiritual activities.

Paraphrased a little, the statement in these verses is this:—"I have told you, brethren, that at the great turning point of my life I was led by the gracious Spirit to give up all my old grounds of trust, that I

might win Christ and be found in Him. But one act is not the whole of Christianity. Acceptance of Christ by faith is but the starting point of the new life. Do not, therefore, suppose that I regard myself by that one decisive act of self-renunciation for Christ to have laid hold of the goal of my appointed race. I have not already attained the great ideal of my heavenly calling. By conversion to God I have only just entered into the race—passed through the entrance. By the reception of Christ I have become possessed of a complete spiritual equipment. But now growth and progress must follow. And it is in this I am now engaged.” “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

I do not now purpose to expound the words “I press toward the mark.” I would take them simply as a motto. In

every true Christian life there are three things we ought clearly to understand and recognise—the *ideal*, the *power*, and the *means*.

I. THE IDEAL.

How important that we should have an ideal! The truth of this is seen even in earthly pursuits. From the lack of a clear, definite aim, the noblest talents have remained idle—the finest opportunities have been allowed to slip by, and the whole life has been misspent and wasted. If we would excel, we must have an aim. This applies to all human activities. It is true of the scholar, the artist, the architect, the reformer. It is also true of the Christian.

By an ideal I mean that which it is possible for you to be. Not something utterly beyond our reach—a mere visionary aim—Utopian; but an aim which men of like passions with ourselves have actually realized.

There is a danger of adopting a false

ideal. If our ideal is low, our practical walk will also be low. No man rises above his aim. The first thing necessary in order to raise a man's practical life is to raise his ideal. We are apt to form our ideal from professing Christians. Perhaps we take our standard from the so-called Christian world. We form our idea as to the possibilities of the spiritual life from what we hear of the experience of others. We are in danger of going to the stream, rather than to the Fountain head. There are multitudes of believers who are living as dwarfs and cripples, simply because they have been imitating a bad copy. They have a false ideal. They are not pressing toward the true mark.

But you ask, How am I to form a true ideal?

The student, either of sculpture or of painting, will go to the galleries of Rome and of Florence to drink in the spirit of the old masters. The scholar, the artist, the reformer, all recognise the importance

of having before them continually the very best standard of excellence they can get.

Ps. cxix. 9.

The Christian must follow the same course. Does any one ask, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" David gives us the answer, "By taking heed thereto *according to Thy word.*" Here is the true standard. Just as the artist goes to Nature to form his conception, to receive his impressions; so the believer must come to revelation—the inspired word of God—to form his ideal.

Speaking generally, we notice how the believer learns touching what it is possible for him to do and to *be* here on earth from four things which the Holy Scriptures contain.

Rom. viii.
29.

The purposes of God: There he sees what God has called him to; what He has predestined him to be—to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Jude 24.
1 Cor. xv.
57.
Phil. iv. 19.

The promises of God: God's undertakings of keeping, of triumph, of supply,

of guidance, and that sin shall not have dominion over him.

The precepts of God : He sees how in all the Divine commands he has the assurance of power ; that His biddings are enablings.

And the inspired prayers of the apostles. These he finds scattered here and there throughout the epistles. Studying these, he not only learns for what he may pray, but what he may expect to realize here on earth.

In this way his ideal as to what is actually possible in his life and experience becomes formed. He gets it direct from God's word ; and he finds how low were his former expectations. His ideal is raised to a true level.

II. THE POWER.

One of the first things we have to learn in connection with this, is that it is not natural, but supernatural power we need.

It is power that comes to the soul as a principle of life. We say knowledge is

Ps. xxxii.
8.

Rom. vi. 14.

Rom. vii.
18.

power. But we may know our duty ; we may know what we ought to be and do, and yet we may be confessing with a burdened conscience, "How to perform that which is good I find not."

What the Gospel in its fulness puts before us is a life of freedom. But knowledge without the power of performing would be bondage.

As the Divine purpose, which shows us what we may be, gives us the true standard from which to form our ideal, so the Divine power provided for us by God makes that ideal possible. His power works in the line of His purpose.

It is thus we distinguish between an ideal that is visionary and an ideal that is practical and possible.

If the ideal is true, it has its warrant in Scripture, and then the believer may count upon power sufficient to realize it.

The point we are now considering is not what I hope to be hereafter in glory, but what I may expect to be here on

earth, in the midst of temptation, of trial, of difficulty, with my present moral and physical constitution, in all my present surroundings.

But it may be objected that the man who actually reaches his own ideal must of necessity become self-complacent, and what is this but pride? We have all heard of the artist who at last succeeded in producing a work of art that came up to his ideal. He no sooner saw that he had reached his highest conceptions than he felt that all his hopes of higher achievements were at an end. He threw aside his brushes and palette in despair. Now it may be urged, let a man reach his ideal in the Christian life, and all thought of further progress, all idea of growth, must perish.

But what are the facts? Why, the soul that is really attaining is never self-complacent, because *as he advances he finds his ideal also advances*. His standard of practical godliness, his views of holiness

—his whole ideal, rises higher and higher. His standard of the present is higher than his ideal of the past.

Divine Power does not make all Christians alike. No two apostles were exactly identical—each had his own idiosyncrasies. But they all had the same power. They were all filled with the same Holy Ghost. The lightning that strikes the tree does not go contrary to, but follows, the grain of the tree. The Holy Ghost does not destroy the individuality of a man; nor does He make all Christians exactly alike, like so many eggs in a basket.

Nor does Divine power destroy our responsibility. Let us never lose sight of the fact that it is God that works in us both to will and to do. Yet we are not mere machines. He does not act upon us mechanically, so to speak. He has so constituted us, that, though we are utterly insufficient, and have no power of ourselves to perform that which is good, yet

we are intelligent and voluntary instruments. He is the Agent, the Worker. Power belongeth unto God, and resides in God.

The Divine power when duly received does accomplish actual results in the fulfilment of God's purposes concerning us. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." It is not enough that we *aim* at conformity to Christ. The true life is the life of attaining, not merely aiming to attain ; growing, advancing, though the final goal cannot yet be reached.

III. THE MEANS.

We must "press" toward the mark. But how?

1. Make sure of your footing in the present.

No man who is uncertain as to his acceptance before God is ready to press forward. If he is not sure the ground is firm on which he now stands, he will not know how to be stepping out towards higher things.

1 Thes. iv.
3.

See how the Apostle puts it in the 9th verse—"That I may be found *in Him*, not having mine own righteousness." Humbly, but thankfully and definitely, take up that position, and recognise the fact that God sees you in Him who is the Lord your righteousness.

2. Lay hold of every spiritual privilege as it is revealed to you.

To be pressing forward implies two things—there is the "*forgetting* those things which are behind," and there is the "*reaching forth* unto those things which are before."

What are the things behind? They may be the things that fill us with shame, and with vain regrets and with bitter remorse—with sorrow of heart. We have to leave them.

Or they may be the things which tend to self-gratulation, to vainglory and pride. Let us forget them.

On the other hand, there is the "*reaching forth* unto those things which are before."

“Every man,” it has been said, “is born with aspiration. It does not develop in every man. Neither do half the buds in trees blossom, but they are there. Aspiration is to the man what the tendril is to the plant. Some plants take hold by winding around, some by delicate roots, some by tendrils, some by little hooks, some by leaves that catch like anchors.” But why? Not to remain where they cling, but that by these things they may rise the higher.

So must it be with us. I took down from my shelves the other day a book entitled “A Year-book of Facts.” This was just a record of the results of scientific discovery during the past twelve months. We are enjoying to-day the benefits and advantages that have been reached through the discoveries made in science during the past hundred years. Take, for instance, such things as gas, steam, and electricity. They are the results, not of inventions, strictly speaking,

but of discoveries. These great powers were there before they were discovered. What science has done is simply to unveil the powers hidden in nature, and then to apply them to the wants and necessities of man.

Just so is it in the spiritual world. All the power we need is stored up in Christ. It is not something to be manufactured—not something to be created—but to be discovered and appropriated. The Holy Spirit reveals to us the infinite resources we have in Christ. All the power is there for us potentially. How may I have it experimentally and practically? By faith.

Some time ago we were all astonished by reading an account of a wonderful explosion; it was called the "Hell Gate Explosion." A large rock obstructed the navigation of Long Island Sound, New York. The rock, which formed an island nine acres in extent, blocked the channel known as Hell Gate, between Long Island and Ward's Island. It had always

been an obstruction to ships passing to and from the East River to the Sound. An engineer undertook the entire removal of the island, so that the water should everywhere be twenty-six feet deep at low tides across the whole channel. Commencing operations in 1875, he was between nine and ten years in preparing for the event. From two shafts tunnels were driven in every direction ; in all, twenty-four galleries or tunnels were run from north to south through the island. These were intersected by others running nearly east to west. After the galleries were completed, the next work was to drill the roof and the pillars full of holes. Into these holes cartridges of dynamite were placed. The enormous mine was studded with 14,000 cartridges of dynamite, the total weight of which was fourteen tons. The whole was connected by means of electric wires with a battery. The mine was fired by a little girl, the daughter of General Newton, the engineer. She simply

Mark vi.
56.

put her finger on a button and pressed it ; instantly a great mass of water was thrown upwards, and the thing was done.

So it is with the power we have treasured up in Christ. All we need in order to overcome the evil, in order to triumph over difficulties, is stored up in Him. The contact of faith enables us to receive the supply. We read in the Gospels that as many as touched Him were made perfectly whole. It was when faith came in contact with Him that virtue—power—came out of Him.

From before the foundation of the world God made this provision for us in Christ. The life that is sustained by this power is the life of faith. Not one isolated act—but a continuous course of action, keeping touch with Christ, walking in living fellowship with Him. It is thus that we receive all the power we need to make us useful and triumphant in the path of life.

The Service of God.

IF we would have a right conception of God's service, we must recognise the principles by which it is governed. And these are all laid down in the Scriptures. We may look at the subject under two main divisions—

The SERVICE to which we are called, and the LIFE we need for that service.

I. The SERVICE itself.

I. All true service lies in the lines of God's *Will*. A good servant knows his Master's will, and obeys it. It is not enough that I am engaged in a good work; I must work according to my Master's will. It is the Master's office to give directions; it is the servant's to obey

Ps. cxliii.
10; xxv. 4.

them. But if I am following my own directions and pursuing my own counsels, the work I am doing may be a very excellent work, but I am not really serving the Lord.

We may go to God for His blessing, but it may be for His blessing on our *own* plans. The first thing is to come to Him for *His* orders. We shall then pray, not only "Give me Thy blessing," but "Teach me Thy will, show me Thy ways." He may bid us do a very simple work; but by doing it we shall be really serving Him. It is better to be occupied with little things in the path of His will than to be doing a great work in obedience to our own conceits.

We recognise this principle in daily life. You ask your servant to bring you a glass of water. That is your will for him. But he thinks to himself, I will do something better than that, something grander and nobler. I will take my master a basket of fruit. Would he be a good servant, and

would that be true service? A good servant is one who fulfils his master's bidding, and seeks to carry out his will. It is not with a view to glorify himself that he serves. Self-exaltation is one of the chief hindrances to our service. As Pasteur Monod once said, "If you want to do something, do not try to be somebody." Such a life of service is always simple. It is not complicated. It is not like a number of divergent lines, but one single line. God does not require you to be in two places at the same time. Service in the path of God's Will never consists of a series of conflicting duties. It is when we let our own desires, our own plans and ambitions come in, that duty seems to be complicated. "This one thing I do," is the true motto of the whole course. The nearer we approach God's will in our service, the simpler and less difficult it becomes, and the more freedom shall we find in it. We shall be learning then the truth of those words, "Thy service

Phil. iii. 13.

is perfect freedom." It has been well said by one deeply taught in God's service, "The more liberty we can throw into service, and the more service we can put into liberty, the truer both the service and the liberty will be." *

But some one may say, "How may I get into the line of His will?" Come to the right centre, the place where the will begins. It is well to be occupied with His commands; it is better to be occupied with the Commander. When you come to Him, you are in the right centre. Get right with God. True service cannot begin until we respond to God's claim upon us, until we recognise His Ownership. "*Whose I am,*" must come first; then we can say, "*and whom I serve.*" It was not the service so much as the One he served that then occupied the Apostle's thoughts. The practical recognition of our true relationship to Him as His servants involves very often

Acts xxvii.
23.

* Rev. James Vaughan.

a complete re-adjustment of our whole spiritual condition. We may have followed the dictates of our own hearts so fully, have served self so long, that before we are brought to give up what we have hitherto regarded as our personal rights, a tremendous struggle ensues. But to that point we must come, the entire surrender of our whole beings to Him who has bought us. This is to come to the right centre. From that point the path of His will for service begins. The act of dedication now becomes an attitude of devotion.

2. True service lies in the line of God's *supply*. If we would be receiving His supply, we must be found abiding in His Will. We need never then be afraid of His commands. "His commandments are not grievous." They may be impossible to you when you are out of Christ, or when you are not abiding in Him. From man's point of view they might seem very unreasonable. You re-

1 John v. 3.

Luke ix. 13.

member that command the Lord Jesus gave to His disciples when He said to them, "Give ye them to eat." How could this requirement be fulfilled? What were their resources? "Five barley loaves and two small fishes!" What were they among five thousand? And yet, impossible as it was, that command they literally fulfilled!

John xv. 5.

But observe how it was accomplished. We have here an illustration of being brought to the right centre in order to get into the line of true service. They must first see their own utter insufficiency: "How many loaves have ye?" That question was intended to convince them of their own helplessness. The first lesson we all have to learn in service is contained in that one sentence, "Without Me ye can do nothing."

The next step is consecration—"Bring them hither to Me." Bring all you have—your weakness and poverty, your emptiness and want—to Him. Put yourselves

into His hands. When that was done, everything was adjusted ready for the fulfilment of the command.

Picture the scene. The multitude forms an outer circle—the disciples an inner circle; but the Centre is Christ Himself. True service is found in lines that radiate from Him. Taking these weak and feeble things into His hands, He opens the fountain of supply, and the stream at once begins to flow from Him, through the disciples, to the multitude. The impossible command was actually fulfilled.

“But,” you say, “the disciples themselves did not fulfil it. It was the Lord who wrought the miracle. It was Christ Himself who fulfilled it.” Precisely so, and so it must be always. This is what we would insist upon to-day. Not you, but Christ working through you. The great point is, to be in the line of His power and life and fulness. We have no resources of our own with which to carry out His commands. But in Him we

Phil. iv. 19.

shall find an abundant supply. "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

3. True service lies in the line of God's *guidance*. God has a place for each one of His children. The highest wisdom consists in learning His way concerning us. The highest privilege is to live continually in His secret guidance. God does not show us the whole course of our life-work beforehand. We must be content to have it gradually revealed. If we would abide in His service, we must walk continually in His guidance. The work of faith and the walk of faith are inseparably united. The best way to do the work, is to be always in the will—that is, in the guidance—of God. He will not dispense with our faith by showing us a chart of all His purposes concerning us marked out in detail. He gives us light step by step. And faith lives and grows as it learns to trust, to follow, and to obey.

(Recognise this truth, and it will remove

all anxiety about work for God. It will teach us that we can serve Him as truly in the little things, and in the ordinary events of daily life, as in the great, and on special occasions. "There are some Christians," it has been said, "who can never find a place large enough to do their duty." But small things after all constitute almost the whole of life. True service lies therefore in the line of God's continual guidance.

II. The LIFE we need for the Service.

We shall consider Christ our life for service in three aspects:—

I. He is the life *before* us—our Pattern; the Object of our gaze—"Behold my Servant." "I am among you as one that serveth." "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." He has left us an example that we should follow His steps—"As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." And as He went forth in entire submission, in complete dependence, and in simple trust,

Isa. xlii. 1.

John xiii.
15.

John xx.
21.

so we must serve according to that pattern. I heard a farmer once say that he had a servant in his employ who was a very good man, but a very bad ploughman. When he was ploughing, instead of fixing his eyes on some object, and keeping it steadily before him as he drove the plough, he was in the habit of continually looking back to see whether he had made a straight furrow! The result was, he was constantly making crooked ones. There are many of God's servants who are doing the same thing. But the true attitude of service is, to be pressing towards the mark, and to be looking off unto Jesus. We have to look away from our own walk. We have to "set the Lord always before us" as the object of our continual gaze.

Ps. xvi. 8.

Ps. xlii. 5.
(margin.)

John xv. 4.
Col. iii. 17.

2. Christ is also the life *around* us—our Protection. "His Presence is salvation." He Himself, the ever-present living One, is the Home of our souls. Hence He says, "Abide in Me." "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in Me." Our ser-

vice is to be carried on in Him. Often we have to serve through scenes of temptation. Often our path lies through defiling and deadening influences. It is in a world of sin and darkness we are called to serve. For this reason we need an armour to keep us pure and undefiled. This provision we have in Him who is our life.

There are little creatures we have often seen playing on the surface of our ponds. They do not spend all their time upon the surface: they dive down into the water beneath. But when they descend, they take with them a globule of air. They become, in fact, enclosed in what looks like a crystal sphere. In the atmosphere of the world above they pursue their errands, and prosecute their search in the world beneath. No matter how impure or polluted the waters may be through which their duty lies, they pass through them all, and come up again uncontaminated, because all the while they are protected in this sphere of atmospheric air.

Ezek. xi. 16.

Rom. xiii.

14.

There we have a picture of what it is to be abiding in Christ, and of how we have to live, and move, and have our being in Him. All our service is to be done *in Him*.

"I will be to them as a little sanctuary."

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." He that obeys that command is, as an old writer says, "a Christ-enclosed man."

3. Christ is the life *within* us—our Power. This power is needed for a two-fold purpose—to cast off the works of darkness, and to put on the armour of light, or, to use another figure, to throw off the dead leaves of the old life, and to put forth the foliage and blossoms and fruit of the new. It is wonderful with what tenacity the dead leaves of our former conversation often cling to us. We need the life of the Risen Christ to cause them to fall off.

Sir John Lubbock, lecturing recently on "Leaves," has told us that the cause of the fall of leaves is a *process of life*—not of death. To prove this he exhibited

a twig which had been half-broken off in the autumn. It was left hanging to its parent trunk. The leaves above the bend, where the life-sap had been hindered in its flow, although utterly withered, remained so firmly attached that it needed considerable force to pull them off. The truth taught here is self-evident. If we find it so difficult to throw off evil habits—if sometimes we have almost despaired of ever being thoroughly quit of them—we may discover the secret of our failure in the fact that our real need is not merely life, but the “life more abundant.”

John x. 10.

If only the avenues of our being were in full and unhindered union with Christ, there would be no lack of power. The dead leaves of evil habit, which too often mar the believer's testimony, would then become easily detached, and by the same increased flow of vital energy, the whole life and conduct would become a bright and attractive witness to the transforming power of the indwelling Christ.

Life, Growth, and Fruit.

A DEVOTED servant of God, now in glory, who had attended one of these Keswick Conventions, and received very definite blessing, was asked *what* it was he had gained? He answered, "It was there I learned to *cash* my cheques!" He referred to the promises of God. It is to one of these cheques I desire now to direct your thoughts. You will find it in the third verse of the first Psalm: "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

Here is a cheque which we may get cashed into the golden coin of a present

experience. Never let us forget that we all have the same treasures in Christ. There is no difference as to our resources—no difference in this respect between ourselves, including the weakest believer, and the Apostle Paul. To us all, and for us all, there is the same Christ—the same unsearchable riches! The question is, How may I live upon these resources? How may I enjoy them? In these words we have an inspired description of a child of God in his true normal condition—“He shall be *like a tree*.” Perhaps there is no figure more beautiful, more simple and suggestive, than the one before us. Think of a tree; you have three things—life, growth, fruit. And those three things you have in a believer who is living up to his privileges.

Ps. 1. 3.

I. THERE IS LIFE. This is one of our first needs. By nature we are dead in trespasses and sins. It is not education, culture, or training, we first need. We need quickening—a life capable of being

Rom. vi. 23.

1 John v. 11.

trained—that can be cultured and educated. That life comes from above. The Word of God proclaims it. It reveals the way of life. It declares life to be God's gift. "The gift of God is eternal life." But there is a *progress in our apprehension* of what spiritual life is. We do not grasp it all at once. In the early stages of our spiritual history we do not take in the full meaning of God's statements. "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is *in* His Son." Such a declaration strikes us at first as somewhat mystical. We should have less difficulty in understanding it if it had been written, "and this life is *from* His Son." But as we are led on by the Spirit, we are enabled to enter more perfectly into God's mind, and we find that God means just what He says—"This life is *in* His Son." Mark two important stages in our apprehension of spiritual life.

Our first view of it is that it is a *Divine Nature Imparted*. That which is born of

the Spirit is spirit. The new nature is not the Spirit—*i.e.* the Holy Ghost Himself; but it is a spirit. It is that which is born of the Holy Ghost. When that has taken place, we have a being in God's kingdom. Now we are new creatures in Christ Jesus; we have new affections and desires, new aims and aspirations. It is a blessed thing to know what life, in this sense, means. But there is a higher and truer apprehension of life.

The Divine Person Indwelling. "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." There is a new principle in me—"I live." But in addition to this there is a Divine Person dwelling within me—"Christ liveth in me." "I am the Life." "That Christ might dwell in your hearts by faith." The recognition of this fact—that life is not merely an abstract principle communicated to me, but a Person dwelling within me—often (may we not say always) marks a crisis in our spiritual history. From that hour we enter on a new experience.

Gal. ii. 20.

Eph. iii. 17.

We are not occupied now with our new nature, and waiting for *it* to grow and become strong before we can live victorious lives; but we are thinking of *Him*, who is not only the Source without us, but the Spring *within* us—we are thinking of Him who is Omnipotent to save us *now*, and therefore we begin at once to expect deliverance and triumph.

II. THERE IS GROWTH.—What is growth? It is the expansion of life. It is life in activity. The tree is planted with a view to growth. God has secured the best possible conditions for growth.

Ps. 1. 3.

“He shall be like a tree planted by the *rivers of water*.” Hebrew scholars tell us

that the word “planted” here means transplanted. It implies that the tree grew previously in another soil. One came, and having chosen it, had it removed into his own garden. How true is this of every believer! Once he grew in a waste land, but God chose him, and then translated him “into the kingdom of

Col. 1. 13.

His dear Son." Every believer is a transplanted tree.

Now, just as the tree finds in the soil and moisture, in the atmosphere and light, all it needs for growth, so the believer finds all he needs in Christ. The life within him has a need which only Christ can supply. But he has been planted into Christ. The new nature has a capacity for reception. It is capable of taking in the food provided for it in the soil in which God has planted it.

This growth takes place in two directions. *Growth in the Roots.* Root growth is hidden growth. Light is needed for the branches, but it is not needed for the roots; on the contrary, it injures them. "When you have hyacinths in water glasses you put them first in darkness for some weeks, till the roots strike down into the water. And even when the roots have spread and filled the glass there is scarcely a sign of growth upward; the stalk remains undeveloped. Light is

needed for that growth. But the roots must come first."* So is it spiritually. The avenues through which spiritual nourishment shall come to the soul must be in contact with the Source of supply.

Many of us, it may be, need to have the channels of our being cleared and adjusted. Though there has been an unlimited provision, our souls may nevertheless have remained barren and unfruitful. Something has stopped the way. There is something wrong in the roots of our spiritual life. Our communion with God is not what it might be. This is the hidden life. We do not need the light of publicity for this. Nay, we may be living too much in public. We need to know more of what it is to be alone with God.

Growth in the Branches.—This illustrates that part of the believer's existence which is seen. "The life hid"—in the roots; the "life manifested"—in the branches.

* Dr. Leckie.

Closely connected with the root-life is the branch-life. Of course it is really the same life. The tree gives out by the branches what it takes in by the roots. "His leaf also shall not wither." In another place we read—

"Her leaf shall be green." This illustrates the ministry of gladness. How cheering to the eye is the beautiful green of the fresh and healthy leaf! How it gives beauty to the landscape! Such should be the influence of every believer's life. He is sent into the world to manifest the gospel of gladness! and not only towards man—in our testimony for God—but also Godward in our worship and service. We are to "serve the Lord *with gladness.*"

Then, again, the leaf is the means by which the tree gives shelter. It affords a refreshing shadow from the rays of the scorching sun. And once more. The leaves of a tree have a purifying influence on the atmosphere. Animals, as they

Jer. xvii. 8.

Ps. c. 2.

breathe, render the air impure. They cannot live upon the atmosphere that has already passed through their lungs. It has become poisonous to them. But the leaves of trees have the property of removing the noxious gases. They take the carbon from the atmosphere, and liberate the oxygen. We have all heard of the wonderful effect of the eucalyptus tree on the atmosphere of malarious districts. The leaves of this tree give out a volatile aromatic secretion, filling the air, and producing a most beneficial effect.

These figures speak for themselves. They shadow forth the believer's mission here in the world. His life may be full of blessing to others—cheering, sheltering, and purifying.

Jer. xvii. 8.

But let us not forget the secret lies in the roots being in contact with the river. "She spreadeth out her roots by the river." It is not by screwing oneself up to it that these results are to be obtained. We have seen artificial fountains playing

on our tables. As long as they are wound up, the waters flow upwards beautifully; but then, after a while, they always run down, and the fountain no longer exists. There is a religious activity which is the outcome of intense emotional feeling—the result of a winding up of mere natural enthusiasm. But as sure as there is a “winding up” there will be a “running down.” Sooner or later it spends itself, and then there comes the inevitable reaction. The life of self-effort always runs down. The better life is known when Christ becomes to us the “well of water within, springing up spontaneously unto everlasting life.”

Now, while we believe in progressive sanctification, let us not lose sight of the fact, that the *beginning* of a new experience, in which sanctification really is progressive, may be something quite sudden and immediate.

The discovery and the removal of the stone that choked the channel and

John iv. 14.

stopped the stream may take place within a very brief space of time. It may be the work of a few moments. No sooner is the hindrance removed than the waters begin to flow, and the soul is filled to overflowing.

Phil. i. 11. III. THERE IS FRUIT.—If you are a Christian at all there will be some fruit. But it is God's will that there should be "much fruit"—that we should "be *filled* with the fruits of righteousness"—every branch heavily laden, weighed down with fruit.

And not only does God require abundance of fruit; it is His will that it should be ripe fruit. We have seen trees with quantities of fruit, but there has been no ripeness. The fruit has been hard and sour. Is this characteristic of our fruit? How shall our fruit be ripened? It must have the sunshine. Sunlight is not enough; it must be sunshine. Sunlight is reflected light, but sunshine is light direct from the sun itself. So we must

live in the light of Him who is the Sun of righteousness, with nothing between.

The Lord Mayor, some time ago, was distributing prizes to poor lads and others, for window gardening. A lovely geranium gained the first prize. When the owner was called, a small child with a pale face came shyly forward. The Lord Mayor thought there must be some mistake, and so he questioned her. She said, the lady who gave her the flower when it was very small bade her to keep it always in the sunshine. So every morning she put it in the window-sill ; at midday she took it to the garret window ; in the evening she placed it in the stairs, that it might catch the slanting rays of the setting sun. Day by day she tended it, with this splendid result. Let us never forget our Sun is always shining, and shining that we might live in His rays. As we bask in the sunshine of His smile He will do the ripening. You need not be gazing at your fruit ; leave that to Him. He will make

you abundantly fruitful, and will ripen it with His own rays, that it may be fruit on which He Himself can feast.

The Yoke of Christ.

“TAKE My yoke upon you.” Have you noticed where this direction comes? It comes after the invitation—that most gracious of all His invitations—“Come unto Me.” It comes after the promise, “I will give you rest”—the promise that so peculiarly fits into the special need of our nature. Every one who listens to this call must feel conscious that it speaks to the very deepest want of his being.

In the invitation, the Lord Jesus appeals to those who are in any kind of sorrow; who are weighed down with care or anxiety—oppressed with any trouble. But He speaks more especially to those who are weary and heavy-laden with sin.

Matt. xi. 29.

Matt. xi. 30.

When Christ says, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light," He is showing us the contrast between His yoke and the sinner's—between His burden and that of the heavy-laden. He saw men burdened with the guilt of sin, and labouring under the tyranny of its yoke. He had come to remove the one, and to destroy the other. He had come to take away the load off the conscience, and to break every fetter, and set the captive free.

It is to such, therefore, that He spoke those gracious words, "Come unto Me ;" it is in this way He gives us rest.

If the sinner's burden points to the load of sins committed—a load that goes on increasing the longer he refuses to return—the yoke points to the power of sin's dominion—a power that gains in strength the longer we continue under it.

Rest comes with a sense of deliverance from these. Such is the blessing Christ bestows on those who come to Him. This is salvation—a present salvation.

But it is not everything. It is not all that He has to bestow. It meets the sinner's first great need.

Now, when the Lord Jesus says, "Take My yoke upon you," He supposes that the invitation has been accepted, and the "rest" has been received. The question is not now, How may the past be forgiven? How may the conscience be at rest?—all that is settled—but, How may I glorify Him in my walk and conversation? How may I live to His praise? What will He have me to do in that path of obedience into which He has called me?

In these words that follow the invitation, the answer to the pardoned soul's inquiry is found. This is what He would have you to do, "Take My yoke upon you."

But do we understand what the Master means by His yoke? There was His Father's yoke to which He had submitted. And in His voluntary and cheerful submission to that yoke, He gives us an example for us to follow.

1. Christ's yoke is *His will*. Salvation may be looked at as a series of acceptances. We accept His pardon, His righteousness, His rest. And let us not forget we accept also His will. His pardon takes the place of our guilt ; His righteousness, of our supposed merits ; His rest, of our misery ; and His will, of our self-seeking.

Col. 1. 9.

Our study now is, not what we shall choose, but—What is it that He has chosen for me? “To be filled with a knowledge of His will.” It is quite possible for the child of God sadly to fail in this. We may desire His gifts and His blessing, and yet not be doing His will. We may make our own plans, and set our hearts on our own ways, and then come to God for His blessing on all these. But this is not to seek His will.

“Take My will upon you,” means laying aside our own plans just seeking first to lie down into the will of God. Then we not only get the benefit of His

merits to justify us, of His power to guard and sustain us, but of His wisdom to guide us.

2. His yoke means also *His Rule*. Liberty in Christ does not mean freedom from control—that would be lawlessness. Christ sets us free, by translating us, out of the reign of sin into the reign of grace. We are called into His reign. “Sin shall not have dominion over you.” Why? “For ye are not under the law, but under grace.” Grace is then over you ; it rules you. You are under Christ’s authority. Deliverance from sin’s power is found in being under Christ’s power. The best way to be free from sin’s dominion is to be well under Christ’s control.

Rom. vi. 14.

3. His yoke means *His Discipline*. We are under His correction and instruction as well as His protection. We are in His school, and the lessons to be learnt we must each one learn for himself. The master may teach, but he cannot learn the lessons for the pupil. So Christ

Heb. v. 8.

Psa. xviii.
35.

was Himself the perfect learner. "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." Here again we have to follow Him as our example. We have to take His yoke. "Thy gentleness," or "loving correction, hath made me great."

But if Christ's yoke may be said to include His will, His rule, and His correction, what is it to *take* it?

We see at once that it implies a voluntary act. It is not something to be forced upon you. Conversion leads on at once to consecration. The first is receiving—an empty heart receiving God's "unspeakable gift." The second means dedicating—presenting our whole being unto Him as a living sacrifice.

But how many shrink from such a step! How many are afraid of yielding themselves unreservedly to the will of God! But can we doubt His love to us, when we see that He laid down His life for us?

To take Christ's yoke means *submission*—unqualified submission to His sway.

"Humble yourselves *under* the mighty hand of God." "Take My yoke *upon* you." You will know Christ's saving power in its fulness—to meet your daily need in the walk—in proportion as you know what it is to be controlled by His will.

Once again, it means *obedience*. "Take" and "Learn" follow immediately "Come" and "Rest." A disciple is a learner. "Learn of Me:" and the Apostle says, "Ye have not so learned Christ." Christ is both the lesson and the Teacher. But the way to learn is to obey.

Then how great are the blessings secured in following this direction.

Standing at the head of every other privilege is that of fellowship with Christ. What is fellowship? It is union. But what kind of union? Regeneration is union of life, but fellowship is union of will. There is not only oneness of spirit, but identity of purpose.

To be yoked with Christ and to be

1 Pet. v. 6.

Eph. iv. 20

willing to follow His leading, is to have the benefit of Divine Guidance. How great is this privilege! Most of our troubles are the fruit of our own folly and sin in trying to guide ourselves, and choosing our own way. But in His path we know that all things work together for good.

Not the least of the blessings that come to us from a child-like compliance with the direction, is that of Rest. "And ye shall find rest for your souls." It is "rest" indeed to receive emancipation from the burden and yoke of sin. But to be led into a path of deliverance from self-seeking and self-management, from self-consciousness and self-glorying, is to be *finding* a rest which meets not only the need of the conscience, but of the soul. It means a living fellowship with a personal Saviour. The atonement of Christ satisfies the conscience; but we need the Person of Christ to satisfy the soul.

How Faith Grows.

THE Apostle Paul could say of the Thessalonian converts, "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly." For there can be no doubt that depth of spiritual life, on man's side, depends on the growth of faith. Faith is a root-grace, and love is a fruit-grace. If the root is in vigour, the fruit will be in abundance. And so the Apostle adds, "And the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth."

But let us consider how faith grows. By what means doth faith increase? By obedience. That is, by responding to

2 Thess. i.
3.

1 John v. 3.

God's requirements. "His commandments are not grievous."

We may take four little words—each a divine command—and we may notice how, by responding to them, step by step, faith will grow. The first of these is

BEHOLD !

This is really God's first requirement. Look and live—not Come and do, or bring anything. Not try to create, to improve, or make yourselves strong, or worthy, or sufficient. But "behold." "Behold what I have provided for you. What I have bestowed upon you. What I am to you. All your need finds its supply in Me." It was so with Hagar in the wilderness of Beersheba. There she was with the lad Ishmael perishing for want of water. The bottle she had brought with her was empty. She had come to an end of all her own resources. What could she do? Only lie down and die. She was in utter despair.

Then came the word of the Lord, "Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand, for I will make him a great nation." Impossible! the creature of sense would say. But God's word was true. "And God *opened her eyes*, and she *saw* a well of water."

Gen. xxi.
19.

Another instance. Elisha's servant at Dothan. He saw the enemy, but he did not see God's hosts. Seeing only one side of the truth—and that the dark side—filled him with fear and dismay. "Alas, my master! how shall we do?"

2 Kings vi.
15. 1617.

How many of God's children are like the servant of the prophet in this respect? They have a vivid sense of the might of the enemy, of the power of evil—but they fail to recognise the all-sufficiency and nearness of the Lord of hosts.

Elisha's conduct, in his dealings with his despairing servant, should be our pattern. "Fear not," said the prophet, "for they that be with us are more than

2 Kings vi.
17.

they that be with them." That was the witness of the man of faith. Then, instead of entering into controversy, Elisha prayed and said, "Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." He now saw the other side of the truth, and all his fears vanished.

So is it now. It is by responding to this command "behold," that we get what we may call the *apprehension*, or knowledge of faith. The next word of command that faith obeys is

LAY HOLD.

It is impossible for faith to respond without receiving blessing. Each blessing received is a fresh starting-point for faith—not a resting-place for indolence, or merely a refuge for fear, but the ground from which to begin afresh a course of more earnest activity and simple trust.

“Lift up now thine eyes,” said the Lord to Abraham, “and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.” This was equivalent to the command “behold.” But then came the words, “Arise, walk through the land in the length of it, and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee.” Similar words came to Joshua nearly five hundred years afterwards—“Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given you.” It was not enough that they beheld the goodly land, and heard the Divine words assuring them that it was God’s gift to them for ever. *Beholding* was to be followed by *appropriating*.

How many earnest souls see the fullness of the provision and are convinced of the reality of the gift, and yet make no progress?

A deed is put into your hands, by

Gen. xii.
14.

Josh. i. 3.

which you discover that you are the rightful heir to an estate. Simply believing in the validity of the document, that it is in every way legally executed, and that you are the heir, would not put you into possession. The act of taking possession must follow the knowledge of the fact that the inheritance is yours.

Heb. xi.
33.

So faith not only beholds, but also *obtains* promises.

Here is a man who has fallen overboard. A rope is thrown out to him. He sees the effort made to save him. It fills him with hope even in the moment of his peril. The bare fact that the rope is within his reach is not without its gladdening influence—but that alone will not save him. He must lay hold.

1 Tim. vi.
12.

Responding to this word of command “lay hold on eternal life” is what we may call the *appropriation of faith*. The third word is

HOLD FAST.

It is one thing to lay hold—it is another

thing to hold fast. "Let us hold fast our confession." "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering" (N.V.). "Holding fast the faithful word." These are apostolic admonitions. For if our great spiritual enemy fails in discouraging us from taking faith's position, he will spare no pains in endeavouring to dislodge us from it, after we have taken it.

It is only as we follow the Divine direction in Eph. vi. that we are enabled to withstand these efforts of Satan. We must know what it is to be "strengthened in the Lord"—to put on the whole armour of God. "The good fight of faith" consists almost entirely in holding fast that which by faith we have appropriated. To hold fast is to keep our ground. It is this we are enabled to do when intrenched in Christ, "that ye may be able to withstand,"—"and having done all, to stand." Here we have the *tenacity of faith*. This brings us to the last word:

Heb. x. 23.

Tit. i. 9.

HOLD FORTH.

Phil. ii. 16.

If it needs faith to receive, to take in—it needs still more faith to give out, “Holding forth the word of life.” But faith is not growing exceedingly unless it advances at each stage of God’s requirement. To hinder this progress is one of Satan’s chief devices. That he should dispute every inch of the ground need not surprise us, for he knows the blessings resulting from a steady unhesitating response to the Divine command.

How often there comes the unbelieving suggestion when the privileges of the “fulness of blessing” are put before us, that, after all, these blessings are *not true*. Perhaps we are tempted to argue about them. Perhaps we are betrayed into controversies in such a spirit that it would seem as if we hoped they were not true; we argue as if we preferred living at a low-level experience. And then the word has come spoken with a power that has penetrated our inmost being. “Behold!” and

we have seen—not our need merely—not the depth of our weakness and depravity only, but we have seen how infinite is the provision, how all-sufficient is the Divine fulness to meet that need. Faith has obeyed the command, and the despondency and mist have fled. We have obeyed, and in obeying we have risen above the gloom and fog of a life that is perpetually limiting God.

But the tempter has not left us. While we have gazed on the fulness of the provision, we have heard the whisper, “Yes, there it is, boundless in its extent; but *it is not for you*. Such a life of triumph is only for God’s favoured ones—some few eminent saints; it is not for those who are engaged in the ordinary pursuits of daily life. No; these great and high privileges are not for you.” But God speaks to the soul, and He says, “Lay hold,” “Whosoever will, let him *take* the water of life freely.” “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.” It is to such that

Rev. xxii.
17.

John vii.
37.

John vii. 38.

the Lord Jesus promises not only the grace that meets our own need, but the fulness of grace that goes forth to others. "Out of him shall flow rivers of living water." Obedience to God's word is the only way of meeting that suggestion.

Then when we have experienced the reality of the blessing, and know it in its actual possession, there comes again the unbelieving thought from the same evil source :—"Yes, you have a blessed experience of the goodness and sufficiency of Christ; *but it won't last.*" What is faith's duty at such a moment? Simply to obey the word that comes to us from God—"hold fast." Live on Him a moment at a time. Hold fast to the faithfulness of God. Never question the immutability of His love.

Then, lastly, when the tempter has failed in each of these assaults, he will adopt another device with the object of hindering our usefulness. He will endeavour to persuade us to hide our light

under a bushel—to keep our religion to ourselves—to do our utmost to prevent our neighbours from discovering the fact that the Lord has visited us with His salvation. But a Divine command appeals to faith at this step, and bids us confess with the mouth as well as to believe with the heart.

It is thus that our faith will grow exceedingly. Not by introspection—not by emotional efforts to believe—but by a simple child-like obedience to God's biddings, at each step of the path along which He leads us.

We see faith then in all these aspects : the apprehension of faith ; the appropriation of faith ; the tenacity of faith ; and lastly, the confession of faith.

Going Forward.

GOD never brings His people into positions from which retreat is necessary, or advance impossible. That they bring themselves into such positions is true. But it is not by God's leading that they come there. And yet God's children are often Divinely led into circumstances of peculiar difficulty.

Ex. xiii. 20.

It was so with Israel when they "encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness." The waters of the Red Sea were before them. How could they hope to escape in that direction? Pharaoh and his hosts were behind them. The situation was perilous.

But since it was the Lord Himself who had brought them there, they could with confidence rely on His intervention for deliverance.

It was a time of special trial, it was therefore a time for special faith.

Their faith was to show itself first, in their restfulness. "Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, *stand still*, and see the salvation of the Lord." We gain nothing in times of perplexity by restless unbelief and anxious efforts. To stand still and to wait on the Lord in such circumstances is the first, but not the easiest, lesson we have to learn. "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

Again, their faith was to show itself in their activity. Prayer alone was not enough. "Wherefore criest thou unto Me? speak unto the children of Israel, *that they go forward.*" This seemed impossible; yet this was God's command. The rest of faith was only the preliminary condition to the activity and obedi-

Ex. xiv. 13.

Ex. xiv. 14.

Ex. xiv. 15

2 Chron.
xiv. 11.

ence of faith. True activity is that which springs out of, and is ever accompanied by, rest. It is only as we know what it is to be "still," that we are ready to "go forward." "We rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go."

Progress lies in the path which God Himself opens for us. When no way is clear before us, when every door seems closed against us, then it is we are tempted to devise openings for ourselves. The great thing is never to lose the thread of the Lord's leading. It is only in that path that we can "go forward."

But progress cannot be without difficulty; for progress always means the growth and strengthening of faith. And this of necessity involves the trial of faith. Difficulties are no real hindrances to growth in grace. Every difficulty that meets us in the path of God's will may become a means of grace a factor in our spiritual advancement.

Difficulties are of various kinds.

There are those that arise from the objections of *carnal reason*. Israel had to pass through that trial. It was among their first experiences. The command came to them from the Lord, through Moses, to slay the Passover lamb. This was to follow a direction for which no reason is assigned, no explanation given. They were to do it simply because it was commanded of God. It was not necessary that they should understand the reason in order to obey.

It was clearly not a difficult thing to do—not impossible, but perfectly easy—and it involved no peril. But the temptation, or trial, came from another side. There was the temptation to regard it as a useless, powerless, superfluous, or reasonless form. So far as human reason could see, there was no essential connection between the means and the end—the cause and the effect.

To obey that command, human reason must submit to Divine wisdom.

Then there are difficulties that arise from the objections of *self-will*. There can be no progress without obedience, and no obedience without the submission of the will. Taking Christ's yoke is the secret of all liberty and joy in the path of obedience. And what does this mean but identity of will—union and fellowship with Christ in the daily walk? What the child of God is often tempted to think is, that that will is something so dark and terrible, that he dare not yield himself to it. Often if he gave expression to the language of his heart, he would say, "I am afraid of trusting myself wholly to God's will. What will it involve? Will He not call me out to bear a heavy cross? Will He not require me to suffer? Will He not lead me into paths of hardships and self-denial from which I must shrink?" But such thoughts betray ignorance of that infinite love which God has towards all His children, of that love which He has already manifested in the gift of His Son.

Let us accept it as a fact, let us grasp it as a truth, at the very beginning of our life of service, that nowhere shall we know the fulness of joy but in the path of God's will, that it is only in the full abandonment of the soul to His leading that complete and abiding rest can be found.

Once more, there are difficulties that arise from the objections of *unbelief*. In the first class of difficulties considered, the objection finds its expression in some such words as these: "I cannot see *why*—why I am required to do this or that." In the second, the objection assumes the form of disinclination—"I do not *want*, or I do not like—to follow this or that leading." But in the third it is, "I cannot see *how*—how the deliverance is to be wrought, or how the blessing is to come."

The command is given: "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." And in the command the promise of

safety or well-being is virtually included. For "God's biddings are God's enablings."

But unbelief hesitates. It asks, "How can it be done?" Unbelief limits God. It "sets a mark," as the word in the original signifies—puts a limit to His power: "They limited the Holy One of Israel."

So unbelief questions whether God is really able to do what He promises. Of Abraham it is said, that "he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief." When a promise seems too good to be true, then we are tempted to "stagger" at it. But Abraham "was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform."

This condition of trust is the root of all practical godliness. It was because of his faith that Abraham "obeyed." When God says, "Go forward," faith steps out on the unseen and unknown; it steps out on the Divine warrant. It is not neces-

Psa. lxxviii.
41.

Rom. iv.
20, 21.

Heb. xi. 8.

sary that faith should understand how—it leaves that with God. No barrier can possibly stand in God's way. He who gave the command to "go forward" had marked out the route, had determined the path, and was ready, step by step, to open the way and supply all their needs.

Another point must not be omitted : Obedience to God's command secures the assurance of God's Presence. The pillar of cloud and of fire accompanied them. "He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people."

Ex. xiii. 22.

God was with them, and that was enough. To go forward at God's word was to have every blessing secured to them. They need not be in doubt as to the issue. God was their defence. He stood between them and their enemies. So He would go with them through the waters. They were sure of reaching the further shore in safety. There was no fear of being overwhelmed. That

Isa. i. 19.

God who had brought them in, would bring them through. He who stood between them and their enemies would stand between them and their circumstances. Jehovah was also the Fountain of Supply. His Presence was Salvation. He could provide bread for them in the desert. He could make the waters flow from the stony rock. They had but to hearken and to obey. Obedience to the command to "go forward" secured all these blessings. So is it with the children of God to-day. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land."

Growth.

THE first great truth the Scripture reveals as an essential condition of fellowship with God is the impartation to the soul of the principle of spiritual life. "Ye *must* be born again." No amount of moral culture or religious training can raise the "natural man" into the sphere of a spiritual existence. It is only by the communication of a Divine principle—a vital energy from God Himself, that we can pass from death unto life. The Apostle Paul recognises that fact in such words as these, "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

It is also the testimony of Scripture

Eph. ii. 1.

John i. 12,
13.

1 John v.
11, 12.

that this principle of Divine life comes with a reception of God's unspeakable gift. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power (right) 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." To receive the Christ is to be born of God. "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."

But the question with the believer is, not—How shall I obtain life? but, How shall I, who have been born from above, quickened into a new existence—how shall I grow and advance so as to abound in spiritual vigour and show forth the praises of Him who hath called me out of darkness into His marvellous light?

This brings us to another great truth revealed to us in the Scripture. And that is, in order to a walk of fellowship with God, next in importance to the commu-

nication of life is the maintenance of those conditions which are essential for its development and growth.

What is the essential condition of *living*? We must recognise the distinction between mere spiritual existence and living. The scientific definition of living, in the sphere of the natural world, is this—that the life must be in perfect correspondence with its environment. There is the life within, and there is its environment. All that the life needs for its sustenance, development, and transformation, is found, not in itself, but in its surroundings. That which is essential, therefore, in order that there may be growth, is that the channel between the two should be open, so that the stream of supply should flow uninterruptedly.

This is precisely what the Scripture reveals as essential in order to spiritual growth. Salvation consists not merely in the quickening of the soul, but in its introduction into a Divine environment.

All that the regenerate soul needs for progress, holiness and fruitfulness, is found in that Divine surrounding. He is not only quickened, he has by faith passed into a new sphere of existence—he has “believed into Christ.” Whatever may be his spiritual necessities, they are all to be met by that fulness which dwells in Him. But one thing is essential, and that is that the channel of communication should be free. There must be “correspondence” between the need that belongs to the life within, and the provision that exists in the environment. The stream of supply from one to the other must flow without interruption. As in natural life health consists not in the cessation of hunger, by once for all satisfying the craving for food, but by the continual supply of that which meets the ever-recurring appetite ; so in the spiritual life, soul-health does not consist in the removal of our need once for all, but in the continual meeting of that need. The fulness stored up in Christ,

in whom we live and move and have our being, is the complement of what we lack in ourselves. But the two should be constantly meeting each other.

In this consists the "fulness of blessing."

"My need and Thy great fulness meet,
And I have all in Thee."

Increase of spiritual vitality will be the effect of a more perfect "correspondence" with our Divine surrounding. This correspondence is effected by faith. We are "filled" "in believing." Faith is the channel of communication between the need in ourselves and the fulness in Christ. The greater the faith, or the greater the receptivity, the larger the channel and the larger the measure of supply. "According to your faith be it unto you."

Rom. xv. 13.

Matt. ix. 29.

Declension in spiritual life and weakness in action are the result of feebleness of faith. The correspondence becomes at once impaired, and the stream of supply

Col. ii. 10.

is hindered. To correspond with one's surrounding, does not mean that there must be an identity of nature between the inner being and its environment. On the contrary, as we have said, the one is the complement of the other. What the one lacks the other supplies. "Ye are in Him being filled full."

In the spiritual, no less than in the natural world, there is no such thing as stagnation without corruption, decay, and death. If the need ceases to exist, the supply will cease to flow, and stagnation at once begins. Ceaseless activity is the characteristic of the healthy, vigorous life. Our emptiness is ever being met by His Fulness. Our weakness by His Strength. Our defilement by His Cleansing. Our tendency to sin by His Purity, and His Power to keep us from falling.

It is not that Christ by one act, once for all, meets the need and absolutely removes it. But by the *law of counter-action and supply* He is ever meeting the

need. To suppose that the first of these is the case, is sooner or later to fall into the delusion that we are kept by Christ in a state of self-sufficiency.

"I need Thee every hour" is a true experience, and one that is perfectly compatible with the utterance, "I have Thee every hour."

The notion above referred to, pressed to its logical issue, must result in the rejection of the truth that we are here in this life only in process of being "changed into the same image."

2 Cor iii.
18.

If we do not continue to the very last hour of our earthly existence to need the cleansing or purifying efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ, *progressive purity* can have no place in our doctrine of sanctification. We shall fall into the delusion that Christ has made us already, not judicially merely, but in ourselves, as pure as we ever shall be ! This is simply to glory in our own fulness, rather than in Christ.

He who is the very home of our renewed

being *is* the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person. *We are being changed* into the same image.

"In *Him* is no sin." *We are being cleansed* from every sin. In *Him* all fulness dwells. *We are receiving* of that fulness and grace for grace.

He is the power of God. *We are being strengthened* with all might according to His glorious power. And so on with all our other needs, there must be a continuous participation of Christ if we are to grow up into Him in all things.

It is only as we are thus kept down low, with an ever-deepening sense of our need of Him, and in full and close communion with Him, that we shall know what "living" really means.

Let us recognise clearly that the source of supply is not in ourselves. God has "called us into participation of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." And to kindle our faith, so that we may be brought into

living communion with Him, He has given us "exceeding great and precious promises;" that by these "we might become" partakers of the Divine Nature

2 Pet. i. 4.

“An unction from the Holy One.”

¹ John ii. 20.

“YE have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” It is only in the power of that anointing that our service is true, effective, or well pleasing to God. But what is this anointing? “The word, which expresses not the act of anointing, but that with which it is performed, marks the connection of Christians with their Head. As He was ‘anointed’ for His office, so, too, are they” (*Westcott*).

Christ was anointed of the Spirit from His birth. He was conceived of the Holy Ghost. Therefore He was the Son of God as well as the Son of man. As to His humanity, He was absolutely pure and sinless. But it was not in the power of His sinlessness that He accomplished

the work His Father had given Him to do. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him."

Acts x. 38.

That anointing He received when He entered on His public ministry. He was the true meat offering. The meat offering consisted of four things: fine flour, oil, frankincense, and salt. The fine flour pointed to the essential purity of His nature. It was not sinful flesh—not our fallen humanity that He took upon Himself—though it was a true humanity. All that was pure and lovely in human nature was in Jesus, but He was separate from all sin, absolutely pure from the beginning. It was not that the flour, originally impure, became purified by a subsequent process. He was spotless from the first. It was not the discipline or trial through which He passed that refined or purified His nature. The suffering and the trial

Lev. ii. 11.

He endured found Him pure, and manifested the excellency of His nature. There was no unevenness in the fine flour of His perfect humanity. "No meat offering, which ye shall bring unto the Lord, shall be made with leaven." So the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the true meat offering, was separate from sin. He did no sin. He knew no sin.

The holy oil was mingled with the fine flour. There we see the Incarnation of the Son of God. But not only was the oil *mingled* with the flour—it was afterwards *poured* upon it. There we have the special anointing of the Holy Ghost which the Lord Jesus received at His baptism, just at the commencement of His public ministry.

Luke iv. 16.

After this anointing for service came the temptation in the wilderness. And immediately after this the Lord Jesus came to Nazareth, "And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read."

What was the passage He read? “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor. 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, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” And when He had closed the book He said, “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

It was then that He presented Himself as the true meat-offering. It was then that the oil was *poured* out upon Him. The Holy Ghost descended on Him visibly.

Does not this teach us that in addition to being born of the Spirit we need the anointing of the Spirit?

What is the source of this anointing? It is “from the Holy One.” The Lord Jesus is the “Righteous One,” and He is the “Holy One.” Our first need has reference to our guilt and sin. So our first view of Christ is as the “Righteous

One." Christ made of God unto us righteousness—in His work of propitiation. Righteousness brings in the idea of a just claim, and the answer to that claim. We see God in connection with His broken law—a law that is holy and just—but a law whose demands we are utterly unable to meet, and under whose condemning power we have been brought through transgression.

Rom. x. 4.

"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." He is the "Righteous One" because He meets *for* us all those claims, and delivers us from the condemnation.

1 John ii. 1.

Righteousness is the prominent thought when sin is between us and God. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the *righteous*."

But it is not to a life of perpetual falling that we have been called. We may know what fellowship with the "Holy One" means, as well as acceptance in the "Righteous One."

Jesus, the Holy One, is the glorified Head of the mystical body, the Church.

The holy oil has been poured upon the head of our mystical Aaron, and by virtue of our union and fellowship with Him we are under the same Divine anointing. But only those who are walking in fellowship with Christ know what this means as a continuous blessing. For we must observe the words do not put before us one completed act, something experienced on some one occasion, or at a particular time in the past ; but rather the words point to that which is a present and continuous privilege. It is not, "Ye were anointed," but "Ye have an anointing."

It is quite possible, through carelessness and lack of abiding, to lose the blessing, and to find ourselves no longer walking under the power of this anointing from the Holy One. Our service then at once becomes formal and unfruitful. There may still be earnestness, and zeal, and activity, but it will not be by virtue

Ex. xxx.
32, 33.

of the anointing ; it will not be the energy of the Spirit, but of the flesh. It is just here that a peculiar danger occurs. Finding an absence of spiritual power, the soul is tempted to make efforts to produce an effect, or make power. But God had expressly forbidden any imitation of the holy oil to be made. "Neither shall ye make any other like it, after the composition of it : it is holy, and it shall be holy unto you. Whosoever compoundeth any like it, shall be cut off from his people."

False spirituality may show itself in the matter of guidance as well as of service. There is a danger, even amongst the children of God, of assuming to be guided by the Spirit, when all the while they are only indulging their own self-will or self-conceit. Our safety lies only in abiding ; a humble dependence upon Christ, keeping close to Him, ever conscious of our proneness to go astray, but restfully confident that He will keep us from falling.

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