

GOD'S PILGRIMS

Their Dangers, Their Resources, Their Rewards

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17)

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PREFACE

This volume does not contain an exposition of Hebrews. Its purpose is rather to carry out, so far as the Lord may enable, the injunction to exhort one another daily, so long as it is called "Today." Another "Day" is soon coming; indeed, we can clearly see it approaching. In that day it will be too late to give heed to the exhortations found in this portion of God's Word, and to gain the recompense of the reward that depends upon the heed given thereto.

The Epistle is addressed to "Hebrews," and the individual most frequently and most prominently mentioned in it is Abraham, who is specifically designated "the Hebrew" (Genesis 14:13). Those acquainted with the Hebrew tongue tell us that the word signifies *one who passes over or through*. We may, therefore, regard a Hebrew as a "passenger"; and certainly the message of the Epistle is for those who are passengers in this age, who have here no continuing city, but seek one in the age to come. The message is not for *Israelites*, who have a place in the world and a mission to the nations thereof, but for *Hebrews*, who are simply passing through the world, having no place or standing therein.

The true Hebrew is one who has *come out* of the country of his birth, leaving all its advantages and associations, because he has heard and believed the report of a *better country* which he has never seen; and he is now passing through the intervening territory, not settling therein, and not mindful of the country whence he came out, though having opportunity to return thither. Of *such* it is written that God is not ashamed to be called *their* God, and He has prepared *for them* a city. Abraham was not an Israelite. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Sarah, Isaac, Rahab were not Israelites. Moses was, rather a Hebrew than an Israelite, for he never had a place in the Land of Promise. These were all true *Hebrews*, who had seen by faith the far-off promises, and were persuaded of them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

The Scriptures speak of many things that God has prepared for them that love Him — things which are in the nature of *rewards*, not *gifts*, and are quite distinct from remission of sins and eternal life. These latter are *gifts* bestowed upon all who believe; but not all believers will obtain the *rewards*. Great is the reward promised to those who maintain the character of Hebrews "to the end"; and correspondingly great is the loss that will be incurred by those who, through neglect or unbelief, turn aside from the pilgrim's path. In view of this, we would point out, as plainly as possible, the dangers to which God's pilgrims are exposed, and the provision that He, in wondrous grace, has made to safeguard them from those dangers.

May it be the purpose of both writer and readers to be "not slothful, but followers of them who, through *faith and patience*, inherit the *promises*" It may be of interest to the reader to learn that the writing of this book was begun and finished on the memorable voyage of the Steamship *Carpathia* which was interrupted by the rescue of the survivors of the *Titanic*, and by the return with them to the port of New York. This is not the place to speak of the harrowing scenes and distressing incidents of the four days of that return trip. But that event — the sudden and dramatic overthrow of the latest and greatest human achievement of its kind, the *most conspicuous object* in the world — which stirred all Christendom to an unprecedented degree, served to impress powerfully upon the writer's mind the truth that the day is at hand for the shaking of all things, when the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth for fear of the LORD and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth. The destruction of the *Titanic* is a foreshadowing of what is about to happen to the great "civilization" upon which man has expended his energies, and in which he puts his confidence. For the unconverted, the obvious lesson of this tragic event is to *inquire concerning the lifeboat*. But there are also solemn and important lessons in it for the saints of God. Some of those lessons the writer has endeavored to set forth in the following pages.

Philip Mauro

SS Carpathia

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CHAPTER 1

Introductory Remarks and Explanations. The Message, its Substance, And to Whom Addressed.

IT is manifest that the Epistle to the Hebrews has a special message for God's people, the strangers and pilgrims on earth, who are living in the last days of this age. It speaks with special emphasis to those who are awaiting the Son of God for salvation (Hebrews 9:28), and who are come to a point from which they can "see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). It voices the desire of the Spirit that these should go on to full growth (that is, to the state of adult sons), and that each one of them who has received the first principles of the doctrine of Christ should show the same diligence unto the full assurance of hope unto the end (Hebrews 6:1, 11).

The people of God who are upon earth at the end of this age must of necessity meet peculiar trials, must experience peculiar needs, and be exposed to peculiar dangers. Many Scriptures testify to this. But God has made special provision for those who have to encounter the special conditions of the last days. The Epistle of the Hebrews is of particular value for them. It points to the age to come as something imminent. It declares that it is but a "very little while" until He Who is coming will actually come; and in view of that fact its chief exhortation is to the exercise of patience or endurance *to the end* (Hebrews 10:36–37 *ff.*). Up to the very last moment there remains the possibility of failure and loss.

The conspicuous feature of this "age to come" will be the manifestation of the Son of God in the character of High Priest after (corresponding to) the order of Melchizedek, who was both a *King* and a *Priest*. That manifestation of the Son of God will be in fulfillment of all that is shadowed forth in the type of Melchizedek; and particularly will it be the fulfillment of what is prophesied by Zechariah, "He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His Throne; and He shall be a Priest upon His Throne" (Zechariah 6:13).

Hence the prominent subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews is the Melchizedek Priesthood of the Son of God, Who is now seated on the Right Hand of the Throne of the Majesty in the heavens, awaiting the joy that was set before Him when He endured the Cross. That joy will be His when He receives the promise made to Him in Psalm 45, repeated in Hebrews 1:8: "Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy Kingdom." "This," says the writer of Hebrews "is the sum of the things which we have spoken" (Hebrews 8:1). Apart from what is written in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we should know practically nothing of the present ministry of the Son of God in the Presence of God, as a Minister of the true sanctuary, or of His perpetual office as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Therefore it will be seen that the Epistle to the Hebrews occupies a place of peculiar importance in the Word of God. Its scope and contents are unique, and this must be borne in mind in seeking the special message it contains for the saints of God. The difficulties that have been encountered in reading it, and the misapplication of some of the statements it contains, are due chiefly to a lack of apprehension of the scope of the Epistle, and a failure to distinguishing features of this great Epistle, the reader, if a confessed stranger and pilgrim on earth, will be greatly aided in comprehending and profiting by the Divine communication it contains.

Let it be noted, in the first place, that Hebrews does *not* set forth, except incidentally, the message of the Gospel of God's grace to sinners; nor does it contain the doctrine and effect of the Gospel. It is in this respect to be sharply distinguished from Romans, and also from those parts of other Church Epistles which speak of the crucified and risen Son of God as the Righteousness of God, and the Giver of eternal life, to all who believe on Him. The Epistle of the Hebrews is concerned solely with a people *who have been already redeemed* from the bondage of sin and the dominion of death, and whom God is bringing "into Glory".

The "salvation" spoken of in Hebrews is *not the justification of the sinner from his sins*. It is *not the reconciliation to God, through the Death of His Son, of those who were by nature enemies and aliens in mind through wicked works*. It is of the utmost importance that the reader take notice of this; for otherwise the special significance of the letter to the Hebrews cannot be understood. The Son of God is not a Priest on behalf of the unconverted. He does not intercede for them, but solely for His own redeemed people. To the unconverted the Gospel is preached with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven. The work of the Son of God on their behalf is "finished" and awaits their acceptance. But the offices of the priest are not for them until they have become believers. The priesthood was not instituted in Egypt, but in the wilderness, after the people of God had been redeemed by the blood of the paschal lamb (Exodus 12), and had been "saved" out of the land of

Egypt (cf. Exodus 13:15; 15:13, 16), the house of bondage, by the mighty power of God displayed at the Red Sea, typifying the Death and Resurrection of Christ (Exodus 14; Romans 6; 1 Corinthians 10). The priesthood was instituted after God's people had become "strangers and pilgrims," and were journeying on to the Land of "the Promise." The types which have their fulfilment in Hebrews belong entirely to the wilderness. They relate wholly and solely to God's dealings with His own redeemed people, and not at all to His dealings with unpardoned and unreconciled sinners. The sacrifices mentioned in Hebrews do not include that of the paschal lamb slain for redemption in Egypt, and under whose blood, sprinkled in faith on the door-posts, there was protection from the Destroyer. The sacrifices mentioned in Hebrews are those of the tabernacle offered on behalf of the redeemed people.

We repeat, and beg the reader to notice carefully and to keep clearly in mind, that the "so great a salvation, which began to be spoken by the Lord" (Hebrews 2:3) is not the justification of sinners, but *the bringing of many sons into glory* (Hebrews 2:10). It is not what is represented by the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt, but what is represented by bringing *the survivors* into the Promised Land, which Land is a type of "the inhabitable earth to come, wherefore we speak" (Hebrews 2:5). The remission of sins spoken of in Hebrews is not the forgiveness of sins of unconverted men upon believing the Gospel of the Crucified and Risen Savior. It is the forgiveness of the "sins of *the people*" (Hebrews 2:17); that is to say, the people of God, who constantly need propitiation for their sins.¹ The message of Hebrews is not addressed to men in their sins, urging them to accept the pardon and life which have been provided by the grace of God through the Cross of Jesus Christ. The message is addressed to "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," urging them to lay hold of the hope set before *them*, and to hold the confidence and rejoicing of that hope, firm *to the end*. Undoubtedly much confusion has resulted from a failure to observe the distinctions indicated above, and which are clearly marked in the text. We often hear the passage "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" used in preaching to the unsaved, and presented as a warning to them of the danger of neglecting the forgiveness and justification which God has made available to all who believe His Gospel. It needs but the slightest attention to the passage to make it perfectly clear that the "we" who are in danger of suffering loss through neglect of the "so great salvation" mentioned there, are the redeemed people of God, the children of God, and heirs of salvation.

The "faith" spoken of in Hebrews is not believing unto righteousness (Romans 10:9), but believing unto the saving of the soul (Hebrews 10:39), which is a very different thing, as will appear later on. The faith spoken of in Romans is *justifying* faith, that is, believing on God Who quickens the dead. But the faith spoken of in Hebrews is faith exercised by those who have been already justified. Abraham is the divinely given illustration of both kinds of faith. In Romans we are referred to the faith of Abraham when he believed God's promise of a multitude of children to him whose body was practically dead. That is the faith in the God of resurrection, which faith God credits or imputes to a man for righteousness (Romans 4:17, 24–25). But in Hebrews we are referred to the faith Abraham manifested by *obedience* of faith, and the *endurance* of faith. By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out, *obeyed*; and by faith he *sojourned* in the Land of Promise as in a strange country. For he *waited* for the city which has the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God (Hebrews 11:8–10). The effect of this kind of faith is not the being accounted righteous before God, but the obtaining of the promised *reward* (Hebrews 6:15; 10:36). Abraham not only believed God, being fully persuaded that what God had promised He was able to perform (Romans 4:21), but he also held the *beginning* of his confidence in God firm to the end; for he died in faith, not having received as yet the promised inheritance (Hebrews 11:13).

It is also needful to distinguish between the truth revealed in Hebrews and that revealed in Ephesians. There are several points of contrast that should be carefully noted.

1. In Ephesians, the elect saints who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and predestined to the place of sons by God unto Himself, are viewed *collectively*, as forming "one Body," even the Body of Christ. The blessings and responsibilities are collective, to be shared by all saints.

In Hebrews, the redeemed people are viewed *individually* as having individual responsibility. We find there such expressions as "lest there be in any of you," "lest any of you should seem to come short," "lest any man fall," "lest any man fail of the grace of God," "lest there be any fornicator or profane person." Hebrews speaks of blessings and privileges in the nature of rewards, to be gained by individual faith, obedience, and endurance, and which may be lost by neglect, unbelief, or disobedience.

2. The blessings mentioned in Ephesians, which are for the present enjoyment of the saints, are located in

1 The word "reconciliation" in Hebrews 2:17 (AV), is an unfortunate mistranslation. It should read "to make a propitiatory offering for the sins of the people". See the RV.

heavenly places. God “has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in (or with) Christ.” He has quickened us together with Christ, and has raised us up and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ.

In Hebrews, however, the blessings have their location in “the habitable earth to come.” The Kingdom of the Son is brought into view — that glorious Kingdom wherein all things shall be placed in subjection unto Him Who, in the beginning, laid the foundation of the earth. It is the dominion of the Son of Man which was the subject of the first revealed counsels of God (Genesis 1:26), and which is specifically foretold in the Eighth Psalm: “Thou madest Him to have dominion over the works of Thy Hands; Thou hast put all things under His Feet. All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea. O Jehovah, our Lord, how excellent is Thy Name in all the earth” (Psalm 8:6–9). We learn by the second Chapter of Hebrews that this prophecy will be fulfilled when the Son of Man, Who is now at God’s Right Hand, shall come again into the habitable part of His creation, and shall take up His great power, and reign. That will be the reign of the Son of God on earth as the Priest-King, to which attention is specially directed in Hebrews.

3. The blessings of the saints mentioned in Ephesians are available in the time *now present*. God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings. He *has* accepted us in the Beloved, in Whom we *have* obtained an inheritance. God *has* sealed us with that Holy Spirit of promise, and *has* quickened us, raised us up, and seated us together in heavenly places. The future is referred to only in an incidental way, mention being made of the dispensation or economy of the fullness of times, and the ages to come (Ephesians 1:10, 14; 2:7); but the emphasis is entirely upon the present relations of the saints as connected with the Risen Christ, now at God’s Right Hand, forming His Body, supplied by Him with everything needful, loved by Him, in process of being built upon Him, and growing into a holy temple in the Lord.

In Hebrews, on the other hand, the blessings are *future*, pertaining to the age to come, when the enemies of the Son of God shall have been placed as a footstool for His Feet; when the many sons shall have been brought unto glory, and shall have entered into the enjoyment and satisfaction of the rest that remaineth unto the people of God. God’s people are not viewed in Hebrews as being at the present time in the place of blessing, but as being in the place of trial, of danger, and of suffering; in one word, as in the *wilderness*. The things spoken of in Hebrews are things “we see not yet”; and we are referred for our encouragement and example to those whose earthly course was determined by things which they had *heard*, but had “not seen as yet.”

The “grace” revealed in Hebrews is not the grace wherein the saints have been made accepted in the Beloved, and wherein God has abounded toward them in all wisdom and prudence (Ephesians 1:7–8). It is not the grace whereby we have been saved through faith, and raised up and seated in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 2:5–6). It is the grace that is sent down to us for meeting our daily need on earth, while journeying through this great and terrible wilderness, and which must be constantly sought at the throne of grace.

4. Lastly, and of chief importance, are the relations of Christ to the redeemed people of God as presented respectively in these two Epistles. In Ephesians, His relation to them is that of Head to the members of His Body, associated with Him as sharers of a common life. The offices He performs on behalf of His people are such as the head of a body performs for the members, nourishing and cherishing them as a man cherisheth his own flesh; “for we are members of His Body, of His Flesh, and of His Bones” (Ephesians 5:29–30).

In Hebrews, Christ sustains towards His people an *official* relation. He is gone into heaven as their Representative, to make propitiation for them, to maintain them in a fit state for approach to the holy Presence of God as worshippers. He is also the Great Shepherd of the sheep, tending and guiding them through the wilderness; and He is set before them as the Royal Priest of the coming age, the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, who was first King of Righteousness, and after that King of Peace. The great character in which He is here presented is that of **SON**. As such He is the Builder and the Ruler of the Father’s House in the widest sense, and is the responsible priestly Representative of the members of the household, those whom He is not ashamed to call His “brethren,” those who are the “children” committed to His care. Being charged by God with responsibility for the welfare of those “many sons” He is faithful to God Who appointed Him, ever living to make intercession for them.

By noting these important distinctions, which might be greatly amplified if time permitted, the reader, who has been begotten again unto a living hope by the Resurrection of the Jesus Christ from among the dead, and who is no longer a babe, unskillful in the word of righteousness, will be greatly assisted in laying hold of the instruction contained in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Many of the difficulties which are ordinarily encountered will disappear when once it is perceived that the experiences therein described are those of a redeemed people. The dangers against which we are warned are those to which God’s own people are exposed. Nothing is said of the doom awaiting those who have rejected the Gospel of God’s grace, and who are lost eternally; but much is said of the loss which the people of God themselves may incur by failing to

take heed to the things they have heard, or to exercise diligence in respect thereto, and by neglecting the salvation so great, whereof the Lord Himself began to speak, which was confirmed to us by them that heard, God Himself bearing witness with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own Will.

The writer's purpose in the present volume is not to explain the difficult passages found in the Epistle to the Hebrews for the intellectual satisfaction of his readers; but to aid his fellow travelers ("Hebrews") in securing the benefit of the warnings, exhortations, comforts, and encouragements in which this portion of God's Word so richly abounds.

Since the Epistle to the Hebrews has to do solely with the experiences of a redeemed people, it follows that certain passages (Hebrews 6:4–6; 10:26–31) which are sometimes taken as indicating the eternal condemnation of the persons to whom they refer, cannot have that significance. That the people of God can bring upon themselves great suffering and loss is clearly set forth in many Scriptures. But it is equally clear that they cannot themselves be lost. In Hebrews we learn what may befall the sheep in the wilderness; and it must not be forgotten that the Good Shepherd has Himself declared concerning them, "I give unto them eternal life and they shall *never perish*" (John 10:28). How could those perish for whom He laid down His Life, and for whom He now intercedes in resurrection life and power? That could not be; but there is, on the other hand, the *gravest danger* that they may, through perversity, disobedience, unbelief, sloth, or neglect, incur serious loss. It is on this account that the Holy Spirit so earnestly urges them "today," and so long as it is called "today," to hear His Voice, Who now speaks from Heaven, in order that, when the crucial hour arrives, that may not befall them, which befell God's people of old, who, when the opportunity came for entering into the possession of the promised inheritance, hardened their heart to His Word, provoked His indignation, and so could not enter in because of unbelief. Those whom God has redeemed from the bondage of sin and the fear of death can never be lost. Their security rests upon the finished work accomplished by Christ upon the Cross; and what He has accomplished stands for ever. But beyond any question there *is* the possibility that they may fall after the same example of disobedience, and so may fail to inherit "the blessing." And in view of that possibility we are here most solemnly warned that such as draw back from entering into the reward promised to patience and obedience, cannot be renewed again unto repentance, that is to say, they cannot be permitted, upon change of mind (which is the meaning of "repentance"), to enter into that blessing from which they willfully turned away.

We are prone to slight the warnings of Scripture, and are all too ready to assign them to others than ourselves — to "the Jewish remnant" for example. Let us be on our guard against the deceitfulness of our own hearts, as well as against the deceivableness of sin. We cannot afford to neglect the warnings of Scripture; and there is no room for doubt as to those for whom the warnings of Hebrews are intended. They are, beyond question, for those who have been redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ. They are for those on whose behalf He is gone into Heaven, and for whom now He intercedes. If we apply to ourselves such passages as "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that has passed into the Heavens" (Hebrews 4:14), we must also of necessity accept the application of the words that occur in the immediate context, "Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (literally, *disobedience*). It is impossible to read the warnings contained in this Epistle without perceiving that tremendous consequences hinge upon the attention given to them.

It being clear then, that the redeemed people of God may fail to obtain "the promise," and to secure to themselves "the recompense of the reward," it becomes a matter of highest importance for them to give their most earnest and intelligent heed to the warnings which God, in His faithfulness and kindness, has vouchsafed them; and also to avail themselves of the provision which His grace extends to meet their need and to help their infirmities.

CHAPTER 2

“The Things which we Have Heard.”

GOD has spoken. This is a tremendous and a solemn fact. Well may the creature tremble before the utterance of God, while counting it a matter of the highest privilege to hear and to comprehend what God has said. But we are called upon to listen, not to a proclamation from the Creator to His universe, or even to mankind in general. God has spoken “unto *us*.” The same God Who of old spoke in many parts and in many ways to the fathers, has in these last days spoken unto us. He has given a message directly to us, and which vitally concerns us.

It appears at the outset that the Spirit’s object in the Epistle to the Hebrews is to impress us with the weightiness of the message spoken to us, and to this end He shows us that, important as was the message given to the fathers of old, the message spoken to us in these last days is of far greater importance. And this appears from the fact that the Word of old was spoken by (or through) angels (Hebrews 2:2), whereas God has spoken to us in (or as) the SON. (The original reads “in Son,” and its force cannot be rendered in English by mere translation. The idea is that GOD HIMSELF has spoken, the character He has taken for this purpose being that of “Son.”).

Many times it is written in the Old Testament that “the Word of the Lord came” to one and another of the prophets; but generally it is not stated how the Word came to them. It appears, however, from what is said in the Scriptures now before us, that the Word was sent by angels, or messengers. We read that the Word of the Lord was brought in this way to Daniel (Daniel 9:21, etc.) Moreover, in Galatians 3:19 it is said that the law was “ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.” Thus it appears that God’s customary way of communicating with the prophets was through angels; though He spoke of old time “in many ways,” as by dreams, or visions, or by directly moving the tongue (Genesis 41:25; Numbers 12:6; Psalm 45:1).

But now God Himself has spoken. He Who is the Effulgence of God’s Glory and the express Image of His Substance, by Whom also He made the worlds, and Who upholds all things by the Word of His Power, has now spoken to us with Human Lips, uttering words of familiar human speech, which words, nevertheless, are Spirit and Life, words such as never man spoke, words of eternal life which shall never pass away.

Attention is directed to this great difference between the Word spoken of old to the fathers and the Word spoken in these last days to us, to the end that *we* should give *the more earnest heed* to the things that *we* have heard. The first Chapter of Hebrews is largely occupied with references to the Old Testament Scriptures which set forth the excellence of the Son of God, as compared with the angels who are His “ministering spirits,” and who are bidden to worship Him when He condescends to come into the habitable earth in human form and nature (Hebrews 1:6). This contrast, so carefully and forcibly made, between the Son and the angels, is not merely for the purpose of establishing and guarding the Deity of Christ, but is given also in order to impress upon us the supreme importance of the special message spoken to us by the Son Himself, as distinguished from that spoken to the fathers through angels. The reason why this contrast is given us at the very beginning of the Epistle clearly appears from Chapter 2:2:

“For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord?”

There is, then, unspeakable advantage to be gained by paying heed to the things spoken to us by the Lord; and it necessarily follows that there is a corresponding loss to be incurred through failure to believe and obey His Word.

“Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard, lest at any time we should slip away.”¹

The plain meaning of this is that if the Israelites of old were bound to give earnest heed to the Word of the Lord sent to them, in order to secure their own welfare, *we* are bound to give the *more* earnest heed to the Word spoken to us, because that Word was spoken by the Lord Himself, and moreover, it puts before us a reward far greater than that offered to the Israelites. The heed which an Israelite was required to pay to the words spoken to him by the prophets is stated in such passages as Deuteronomy 11:18–19; 28:1–2; and

¹ It is not, lest the words slip away from us, but lest we through failure to heed the Lord’s words, should ourselves slip and fall.

32:46–47.

What, then, is this “salvation” to which the Spirit of God applies the expression “so great,” and which began to be spoken by the Lord? Surely this is a question of the utmost importance. We cannot afford to be in ignorance, or even in uncertainty, about it; and surely God would not have us to be either ignorant or uncertain as to a matter of so great moment to us. The cause of the confusion that exists upon this subject is the usage among Christians of the word “salvation,” which is commonly taken as meaning justification or the forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ, and as being limited to that meaning. But the word “salvation” is seldom used in the New Testament as equivalent to justification, that is to say, the change which takes place in the sinner’s relations with God when he believes on the Son of God. The salvation of God goes far beyond that; and the word “salvation” itself, as used in Scripture, generally refers to something. Thus, in Romans 5:10, “reconciliation” is spoken of as a thing already accomplished for the believer, while is yet future; “For if, when we were enemies we **WERE RECONCILED** to God by the Death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we **SHALL BE SAVED** by His life.”

Likewise, in Romans 8 it is declared that there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus, and believers are spoken of in that Chapter as children of God; but they are said to be “saved in hope,” that is to say, their “salvation” is yet future. See also Romans 13:11–12, “Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed,” etc.

So also the apostle Peter speaks of those redeemed, and begotten again, as still awaiting the that is about to be revealed (1 Peter 1:3, 5).

In the Epistle to the Hebrews the word “salvation” is used as signifying the future blessing into which the people of God are to be brought, whereas redemption is regarded as having been already accomplished. Christ has entered into the holy place “having obtained eternal redemption.” On the other hand, those who have been redeemed are addressed as “heirs of salvation,” literally as those “who are to inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:14), and as awaiting salvation. (The literal reading of Hebrews 9:28 is “and a second time, apart from sin, shall He appear unto them that await Him for salvation.”) It clearly appears from Chapters 3–4 that the “so great salvation” of Chapter 2 is something of which the land of Canaan, promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and put before the Israelites as the goal of their journey through the wilderness, is the special type. Those chapters plainly teach that we are now in the eve of the fulfillment of this type. God is now leading a people through the wilderness of this present evil age. He has revealed to them, for their encouragement, the glories of the age to come, and has even given them a taste of the works of power of that age (Hebrews 6:5). Those glories center in Christ as the Priest-King — the High Priest of good things to come. That is the destination and the glorious Rest that awaits them; and it will be theirs if they hold the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end. God has not only given His Word, but He has confirmed it with an oath, saying, “The Lord swore and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek”; and He has done so in order that, by two immutable things, the Word and the Oath of God, we might have a strong encouragement to lay holy upon the hope that is set before us (Hebrews 6:17–20). The “so-great salvation” of Hebrews 2:3 is defined in verse 5 as being identified with “the habitable earth to come.” By that passage it is made known to us that God has not put in subjection to angels “the habitable earth to come whereof we speak”; and then the eighth Psalm is cited and quoted to prove that the glorified and perfected works of God’s Hands, delivered from the curse, and rejoicing in the blessing of God, are, in the coming age, to be put under, even under the Son of Man; and Jesus, the blessed One, Who for a little while was made lower than the angels for the suffering of death, but now is crowned with glory and honour, is announced as that “Son of Man” in Whom the prophecy is to have its fulfillment.

The habitable earth to come is thus declared to be the subject “whereof we speak.” That is what the Apostle connects with the so-great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord. It is the glorious Kingdom of the Son, when He shall occupy the place of “Firstborn,” in all that is signified by that great title. The Firstborn is the Father’s might, and the first-fruits of His strength, the Preeminence of dignity and Preeminence of power (Genesis 49:3). He is Head and Ruler of the Father’s House — taking the word “house” in the broadest sense. The same thought occurs in the third Chapter where Christ is spoken of as Son over His Own House (Hebrews 3:6); and the connection is still closer in the original, the word rendered “world” (“world to come” or “habitable earth to come”) Hebrews 2:5, and that rendered “house” in Hebrews 3:5–6, being of the same derivation.

The Scriptures make it clear that “this present evil age” (Galatians 1:4), during which the people of God are strangers and pilgrims in the earth, because the latter is the scene of the dominion of sin and death, is to be succeeded by an age of blessing and glory in which the earth and all created things will be under the rule of the Son of Man, with Whom will be associated all those who shall be accounted worthy to participate with Him in the administration of the affairs of that Kingdom. This is the salvation so great whereof the Lord Himself spoke, as for instance in Matthew 13, where, in announcing what is to happen at “the end of this age,” He said,

“The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 13:41–43).

Manifestly the same event is referred to in Hebrews 2. The angels are sent forth to minister for them who are about to inherit salvation (Hebrews 1:14). The righteous *shining forth* in the Kingdom of their Father, are the “many sons” whom God is bringing “unto glory” (verse 10). That event will be the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 8:18, quoted in verse 12, when Christ will say, “Behold, I and the children which God has given Me.” The “furnace of fire” is the “fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:27). The words of solemn warning, “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear,” have their echo in the words “We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard,” things “which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord” (Hebrews 2:1, 3).

Again, on the occasion when Simon Peter, by the revelation of the Father, recognized and confessed the Lord Jesus to be “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” the Lord “began” to show unto His disciples that He must fulfill what was written concerning the sufferings of the Christ (Matthew 16:21), and then He went on immediately to speak of the glory that should follow, saying: “For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then shall He reward every man according to his works (Matthew 16:27).

We do not stop to comment now upon this exceedingly important Scripture, expecting to return to it. We wish at this point only to direct the attention of the reader to certain specific Scriptures wherein the Lord Himself began to speak of the glory of the age to come when He, as Son of Man, shall reign in righteousness over the earth. In the foregoing passage the reference to the “Son of Man,” His sufferings, Death and Resurrection, the glory of His Father in which He will return, the angels, and the “reward” of men’s works, show clearly that the subject is the same as that of Hebrews 1–2.

CHAPTER 3

The Son: His Person, His Power, His Kingdom.

HAVING obtained a general idea of what is meant by the salvation so great, which began to be spoken by the Lord, we would look more closely at the contents of the first Chapter of Hebrews. We quickly perceive that it is all about the SON. The Spirit is here giving Him the preeminence, and is fulfilling Christ's own Word, "He (the Spirit) shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. ALL THINGS that the Father hath are Mine; therefore said I that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you." We are told of His "Being," Who He is — "Being the Effulgence of God's Glory and the express Image (or exact expression, literally, *the character*) of His Substance." His wealth is also declared. The Father has appointed Him "Heir of all things." His creative wisdom is then set forth; for by Him He made the words or ages. His power is announced; for it is He Who upholds all things by the word of His power. His mighty work of redemption is brought to mind; for it is He Who by Himself purged our sins. And then the place to which He has been exalted is declared; for He is seated on the Right Hand of the Majesty on high. There is no other, no angel or any created being, who could occupy that place. Yet it is as a Man that He has gone into Heaven. He has taken humanity to that exalted position. He appears there as Man, and for men. But He is, at the same time, God over all, and blessed for evermore. Therefore, after His Deity has been declared, the Spirit refers to Him as the Man Who has been "MADE so much BETTER than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent Name than they" (Hebrews 1:4). This should be read in connection with the passage in Chapter 2, "We see Jesus, Who was MADE for little while LOWER than the angels" (Hebrews 1:9). He came as Man to do the Will of God by tasting death for everything, being made, for that purpose, and for a little time, lower than the angels. Now, as the Man raised from the dead, He is made so much better than the angels, as the Name which He has obtained "by inheritance" (not His own Divine Name) is more excellent than theirs. He, as Man, has obtained by inheritance the Name that is above every name (Philippians 2:9; Ephesians 1:21; Acts 4:12). It is very significant that the first thing here asserted of the Son is that God has appointed Him the "Heir of all things." Thus our attention is at the very outset directed to the prominent subject of the Epistle, namely the glorious Inheritance of the Son of Man. The frequent recurrence of the expression, "All things," is worthy of notice.

Our attention is next called to certain prophetic Psalms which are to have their fulfillment in this glorified Man — the Son of God and Son of Man. The fulfillment of these prophecies will be the "salvation so great" spoken of in Chapter 2. These are Psalms 2, 45, 102, 104, and 110. Psalms 8 and 22 also are quoted in Chapter 2.

The Second Psalm is of surpassing interest and importance. In it the Lord is saluted of God as "My Son." From Acts 13:33 it appears that this was the greeting God gave Him when He raised Him up from the dead to sit with Him on His Throne; and the begetting there spoken of is that whereby He became the Beginning of a new creation, the First-begotten of every created thing, the First-begotten from the dead, that in all things He might have the preeminence (Colossians 1:15, 18; Revelation 1:5).

Having been thus greeted and exalted to the highest place, after having made peace by the Blood of His Cross, in order to reconcile all things unto the Father, He awaits the moment when He shall ask of the Father, and shall receive, the nations for His Inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession (Psalm 2:8).

The Lord Jesus has already received some of those whom the Father gave Him out of the world (John 7:6, etc.). They constitute "His inheritance *in the saints*" (Ephesians 1:18). But even these are not yet "perfected." The Church has not yet attained to the "full-grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). It is not yet ready for Him to "present it to Himself, a Church of glory, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Ephesians 5:27). Therefore we may say that He has thus far received only an *earnest* of His inheritance in the saints, as they have received an earnest of theirs. But, in the age to come, He will receive, not only the perfected and glorified Church, His Body, to which God has given Him to be Head, over "all things," but also the nations for His inheritance. At the present time He has, in the world, only a feeble people for His own Possession (Titus 2:14 — the word "peculiar" means "for a possession," see also 1 Peter 1:9); but *then* He will have "the uttermost parts of the earth for His Possession."

In view of this universal dominion that is to be exercised by the Son, the kings of the earth and the rulers, who (as stated in Psalm 2:2) set themselves and took counsel together against the Lord and against His Christ, are admonished, in verses 10-12, to be wise, and to be instructed, and to kiss the Son, because in a little while His wrath will be kindled (RV). Regardless, however, of all that the kings of the earth and the rulers may plan and do, the purpose of God is declared, and will be carried out: "Yet have I set my King upon My holy hill of Zion" (Psalm 2:6).

Surely it is a point of great significance and importance that the very first Scripture cited in Hebrews is that which declares God's blessed and unalterable purpose to place His Son in absolute authority over the whole earth. This is the great salvation that is in prospect for the sons of God. It is the great feature of "the world to come whereof we speak," which God has not put in subjection to angels, but unto Him Who stooped to become the Son of man, and unto those who shall be associated with Him, that is to say, unto "all them that obey Him" (Hebrews 5:9). The closing words of Psalm 2 doubtless refer to those: "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

Hebrews 1:5 contains also a quotation from the Lord's message by Nathan to David. In that message occurs this promise, "Also the Lord telleth thee that He will make thee an house. And when their days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy Seed after thee which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish His Kingdom. **HE SHALL BUILD A HOUSE FOR MY NAME, AND I WILL ESTABLISH THE THRONE OF HIS KINGDOM FOR EVER. I WILL BE HIS FATHER AND HE SHALL BE MY SON**" (2 Samuel 7:11-14).

The last words of this promise are quoted in Hebrews 1:5 as being fulfilled in Christ. We know that Solomon failed, and that his direct line was cut off in Jehoiakim, the last wicked king of Judah, whose sons were slain before his eyes, and of whom God declared that none of his seed should sit upon the throne of his father David (Jer. 22:30; 36:30). Hence the descent of Jesus Christ is traced through David's son Nathan (Luke 3:31). At the same time Christ was the adopted Son of Joseph, who was descended from David through Solomon, and thus was, by Jewish law, the rightful heir to the throne (Matthew 1:7, 11) although not of "the seed" of Jehoiakim.

In the next verse of Hebrews 1, we read that "When He bringeth in the "First-begotten into the world (*habitable earth*) He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him." Although He was made for a little while lower than the angels, nevertheless when He comes into the habitable earth the angels are commanded to worship Him. This coming scene of the revealed glory of the Son of Man was made known by the Lord to Nathaniel, the guileless Israelite, who believed His Word. To him He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see Heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending unto the Son of Man" (John 1:51). That "hereafter" is the age to come; and this is another instance where the Lord began to speak of that so great salvation that is ready to be revealed.

At this point Psalm 104:4 is quoted: "Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire"; and then, by way of contrast, Psalm 45 is quoted. In that Psalm the Holy Spirit, by the tongue of the Psalmist, speaks of "a good matter," even of "the things touching the King." No other prophetic Scripture speaks so clearly, with such detail, and in such glowing terms, of God's King. The words quoted are verses 6 and 7 of the Psalm. "Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the scepter of Thy Kingdom is a right scepter. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness (lawlessness); therefore God, Thy God, has anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows."

Here again the Kingdom of the Son is brought into view, for it is "unto the Son" that God saith "Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever." He is saluted as "God," and is also spoken of as the "anointed" One, that is, the Christ, being anointed, not with the oil of consecration for suffering and death, but with the oil of gladness for reigning in glory.

Attention should be paid particularly to the words "above Thy fellows." This glorious and blessed One has companions or associates, taking part with Him in the responsibilities of His Kingdom, and participating in His glory. There is no difficulty in recognizing these as the "many sons" whom God is bringing "unto glory," whom Christ is not ashamed to call "brethren." The connection is very clearly seen in the original, for the word rendered "fellows" in Hebrews 1:9 occurs again in two passages in Chapter 3, and those occurrences should be carefully noted. In Hebrews 3:1, we read "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers (fellows) of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus." These "holy brethren" are the "fellows" or companions, or associates, of God's anointed King, Jesus.

The next occurrence is in verse 14, and it calls for special notice. "For we are made partakers (fellows) of the Christ (the anointed King) if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." Thus we are plainly told that being made an associate of God's anointed King in the glories of His reign, which is, is dependent upon the of those who are called to that great honour. Those who are seen coming forth with the Faithful and True One, when He issues from the opened Heaven, bearing upon His vesture and upon His Thigh the Name written "**KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS,**" are not only "called," and "chosen," but also are "*faithful*" (Revelation 19:11-16 with 17:14).

The next Psalm quoted in Hebrews 1 is Psalm 102. This Psalm speaks of the time when the Lord, Who endures for ever, shall arise, and shall have mercy on Zion (verses 12-13). "For the time to favor her, yea, the SET TIME, is come." As the apostle Paul declared to the Athenians, God has "APPOINTED A DAY in the which He will judge (that is, will do justice and equity to) the world (*habitable earth*) in righteousness, by

that Man Whom He hath ordained, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). And it is given to us, who are now sojourners in that world, to "see the day approaching." Furthermore the Psalm declares: "So the heathen (the nations) shall fear the Name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth Thy glory. When the Lord shall build up Zion HE SHALL APPEAR IN HIS GLORY" (verses 15-16). "This shall be written for the generation to come; and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord" (verse 18).

The succeeding verses refer to the work of Christ in the days of His flesh, when His strength was weakened and His days were shortened; and then follow the words quoted in Hebrews 1. "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thy Hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure. Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed. But Thou art THE SAME, and Thy years shall have no end."

He Who is soon to take up the sovereignty of the earth, and reign over it, is "the Same" Who of old laid its foundations, and created all things therein. He alone knows the secrets of nature, the marvelous properties of matter in its countless forms, and He will bring to light and put to their intended uses all the properties and forces of nature. At that day it will be seen that the wise and learned men of this day, the "men of science" (falsely so called, for they are really men of ignorance) are but stumblers in the darkness. At that day the wisdom of this age will be seen by all to be utter foolishness.

He is also the One Who changes not. "Thou art THE SAME"; and this blessed truth, full of comfort and assurance for those who are enduring the sufferings of this present time, is repeated in the last Chapter of Hebrews, in those well-known words, "Jesus Christ, THE SAME yesterday, today, and for ever."

The last quotation in Hebrews 1 is from Psalm 110. This contains the germ of the great subject which is expounded in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and nowhere else in the Word of God, namely, the office of the Son as a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Again the Spirit of God directs out attention to a Psalm which speaks clearly of the Kingdom of the Son, pointing to the time when the Lord shall send the rod of His strength out of Zion, and He shall rule in the midst of His enemies. It tells of the coming day of His power, when His people will offer themselves willingly to Him, adorned with the beauty of holiness; and He Himself will have the dew of His youth out of the womb of the morning. Again, there is a reference (as in Psalm 2) to the "day of His wrath," and to the kings of the earth who will then be stricken through. And again is the promise given, "He shall judge among the heathen (the nations)."

Such are the Scriptures which are brought to our notice as showing what is meant by the great salvation which is to become a manifested reality in the habitable earth to come whereof we speak. In view of such a revelation, in view of the wonderful things we have heard, can there be anything more important for us than to examine ourselves as to how much heed we have paid, and how much we are now paying, to these things? And if, as the result of such examination, we find that we have been paying even less heed to these things of Christ and His coming Kingdom, than to the perishing things of this present evil age, shall we not make haste to present ourselves at the throne of grace, where the High Priest of our confession is now seated, that we may "obtain mercy" for these past failures and perversities, and "find grace to help" in this present time of need? The wonderful "things that we have heard," whereof a beginning was spoken by the Lord Himself, transcend the human mind and understanding. They constitute a salvation so great that the imagination of man can form no conception of its greatness. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him." Paul could say for himself, "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit"; but he could not write them unto the Corinthians, because they were babes. He could not speak to them as unto spiritual men, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ (1 Corinthians 3:1). Hence the importance of the exhortation to be no longer babes, but to "go on to full growth," of which exhortation we hope to speak later on.

CHAPTER 4

The Apostle and High Priest of Our Confession

THERE are two exhortations to which special prominence is given in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The first is that we, God's pilgrims of this dispensation, should give to the things that we have heard more earnest heed than God's people of old gave to the things announced to them. The reasons for this exhortation are, that the things we have heard are vastly "better things" than those spoken of old time to the fathers; and chiefly that the One Who began to speak to us of these "coming good things," is the Son Himself, by Whom and for Whom all things are and were created.

The second great exhortation is that which stands at the beginning of Chapter 3, namely that the holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, should attentively consider the Apostle and High Priest of their confession, even Jesus. (The word "*Christ*" is lacking in nearly all the texts.)

The second exhortation follows logically from the first. Having given earnest heed to the things that we have heard, we are led thereby to devote our best consideration to Him Whom God has set before us, by revelation of His Word and Spirit, as the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. Having given heed to the things that we have heard, we perceive that those things have to do with the future period of the visible glory of the Son of God, when He shall assume, in the eyes of the whole creation, the Headship over all the works of God's Hands. What that means to Him is, of course, far beyond our comprehension. But as we give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard, and as we attentively consider Him, in the capacity of Apostle, and in that of High Priest, we shall find ourselves gaining in the apprehension of the hope that is set before us. This fast approaching day of the glory of the Son of God is the joy that was set before Him, when He endured the Cross. How great will be that joy we cannot say. We have no means wherewith to measure, and no terms wherewith to describe it. But this we know, that so great will be that joy to Him, that the mere anticipation of it enabled Him not only to endure the Cross, but even to despise the shame.

That "glory" and that "joy" He desires to share with those who are the objects of His grace; for His present work is on behalf of those many sons whom the Father is bringing unto *glory*, and His special interest is in those to whom He shall say, in that day, "enter thou into the *joy* of thy Lord."

It seems very clear, after an attentive study of the text of this Epistle, that the way to avoid the dangers to which God's pilgrims are exposed, and to gain the reward that is set before them, is by heeding and obeying these two leading exhortations, which are the burden of the first four chapters of Hebrews. Parts of those chapters, and the whole of other chapters following them, are occupied with the things that we have heard, "the better things, and things that accompany salvation," and with special revelations from the Spirit of God, whereby we may be enabled to consider Him Who is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. Then, in Chapter 12, these two leading exhortations appear again. In verses 1–2 we are exhorted to run with patience the race that is set before us, "looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith." The words "Author" and "Finisher" correspond respectively with "Apostle" and "High Priest." As the "Apostle" of our confession He is the Author or Beginner of faith, and as High Priest He is the Finisher of faith. Then, at verse 25, occurs again the warning, given in the most impressive language, to "refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth (Moses), much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from Heaven."

The purport of all this, briefly and simply stated, is that God is now leading a people out from the present evil world and its seen things, unto a coming world consisting of "things not seen as yet," and which at present are apprehended only by faith. These are "the things that we have heard," but they are realities, and God's announcement concerning them is capable of exerting an influence upon those, and only those, in whom it is "mixed with faith." The seen things are "the things that can be shaken," and which will therefore be "removed." The great danger is that those whom God has called (partakers of the heavenly calling) may occupy themselves with, give their attention to, set their hearts upon, the seen things, thus refusing Him that speaketh, or, in other words, neglecting that great salvation which is "the Kingdom that cannot be shaken." In such case, the warning is given, and given too clearly to admit of being misunderstood or explained away, or relegated to the Jewish remnant, that they who neglect that great salvation shall not escape the loss of a share they might otherwise have had in that Kingdom. In order that we may escape so great a loss, we are urged *first* to give earnest heed to the things we have heard, and not to refuse Him that speaketh, and *second* to consider, that is, be occupied with, Himself, especially in His offices of Apostle and High Priest.

The words "holy brethren," which define those to whom the second exhortation is addressed, connect directly with verses 10–17 of the preceding Chapter, whereof the subject is His "brethren." They are "holy" or "sanctified" by His own act, as stated in Hebrews 2:11: "He that sanctifies and they that are sanctified are

all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them 'brethren.'" They have been by Him "sanctified," that is to say, set apart for a special purpose, which, in this instance, is that they should become members of a priestly house, a household of sons, built up and presided over by the Son Himself. This is more fully brought out in Chapter 3:6–7. "But Christ as Son over His own House, Whose house are we, IF we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end."

To become a member of that Household is a matter of reward and privilege. It is a privilege so high that the danger of neglecting it through lightly esteeming it, as the Israelites slighted the land promised to them, and as Esau slighted the privilege of the birthright, is very great indeed. Membership in that Household is a reward promised to those who do the Will of God in the particulars now under our consideration. Of this the Lord began to speak, saying, as He looked on those who "sat about Him" at the time when the rulers and the nation rejected Him, "Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall **DO THE WILL OF GOD**, the same is My brother, and My sister and mother" (Mark 3:34–35; see also Matthew 12:49–50). With this agree the words of the Epistle; "For ye have need of patience that, **AFTER YE HAVE DONE THE WILL OF GOD**, ye might receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:36).

These "holy brethren" are "partakers of the heavenly calling," that is to say, a calling into the Household of the Son, to be associated with Him in the authority, dignities, honors and glories, of His Royal Priesthood. In order that they may make their calling and election sure, they are exhorted to fix their attention steadfastly upon the Apostle and High Priest of their confession. The word "confession" probably embraces the whole of that for which they have been apprehended in Christ Jesus, and for which He assumed the characters of Apostle and High Priest; but especially it would seem to refer to their present status in the world as strangers and pilgrims. They have the example of those who "*confessed* that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13). This is the character they are called upon to maintain, and of those who seek to maintain that character, Christ is the Apostle and High Priest.

The word "*Apostle*" signifies one sent forth on a special mission. Hence, the work of the Son of God as the Apostle embraces all that He did in the days of His Flesh as the Sent One of God. His work as the Apostle of our confession is finished. He, being eternal Deity, came forth from God, assumed the form and nature of man, and thus brought to man all that man required of God. Having finished that work, He, as true Man, returned to God, bringing to God all that God required of man. That is His present office and work as High Priest within the true sanctuary. It is not His character of High Priest after the order of Melchizedek that is spoken of here. He will not appear in *that* character until He comes forth again to assume the office of King in addition to that of Priest. His present ministry is rather the fulfillment of what is typified by the ministry of the Aaronic high priest on the Day of Atonement, when he entered into the Holy of Holies with the blood of the sin offering. This clearly appears from Chapters 8–10, in which Christ is revealed as a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, but is not spoken of as High Priest of the order of Melchizedek. Nevertheless, He has been already "saluted of God as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek (verse 10), though yet waiting to be revealed as such. What He is awaiting is, amongst other things, the perfecting of the "many sons" who are to be associated with Him in that Royal Priesthood.

The work of the Son of God as the Apostle of our confession is not specially described in Hebrews. For that we must refer to other Scriptures. It embraces all His words — the words which the Father gave Him to speak — and all His works, especially His work on the Cross, where He bore the sins of many, and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. This redemption — aspect of the work of the Cross is mentioned in Hebrews, though not specially described there (Hebrews 9:12). The following passages, among others, refer to features of His work as the One sent forth from God.

- "When He had by Himself purged our sins" (1:3).
- "Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death; that He, by the grace of God, should taste death for every one (or every thing)." "Forasmuch, then, as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil, and deliver those who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." "He Himself hath suffered being tempted" (2:9, 14–15, 18).
- "Who, in the days of His Flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him Who was able to save Him from (out of) death, and was heard in that He feared, though being Son yet learned He obedience by the things He suffered" (5:7–8).
- "Who needeth not daily to offer up sacrifice...for this He did once, when He offered up Himself" (7:27).
- "The blood of Christ Who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God" (9:14).
- "Now once in the end of the age hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself"

(9:26).

- “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many” (9:28).
- “Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me) to do Thy Will, O God...By the which Will we are sanctified, through the offering of the Body of Jesus Christ once for all” (10:7–10).
- “A new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His Flesh” (10:20).
- “Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame” (12:2).
- “Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own Blood, suffered without the gate” (13:12).

The foregoing passages, found in the Epistle to the Hebrews, call our attention to special features of the work of the Son of God as “Apostle of our confession.” It behoves us, therefore, to bestow upon them our attentive consideration.

But chiefly are we urged to pay heed to the *Words* He spake as the One sent of God. It was of old foretold of Him that He would speak the words of God, and it was shown in advance that great consequences would hinge upon hearkening to His words. God said by Moses:

“I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and will PUT MY WORDS IN HIS MOUTH; and He shall speak them unto all that I shall command Him. And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto My words, which He shall speak in My Name, I will require it of him” (Deuteronomy 18:18–19).

The Holy Spirit, by the mouth of the apostle Peter, cited this prophecy, varying it to read thus: “And it shall come to pass that every soul (psuche) which will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people” (Acts 3:22–23).

The Lord Himself referred frequently to this feature of His ministry as the Apostle of God. For instance, we read, “He Whom God hath sent (*i.e.*, Christ as Apostle) speaketh the Words of God” (John 3:34). The reader is also referred to John 5:46; 6:14, 63, 68; 7:46; 12:48–50).

In the prayer recorded in John 17, where the Son of God declared to His Father that He had finished the work given Him to do, He referred to Himself as the Apostle of God — “Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent” — and He spoke specially of His ministry to “the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world.” The items of that ministry which He there mentions are these:

- “I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me.” (This is like the passage in Hebrews, “Lo, I and the children whom God has given Me”).
- “I have given unto them the Words which Thou gavest Me” (verse 8).
- “I have given them Thy Word” (verse 14). (From this we may learn the great importance which God attaches to the words spoken unto us by the Son.)
- Special attention is called to verse 13: “And now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have **MY JOY** fulfilled in themselves.”

This seems to be a reference to the joy set before Him when about to endure the Cross, and which will be fulfilled in the coming age in those for whom He then prayed. The burden of that prayer was that the Father would keep them through His Name, which Name He (Christ) had manifested (verse 11), and would sanctify them through His truth; and His Word, which Christ had given them, is truth (verse 17). He prayed not that they should be taken *out of* the world, for it is *in* the world that they must be tried and perfected; but that the Father would keep them from (out of) the evil (verse 15). And again He refers to Himself as the Apostle, saying, “As Thou hast SENT ME into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world” (verse 18). In the world He did the Will of the Father, and learned obedience by the things He suffered. “Even so” they are sent *to do the Will of God*, and become heirs of the eternal salvation whereof He is the Author “unto all them that obey Him” (Hebrews 10:36; verse 9). Finally we would call attention to verse 22, “And the glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them.” This glory “given” to Him as the Finisher of the work of redemption, is different in character from the glory He speaks of in verse 5; “the glory which I HAD with Thee before the world was.” That glory is His Own, which He does not give to another; but the acquired glory, *given* Him as the Author of eternal salvation, He shares with those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren.

By all this we are clearly taught that, in carrying out the exhortation to consider the Apostle of our confession, we should pay earnest attention to the *words* spoken by Him and recorded for us in the Gospels,

especially that of John.

CHAPTER 5

The High Priest of our Confession

IN the preceding Chapter we presented for the reader's consideration some points in connection with the "Apostle" of our confession. We now proceed to consider Him in the capacity of "High Priest." His work as Apostle ceased when His Life was taken from the earth (Acts 8:33); but His work on behalf of "His own which were in the world" (John 13:1) and whom the Father has given Him out of the world, does not cease. It takes a new character, and is accomplished in "the power of an endless life." He now appears "in the Presence of God for us," (Hebrews 9:24) taking up ministries on our behalf which He could not discharge on earth, "For if He were on earth, He should not be a Priest, seeing that there are priests (on earth) that offer gifts according to the law" (Hebrews 8:4). The revelation which has been given us of the Son of God, in His office of High Priest and Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, is contained almost wholly in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Other Scriptures tell us that, when "received up in glory," He sat down at the Right Hand of God (Mark 16:19; Acts 7:56; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; 1 Peter 3:22), but they do not speak of His present occupation. Romans 8:34 states briefly that He is "at the Right Hand of God," where He "also maketh intercession for us"; and in 1 John 2:1, we are told that "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." These are the only Scriptures, outside of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that refer to the present ministry of the risen and glorified Son of Man.

The first reference to Him as the High Priest occurs in Hebrews 2:17, "Wherefore, in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a MERCIFUL AND FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

This statement is of the deepest interest to the people of God who, though redeemed, pardoned, reconciled, and for ever freed from the condemnation of sin, and yet exposed to temptation and defilement, and are liable to the commission of sins. To meet this need, the infinite resources of Divine grace have provided for the people of God the services of a *merciful* and *faithful* High Priest, Who incessantly devotes His exhaustless energies, and His infinite merits, to making propitiation for *their* sins. But for the efficacy of this ministry, none of the people of God could approach His holy Presence for worship. Thus they would be deprived of the priceless privilege of worship, and the Father would be deprived of what He is seeking, namely, true worshipers, who shall worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:22).

In His office of High Priest, Christ is "*merciful*" to the people of God; for having suffered Himself, being tempted, He is able to help them that are tempted. Thus the Throne on which He is seated has become "a Throne of grace," where we may "obtain mercy." He is "*faithful*" to God, in discharging fully the responsibility which He, as High Priest, has assumed towards God, on behalf of the people of God. Those whom He represents are God's own people; and He is "*faithful*" in His service on their behalf to God, Whose people they are. The first thing asserted of Him after the exhortation to consider the High Priest of our confession, is that he was "FAITHFUL to Him that appointed Him" (Hebrews 3:2).

We cannot conceive what we owe to the services of this merciful and faithful High Priest, nor what energies He has to put forth on behalf of a people so ignorant, foolish, and perverse; but this is eminently a matter which it behooves us to "consider."

We have a High Priest Who is faithful to God Who appointed Him. The unfaithful priest neglects the interests of God and of God's people, and looks after his own interests; and under the administration of such a priest, the enemies of God prevail over God's people. An illustration of the conditions arising under the administration of an unfaithful priest is given us in the case of Eli, to whom God said, "Wherefore kick ye at My sacrifice and at Mine offering which I have commanded in My habitation, and honourest thy sons above Me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel, My people." Therefore God pronounced a curse upon the house of Eli, the unfaithful priest, and cut off his two sons in one day. Moreover, God at that time spoke this great promise:

"And I will raise Me up a FAITHFUL PRIEST, that shall do according to that which is in Mine Heart and in My Mind; and I will build Him a SURE HOUSE; and He shall walk before Mine Anointed FOR EVER" (1 Samuel 2:27-36).

We have now the fulfillment of this promise in the One Who glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest, and Who is "faithful to Him that appointed Him." And God also is faithful to Him, for He is building Him a "sure house," Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

In order that we may not cast away our confidence, or relax our grasp upon the hope of a place in that priestly household of sons, God would teach us our continual need of the services of this merciful and faith-

ful High Priest. Therefore, after speaking briefly of the “house” over which Christ as Son presides, the Spirit of God gives us instruction as to our present state and position, the risks to which we are exposed, and the loss which we may suffer through carelessness, unbelief, or disobedience. We are referred to what befell the Israelites on their journey through the wilderness, at the time when God had brought them to the very border of the Promised Land. The practical value and importance of this lesson to the people of God, at the present moment, are beyond all computation. Therefore, we purpose discussing this section of the Epistle (Hebrews 3:7; 4:13) in some detail later on. At this point we are seeking to carry out the exhortation that bids us “Consider the High Priest of our confession.” Accordingly, we would merely mention the purpose for which our attention is directed to the “Provocation,” in the day of temptation in the wilderness, which purpose is to put us on guard against ourselves. We have, in our own natural hearts, precisely the same traits, inclinations, and appetites, which caused the Israelites to provoke the indignation of God, and because of which they were irrevocably shut out of the promised inheritance. Let us be fully warned, therefore, of the danger that confronts us. It is of the same nature as that which the Israelites encountered, and it arises from the same causes. There is, however, this great difference: that the promised “rest” offered to us is incalculably greater and more glorious than that which God’s people of old failed to enter. The “rest” of Canaan was but a “shadow” of the habitable earth to come whereof we speak, the glorious Kingdom of the Son of Man.

And again, at this solemn and critical point in our study, we would, in view of the extent to which these important warnings have been heretofore neglected, most earnestly urge our readers to give heed thereto. We are aware that, in the process of “dividing the Word of Truth” (which is not always “rightly dividing” it), the warnings contained in Hebrews are, by some godly teachers of deservedly good repute, apportioned to the “Jewish remnant.” But we are bold to say that those warnings are, every one of them, *for the people of God of this dispensation now drawing to a close*, and in a special way are for us who are enjoying the benefits of the ministrations of God’s faithful High Priest, while awaiting His appearance, the second time, for salvation. If there could be any uncertainty as to the application of those warnings, arising from the circumstance that the Church, which is the Body of Christ, is not mentioned in Hebrews, that uncertainty could not remain in view of what is written in 1 Corinthians 10. The experiences of the Israelites in the wilderness are there referred to, and it is clearly stated that “ALL these things happened unto them for ensamples (types): and they are written for OUR admonition, upon whom the ends of the world (ages) are come.” And the plain warning is added. “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth (literally, *that thinks to stand*) take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:11–12). In Hebrews we have the same admonitions “Take heed,” and “lest any man fall after the same example of disobedience” (Hebrews 3:12; 4:11).

We should apply our hearts diligently in the endeavor to get the sense of these warnings, which God will surely impart to us if we “take heed” thereto; and having learned the gravity of the danger confronting those who are confessed “Hebrews,” especially at the critical moment when they are brought within reach of the promised inheritance, we shall the better be able to appreciate the value of the resources which God has provided for us, as stated at the end of this section of the Epistle. It is in view of the gravity of the danger and the irrevocable character of the loss we may incur, that our attention is directed again at the close of this section to the “Great High Priest.” The term “great” is here added to the previously used terms “merciful” and “faithful.” For a *great* emergency “we have a *great* High Priest, that is passed into (through) the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God.” Therefore, we should “hold fast our confession.” At the beginning of the passage we are exhorted to *consider* the High Priest of our confession, and the result should be a determination to *hold fast* that confession. And we should not be discouraged because of our infirmities; “for we have not an High Priest Who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:14–15).

And finally our attention is directed to the blessed fact that God has made available to us a “throne of grace.” Here is our great resource; and the real danger is that we may neglect it, and thus “fail of the grace of God,” during the period of trial and in the hour of danger. We must learn (and none but God Himself can teach us) the *need* of the grace that is dispensed at that throne, else we shall fail to seek it. Unless we know of the “time of need” we shall not be likely to look for grace to help in such a time. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance for us to pay heed to the warnings which God has, in His goodness, given to us.

The place to which we have access is “a throne.” That word speaks to us of the power and royal authority of Him, Who, being our Representative before God, is seated there. All authority has been given unto Him in heaven and earth. He is “gone into heaven, and is on the Right Hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him” (1 Peter 3:22). Therefore His grace is mighty, and by it the feeblest pilgrim can be empowered to overcome all that obstructs his pathway or resists his progress; but without that sovereign and irresistible grace the strongest must “fall.”

“Let us have grace, therefore” (Hebrews 12:28); and the way to *have* grace is to *seek* it constantly at the Throne of Grace. The supply cannot fail, nor will any needy saint be denied who seeks grace there; for it is dispensed by One Who is touched by the feeling of our infirmities, Who was tempted in all points like as we

are, yet without sin, and Who, having suffered in being tempted, is able to help them that are tempted. So shall it not be with us as with Israel in the day of their temptation in the wilderness, who, when they were tried, provoked God. They had not the merciful and faithful High Priest, nor access to a throne of grace. God has provided a “better thing” for us. Wherefore, there is the less excuse for us if we should fall after the same example of disobedience¹ (Hebrews 4:11).

The subject of the High Priest of our confession, Whom we are exhorted to “consider,” continues in subsequent chapters of the Epistle, unfolding new and more glorious features as it progresses. In Hebrews 5 comes the revelation of the fact that the Risen Son of God is a Priest *after the order of Melchizedek*; and this is declared to be a matter of adult knowledge, whereof the significance is not to be understood by those who are unskillful in the word of righteousness, who are babes.

Between the several doctrinal statements concerning the present and future Priesthood of the Son of God, are found extended passages containing practical instruction. The doctrinal statements have received much attention from expositors; the practical instruction very little. It will, therefore, be our special aim to call attention to the lessons that have been given for our profit in Hebrews 3–4.

¹ The word at the end of Hebrews 3:19 is “unbelief”. That at the end of 4:6 and 4:11 is a different word, which is more adequately rendered by the English word “disobedience”.

CHAPTER 6

The Provocation

IN Hebrews 3:4–6, Christ is compared with Moses, who was faithful as a servant in all God’s House, for a testimony of the things which were to be spoken subsequently (which we take to be “the things which we have heard”). Christ, however, is not a servant in God’s House, but Son *over* His House; and then follows the statement that directly concerns us: “Whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.” What follows is given for the purpose of teaching us what is meant by holding fast the confidence and rejoicing (or, as it has been otherwise rendered, the boldness and boasting) of the hope firm to the end. That such is the purpose is evident from the fact that the next words are “Wherefore (omitting the parenthesis to end of verse 11) take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.” For information as to what is meant by departing from the living God as the result of unbelief, we are referred to the Psalm 95, the last part of which is quoted in full and declared to be the sayings of the Holy Spirit.

From this we learn that the period denominated “Today” is the present day of our sojourn and pilgrimage on earth; and that “the end,” unto which we are again and again admonished to hold fast our confession and our confidence, is the end of our pilgrim journey. We learn further that the danger against which we are so pointedly and earnestly warned is something that corresponds to the “provocation in the day of temptation in the wilderness,” the dire consequence of which was that God swore in His wrath that those who provoked should not enter into His rest. What, then, *was* the “provocation,” and what does it stand for as a type? Turning to Numbers 14 we find at verse 11 the words “And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people PROVOKE ME?” and how long will it be ere they BELIEVE Me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?” And at verse 23: “Surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that PROVOKED Me see it.”

Here we have the provocation and the penalty. The provocation was — not a single act, but — the culmination of a series of acts. The Lord’s question was “*How long* will this people provoke Me?” And in verse 22 He spoke of them as “those men which — have tempted Me now these *ten times*, and have not hearkened unto My Voice.” Therefore, it will be profitable to trace the steps which culminated in provoking the irrevocable punishment inflicted on those whom God still owned as His people, and over whom He still continued to watch in the wilderness where they were condemned to remain. If we take care to avoid the *first step* of the provocation we shall not incur the indignation.

In the latter part of Numbers 10 we read of the journeys of the Israelites under the guidance of Jehovah, the Shepherd of Israel, the Ark of the covenant going before to search out a resting place for them; and we read also the words that Moses uttered when the Ark set forward, and when it rested. Nevertheless, the beginning of Numbers 11 we find a record of the people complaining, and of the Lord’s displeasure threat. The occasion or subject of the complaint is not stated. Any complaint, therefore, concerning the incidents of our pilgrimage, may be the starting point of departure from the living God. We need to *learn* obedience and contentment by the things we suffer; as the Apostle Paul could say, “I have LEARNED, in whatsoever state I am, to be content” (Philippians 4:11). This contentment does not come by nature, it must be “learned.” Let us, then, watch ourselves and check every tendency to complain of the hardships of the journey.

The next incident is recorded in Numbers 11:4–6:

“And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting; and the children of Israel also wept again, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic. But now our soul is dried away. There is nothing at all beside this manna before our eyes.”

So the next step in the provocation came through the “mixt multitude” which had come up with them out of Egypt (Exodus 12:38). It is dangerous for the people of God to have a “mixt multitude among them.” These are sure to give voice to their desires, and thus stir up the flesh in the believer. Recollections of Egypt were revived. And here the deceitful heart and memory played a trick that is common enough, though hard to explain. All the asperities of their oppression in Egypt, the cruel servitude, the bitter bondage, the taskmaster’s lash, the harsh increase of the burden, were entirely forgotten. The great wonders wrought by the Hand of the Lord and His mighty deliverance out of the house of bondage, were also forgotten. They recalled only the things of Egypt which serve to satisfy the natural appetite. They despised the bread of God, which He supplied daily for their recurring needs, and craved the food of Egypt. They were thus the types of those whom Paul characterizes as “enemies of the Cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, who glory in their shame, who mind earthly things” (Philippians 3:18–19).

The manna which God supplied to His people in the wilderness stands for the Word of God on which His people are privileged now to feed, that they may be "nourished up in the words of faith" (1 Timothy 4:6). From this we may learn that it is a very serious matter to slight the Word of God. To do so is to neglect the appropriate spiritual food which God, in His goodness, has supplied, in order that we may be nourished and strengthened to bear the trials of the way. Disinclination to feed on the Word is a common complaint among Christians, particularly among such as have fellowship with the mixed multitude of Christendom, who have no taste at all for the bread of life. Let us take careful note of this, and not permit either the habits of our neighbors or the pressure of things about us, to divert us from the daily, deliberate, meditative reading of the Word of God. Regular attention to this important matter will go far towards fitting us to overcome the severe trials that surely lie in our path. The reading matter of the day, that is devoured by the people of the world, and by the mixed multitude, is utterly unfit for the people of God. Not only is it quite void of spiritual nutriment, but it vitiates the taste therefor. Much of the *religious* literature of the day is no better, and some of it is even worse. The attempt to make spiritual things palatable, by means of artistic and literary expedients, is sure evidence of a state of spiritual decline, which may end in apostasy. It is written of the Israelites that they subjected the manna to culinary expedients in order to make it more palatable, not relishing it in the state in which God gave it to them. For "the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it" (Numbers 11:8). But that did not satisfy them; for eventually they came to such a pass as to say, "Our soul loatheth this light bread" (Numbers 21:5). It is safe to say that, of the literature of the day, not the thousandth part contains any spiritual nutriment; and beside that, it must be remembered that the very soundest and most spiritual books cannot take the place of the Word of God. This admonition applies to the old and young alike.

To despise the provision which the Lord has made for His people is *to despise the Lord Himself*, as He said on the occasion we are now considering, "Ye have despised the Lord Who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?" (Numbers 11:20.)

God has taken pains to teach us very plainly and forcibly the seriousness of neglecting our spiritual food, which He supplies, namely, the words of eternal life. The incident of the preference of the Israelites for the food of Egypt is rehearsed in Psalm 78. There it is written, "And they sinned yet more against Him by provoking the Most High in the wilderness. And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust" (Psalm 78:17-18). And the reason is given, "Because they BELIEVED NOT in God, and trusted not in His salvation, though He had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of Heaven, and had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of Heaven. Man did eat angels' food" (Psalm 78:22-25). The brief explanation is that "THEIR HEART was not right with Him" (Psalm 78:37).

Again in Psalm 106 the incident is recited in detail; and, as we have already seen, Psalm 95 prominently and pointedly to the provocation in the day of temptation in the wilderness.

Proceeding with the record given in Numbers, we find in Chapter 12 the sedition of Aaron and Miriam against Moses, which amounted to rebellion against the Word of God, Who spoke through Moses. Aaron and Miriam wished their utterances to have the same authority as those of Moses. "And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath He not spoken also by us?" Many among professed Christians are saying the same thing today, putting the uninspired words of man on the same level with the Word of God. Those who were most closely related to Moses "refused him that spake on earth" (Hebrews 12:25), and they did "not escape" punishment.

Numbers 13 relates another step in the departure of the Israelites from the living God, giving a further manifestation of the existence in themselves of "an evil heart of unbelief." The subject of this Chapter is the sending of the spies to investigate and report upon the Promised Land. They believed not God's report concerning the land. His announcement did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard. So they sent chosen leaders to spy the land, with instructions to "SEE the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; and what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents or in strong holds; and what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein or not" (Numbers 13:18-20). From Deuteronomy 1:22 we learn that the sending of the spies was the act of the people, God permitting them in all these matters to have their own way, which they preferred to His. They saw His works, but did not know or desire His ways. Moses in his farewell words to the people said:

"And I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord our God doth give unto us. Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee. Go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee. Fear not, neither be discouraged" (Deuteronomy 1:20-22).

This surely should be enough for those who had faith in God. But "their *heart* was not right with Him." They did not hold the beginning of their confidence, in which they set out from Egypt, steadfast unto the end. They wished to "see the land," not believing the word of the report concerning the "things not seen." So

the account continues:

“And ye drew near unto me, every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land and bring us word again by what way we must go up and into what cities we shall come” (Deuteronomy 1:23).

Two things are prominent in this action of the congregation of Israel; *first*, that they had more confidence in the report of men than in that of God; and, *second*, that they had more confidence in the guidance of human leaders than in that of God, notwithstanding that He, as Moses reminds them, “went in the way before you to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night to show you the way ye should go, and in a cloud by day” (Deuteronomy 1:33).

Taking the two accounts (that in Numbers and that in Deuteronomy) together, we may see that God was virtually ignored by His people. They did not consider His purpose or will in the matter, or even consider whether He *had* a will as to their entering the land of their inheritance. They disregarded His promise made to them in Egypt that He would “bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8). They acted as if they lacked trustworthy information concerning that land; as if their entering or not was a matter for their own choice after due investigation and deliberation, and as if, in case they should decide to enter, they would have to determine for themselves the route to take.

Can it be denied that there are Christians — in name, at least, and probably in fact as well — who are acting similarly with reference to “the things which we have heard” concerning the habitable earth to come, the Rest that remaineth unto the people of God? We apprehend that the number of such is great. “Let us fear, therefore, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”

Let it be noted that it was those who had *heard the announcement* of God that provoked Him by the way in which they acted with regard to the things announced. “For some, *when they had heard*, did provoke” (Hebrews 3:16). The announcement was perfectly plain. It could not be misunderstood, although it could be treated with indifference, slighted and neglected.

Now, it is expressly stated that good things have been announced to *us*, “as well as unto them” (Hebrews 4:2). This is not the preaching of the gospel of God’s grace to the unconverted. It is the announcement by God Himself of good things to come, which He has prepared for those who love Him and manifest their love by holding fast the beginning of their confidence in Him steadfast unto the end. This is the “word” which will not profit, if not mixed with faith in us who have distinctly heard it.

The action of the congregation of Israel in the matter of the spies teaches plainly the lesson that when the people of God are lacking in the energy of faith, by reason of insufficient spiritual nourishment, due to their own neglect of the Word of God, the effect is to throw them back upon the resources of nature, and upon the methods and means of the natural man, even in matters connected with their spiritual concerns. This is a condition that widely prevails at the present day. On every hand we see attempts at producing spiritual results by means of natural agencies, and the consequences are deplorable indeed. All these fleshly activities are outward manifestations of the inward presence of an evil heart of unbelief; and the source of it all is the failure to heed, believe, and obey the Word of God.

The spies returned and reported to the congregation the things that they had seen, which, in the state of their heart towards God, outweighed the things that He had spoken concerning the land. “They brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched” (Numbers 13:32). God describes the action of the spies as “bringing up a slander on the land” (Numbers 14:36). In Psalm 106, God says, “Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not His Word” (verse 24). And this unbelief culminated in the rebellion recorded in Numbers 14: “And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.” This was the last step in their departure from God, and brought upon them the judgment of being shut out from the land which they had despised.

In studying this incident, in the light of what is said of it in the Psalms and in Hebrews, we observe that today, those who long for the enjoyments, indulgences, pleasures etc., which this world affords, are often permitted to have them; but sometimes ere they can derive any satisfaction therefrom — “ere it was chewed” — they are cut off in the midst of their carnal pleasures according as it is plainly declared, “if ye (believers) live after the flesh *ye shall die*” (Romans 8:13). In the words of Psalm 78:29–31: “So they did eat, and were well filled; for He gave them THEIR OWN DESIRE; they were not estranged from their lust. But while the meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel.” And in the words of Psalm 106:13–15: “They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel; but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. AND HE GAVE THEM THEIR REQUEST; but sent leanness into their soul.”

Once more, when the people wished to investigate the land for themselves by chosen representatives, God again gave them their desire. He allowed the whole congregation to be halted for forty days, while the leaders of Israel, one man from each tribe, searched the land concerning which God Himself had given them a report. But for every day they thus hindered the carrying out of His promise — a promise made four hundred years previous to Abraham, and renewed to them through Moses — they were condemned to spend a year in the wilderness. “After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know My breach of promise (or estrangement)” (Numbers 14:34).

And finally, when the people turned back and tempted God, and limited the “Holy One of Israel” (Psalm 78:41), and said, “Would God we had died in this wilderness” (Numbers 14:2), God again gave them their wish, saying, “As ye have spoken in Mine Ears so will I do to you” (Numbers 14:28).

This should teach us to search our hearts, by the light of God’s Word, for any desires which are not in accord with His revealed purpose for us. In the particular case which we are now studying, it is God’s revealed purpose to lead many sons unto glory; and it is necessary to the accomplishment of this purpose that they should give heed to, and obey, the word spoken to them. This purpose of God is not for *their* satisfaction only, or chiefly. It is primarily for *His own* satisfaction, and for the glory of His First-Begotten, Who glorified Him in the earth, and Who is now waiting for the joy that was set before Him when He endured the Cross. *It is an exceedingly serious matter to hinder this purpose of the Father.* He has graciously made it known to us, and great will be our loss if we set not our hearts in line with its accomplishment. If, therefore, we allow and cherish in our hearts desires for the seen things of *this* age, giving them preference over the things “which we have *heard*” but have “not seen as yet,” then, regardless of our Christian name and profession, we do provoke God, and render ourselves liable to such consequences as the Israelites brought upon themselves; that is to say, we may fail to enter into the “Rest” that God has announced to us, and be condemned instead to have our portion in the wilderness of this age, and in the things that pertain to it, according to the desire of our hearts.

It is important to observe that those who provoked God in the wilderness by their unbelief and disobedience, and who were in consequence shut out of the Promised Land, *did not cease to be the Lord’s people*, and that He did not refuse to pardon their iniquity. Moses interceded for them, as he had done at Sinai, and said, “Pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of Thy mercy, and as Thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. And the Lord said, I HAVE PARDONED according to thy word” (Numbers 14:19–20).

By this we are taught that God’s pardon to His children does not mean the remission of the appropriate consequences of their wrongdoing. That is what *we* usually mean when we ask forgiveness of our sins; but God’s pardon is something different from that. It is written that every transgression and disobedience receives a just recompense of reward (Hebrews 2:2); and again, that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap (Galatians 6:7). And again, that everyone shall receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10). And again, “He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done” (Colossians 3:25). God’s pardon means that He does not cast away His people though He punishes their sins; as said the Psalmist: “Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God: Thou wast a God that forgavest them, *though Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions*” (Psalm 99:8). He shut the disobedient people out of the Land of Promise; but He Himself accompanied them. The pillar of cloud and fire never left them. The manna never failed. For “about the time of forty years suffered He their manners in the wilderness” (Acts 13:18). We often think of what *they* suffered, and seldom of what *God* suffered. Nevertheless, “in all *their* affliction, He was afflicted.” See also Nehemiah 9:19.

God’s dealings with David impressively teach the same lesson. Immediately upon David’s confession of sin, Nathan said, “The Lord also hath put away they sin” (2 Samuel 12:13). Nevertheless, the *punishment* for the sin was not remitted or abated. The sword never departed from David’s house, and the other items of his punishment were fully carried out, according to the Word of the Lord (2 Samuel 12:10–12).

As we have seen, the righteous retribution which God visits upon His people, frequently takes the form of permitting them to have the preference of their own hearts. It was thus when the people said, “Give us a king to judge us” (1 Samuel 8:6). God first warned them clearly by His prophet Samuel what would happen to them if they rejected Him and chose a human king to rule over them (verses 9–18). “Nevertheless, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel, and they said, Nay, but we will have a king over us, that we may be like all the nations” (verses 19–20). So God gave them a king in His anger, and not only so, but He gave them just such a king as their own hearts desired.

On another greater and more solemn occasion, a choice was presented to the people. The choice then offered them lay between Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and Barabbas, the murderer. And they all cried saying, “not this man, but Barabbas” (John 18:40). The Apostle Peter subsequently reminded the people of Israel of

that choice saying, "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of Life" (Acts 3:15). That choice was in reality the choice of "the princes (or rulers) of this world" (1 Corinthians 2:8); and accordingly, God allowed the world to have the ruler it preferred; for the Devil, who has the power of death, is "the prince (or ruler) of this world" (John 14:30); and "he was a *murderer* from the beginning" (John 8:44). Before leaving the record of the provocation in Numbers 14, we would direct attention to the remarkable promise found in verse 21: "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." It is a very significant fact that the Lord, in pronouncing the judgment that excluded the disobedient people from the land of Canaan, should have uttered and recorded an oath which is to have its fulfillment in the habitable earth to come, whereof Canaan was the type.

The essence of the lesson put before us in the incidents of the "Provocation" is that, when God, having redeemed for Himself a people at a great price, and having revealed to them His might power and His tender mercy, speaks to them of a place of wondrous blessing which He Himself has chosen for them, and into which He purposes to bring them; and when those to whom this purpose is revealed despise "the pleasant land" and manifest a preference for the things they are leaving behind them, God's fiery indignation is aroused against them, insomuch that He shuts them out of the promised blessing, and leaves them to a dreadful alternative.

The same lesson is taught by the Lord Himself in the parable of the great supper (Luke 14:16-24). The Lord had been speaking of *recompense* at the *Resurrection of the Just* whereupon one of those that sat at table with Him said: "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God" (verses 14-15). The general subject of the parable, therefore, is the *Kingdom of God*, which will be introduced at the Resurrection of the Just; and the specific subject is the blessing of eating bread (which signifies the satisfaction of the soul) in that Kingdom. "A certain man made a GREAT supper and bade many." This *great* supper represents the "good things to come," to which the saints of this era are invited. But the invited guests were more interested in the things of their immediate surroundings than in the great supper. Their conduct revealed the preference of their *hearts*. Therefore the lord of the household was "angry," and sent out his servant to bring others in ("seeing therefore that some *must* enter therein" Hebrews 4:6), in order that his house might be filled. And concerning those who lightly esteemed his invitation, he declared, "I say unto you that none of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper." They preferred not to come, and he left them to the consequences of their choice.

How, then, shall we escape if we, after the same example of unbelief, make light of and neglect "so great salvation," whereof a beginning was spoken by the Lord?

CHAPTER 7

The Rest that Remaineth. The Works of Wisdom, and Her Children.

MANY hundred years after the Provocation in the wilderness, the Holy Spirit inspired the utterance of Psalm 95. It begins with a note of praise “to the Rock of our Salvation.” Then it speaks of the Lord as a great God and a great King. It brings to mind the works of His Hands, making mention of the deep places of the earth, the strength of the hills, the sea, and the dry land. Then follows an invitation to come and *worship* before Him; and then they to whom this invitation is given are called “the people of His pasture and the sheep of His Hand.” The parallel between these verses and the contents of Hebrews is obvious.

The second part of the Psalm consists of the warning quoted in full in Hebrews 3; and it should be carefully noted that the warning, “Today, if ye will hear His Voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation” is addressed to “the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His Hand”; and it should be further noted that the subject spoken of, regarding which they are urged to hear His Voice, has to do with “salvation” and with the material creation — the sea and the dry land.

This Psalm is beyond all doubt prophetic. It belongs to a series (Psalms 93–100) which speak in glowing language of the salvation to be manifested in the age to come, when “the Lord reigneth,” when the heavens shall rejoice and the earth be glad, the field be joyful, and all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord, “for He cometh to judge the earth.” We cannot comment extensively upon these Psalms, but would advise the reader to study them carefully.

The Epistle to the Hebrews fixes definitely the period of the fulfillment of these prophetic Psalms. It tells us that “the rest” which God offered to the Israelites was but a shadow. Joshua did not, in fact, give them rest, “For if Joshua *had* given them rest, then would He (God) not afterward have spoken of another (rest) day” (Hebrews 4:8). And it tells us quite plainly that the people of His pasture, to whom the warning “Harden not your heart” is addressed, are the redeemed people of this age, the “Hebrews,” those who are passengers through the wilderness of this world, and who have the privilege of coming into His Presence to “worship.”

The application of the warning is made for us with a definiteness that leaves little room for misunderstanding. The point of the matter is that we should fear lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of us should seem to come short of it; and that we ought to give diligence to enter into *that* rest, lest any man fall after the same example of disobedience. By reference to Scriptures which speak of the Rest of God, we may obtain light whereby many and exceedingly precious details of this subject can be perceived.

In the fourth Chapter of Hebrews, two “rests” are spoken of, namely, the rest of the old creation (verse 4), and that of the new creation (verses 5, 9–11). In Genesis 2 God spoke “of the seventh day on this wise, and God did REST the seventh day from all His works” (verse 4). Then subsequently, “in this place (*i.e.*, in Psalm 95) again He spoke of a rest, saying, “If they shall enter into My rest” (verse 5). Having spoken in Genesis 2 of a certain day of rest (which rest was broken by the entrance of sin into the world) God again, after so long a time, limited a certain day (of rest), saying in David “Today, etc.” And by this He could not have meant the rest of Canaan, for if Joshua had given rest there to the people of God, He would not have spoken afterward of “another day.” Inasmuch as God spoke in Psalm 95 of His rest, and of some who did not enter into it, the conclusion drawn in verse 6, is that the rest there spoken of still remains, and that some must enter therein, in fulfillment of God’s purpose, which cannot fail. “Seeing therefore it (the rest of God) remaineth, that some must enter therein, and (seeing that) they, to whom it was first preached (announced), entered not in because of disobedience, again He limiteth a day, etc.” It follows that there remains a rest day (*sabbatismos*) unto the people of God; and this is a subject into which we would do well to inquire most diligently.

This is the conclusion of the argument beginning at verse 3, the sense of which appears to be this: Although the works of God were completed from the foundation of the world (for the Seventh day is specifically named as the period when God rested from all His works) nevertheless, at a much later time, God speaks *again* of “My rest,” and speaks of it as something in the future. What does this mean? What are the works from and in which God will rest, and into which He is now bidding some men to enter? The explanation appears in verse 10, pointing to the rest that will ensue from the works which Christ finished on the Cross, where He Who is the Beginning, made peace through the Blood of His Cross, to reconcile ALL THINGS unto Himself (Colossians 1:18, 20). “For He (Christ) that is entered into His rest, He also hath ceased from His Own Works, as God did from His.” This is the rest into which we should labor to enter. It is a rest far more glorious than that ensuing upon the works of the six days of Genesis 1, for it will be based upon the mighty work of Redemption, accomplished upon the Cross of Calvary, where the Incarnate Son of God put

away sin by the Sacrifice of Himself, and through death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil.

By "God's rest" is not meant recuperation from the fatigue of labor, for we cannot think of God as being fatigued by His labors. It means the satisfaction and enjoyment which God takes in the finished and perfected works of His Hands, the productions of His creative wisdom and power. "Rest," therefore, is associated with God's "works." When God had set the world in order by the work of the six days recorded in Genesis 1, and had filled it with living creatures, and had "blessed" them, and had seen that all was "very good," He then rested on the seventh day. That rest was broken by sin. The world was again thrown into confusion, being filled with corruption and violence. God could not rest in such an evil state of things; so He took up another and a mightier work, that of redemption, looking to a new creation based upon reconciliation, and to an eternal and glorious rest therein.

The works of God, wherein He finds rest or satisfaction, are the products of His WISDOM, as it is written: "O Lord how manifold are Thy works! IN WISDOM hast Thou made them all. The earth is full of Thy riches; so is this great and wide sea" (Psalm 104:24–25). "To Him that BY WISDOM made the heavens" (Psalm 136:5). "The Lord BY WISDOM hath founded the earth" (Proverbs 3:19). "WISDOM hath built her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars" (Proverbs 9:1).

These passages, and others which refer to the wisdom of God, have an important bearing upon our subject, as we shall endeavor to show; for the supreme works of Christ, Who is the Power of God and the Wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24), will come into display, for the enjoyment and satisfaction of God, and of those who enter thereunto, in the age to come.

Hence we find in the Scriptures many foreshadowings of "that rest." Particularly would we direct attention to Proverbs 8, where Wisdom is represented as crying, standing in the top of the high places, crying at the gates, and at the doors: Wisdom's call is addressed not unto angels, but unto men: "Unto you O MEN, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." To them she cries, "Hear, for I will speak of excellent things" (verses 1–6). She speaks of fruit better than gold, and of revenue better than choice silver, and declares that her purpose is to lead in the way of righteousness, "That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures" (verses 19–21). Then comes the announcement: "The Lord possessed me, the BEGINNING of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, ere ever the earth was" (verses 22–23). Then the creation is brought into view. God here speaks with delight, as He ever does, of the works of His Hands, the earth, the fountains of waters, the mountains, the hills, the fields, the clouds, and the seas. Thus speaks the Wisdom of God: "When He gave to the sea His decree... When He appointed the foundations of the earth. Then I was by Him, as one brought up (or as another translation renders it *His Artificer*), and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him, rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and My delights were with the SONS OF MEN" (verses 29–31). "For not unto angels hath He put in subjection the habitable earth to come, whereof we speak."

There is, at the present time, a teaching which finds much acceptance, to the effect that the blessings of the Church are wholly of a "spiritual" nature, and are confined to "heavenly places," having nothing to do with the habitable earth to come. It is regarded as "unspiritual" to anticipate material blessings, which are (according to this teaching) assigned to Israel. Certainly, the Church of Christ is blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," and that is true of the time now present; but that blessed truth certainly does not exclude the Church from sharing the Rest of God, that is His satisfaction and delight in the habitable earth to come. We surely need not seek to be more "spiritual" than the Wisdom of God Who rejoices "in the habitable part of His earth." It seems to be quite generally overlooked that the Word of God does not speak of "spiritual" things in contrast with what is material or physical. That distinction is one of the fundamental principles of Gnosticism, which declares matter to be unspiritual and evil. It is a fundamental principle of the latter-day offspring of Gnosticism, "Christian Science" (so-called). But the Word of God does not so speak. Matter is spiritual, for it proceeds directly from God Who is Spirit. In the Scriptures the contrast is not between things spiritual and things material, but between things spiritual and things carnal or fleshly.

Let us, then, listen to these words, which are intended for our ears: "Now, therefore, hearken unto Me, O YE CHILDREN, for blessed are they that keep My ways." Surely this is addressed by Christ to the children that God has given Him; and of whom also He speaks in Matthew 11:19, "Wisdom is justified of her children." Let us therefore prove ourselves to be the children of Wisdom by hearkening to these things; for at that very time "Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." And then He tells how, by bearing His yoke and learning of Him, they may find rest unto their SOULS (Matthew 11:25–30). To this important saying of the Lord — another instance where He began to speak of that salvation so — great, the coming "rest" — we will return later on.

In these Scriptures we see the Christ of God, Who is the Power of God and the Wisdom of God, by Whom all the works of God are wrought, looking forward to the time when He will rejoice in the habitable part of His earth, and have His delights with the sons of men. That was the joy set before Him when He endured the Cross.

In this connection, we would commend to our readers the study of that remarkable passage (1 Corinthians 1:17–2:16) wherein the Apostle Paul contrasts the wisdom and power of God with the wisdom of this world, which is foolishness with God, and which has been confounded and brought to nothing by the Cross of Christ. We can but indicate a few of the leading points. Paul's ministry among the Corinthians was to preach the "foolishness" of the Cross, by means of which it pleases God to save them that believe (1 Corinthians 1:17–23). Among them he had determined to know nothing else (1 Corinthians 2:2). "However," he says, "we do speak WISDOM among them that are perfect," that is, *full-grown*. This relates the passage to Hebrews, where the sons of God are urged to go on to perfection (full-growth). But the wisdom which the Apostle speaks to the mature saints is not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to naught. He speaks the wisdom of God, the wisdom that was hidden in mystery, that is to say, kept secret, the wisdom that God predetermined before the ages for OUR GLORY (1 Corinthians 2:6–7). This is the purpose of God, predetermined before the ages, and which is referred to in Hebrews, namely, "bringing many sons unto GLORY." This wisdom, no one of the rulers of this age has known, for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of THE GLORY. The One Whom the rulers of this age — the leaders of the thought of this age and the representatives of its wisdom — put to shame upon the Cross, is the Lord of that GLORY, into which God, during this very age, is bringing His many sons. That wisdom, hidden from the wise and prudent (*cf.* Matthew 11:25 and 1 Corinthians 1:19) is now declared to be what the prophet speaks of in Isaiah 64:4 — a wisdom not understood by the learned men of this world, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man THE THINGS which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:8–9). These "things" prepared by the Wisdom of God, things which pertain to the glory of the sons of God, were not disclosed to the Corinthians, and the Apostle's reasons for not revealing them to the saints at Corinth was not because they were too spiritual, but for the very different reason that they were "babes," being "carnal"; and the evidence of their spiritual immaturity and carnality is pointed out in 1 Corinthians 3:3. "For ye are yet carnal: For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men?" (*i.e.*, as men in the flesh, for they were "babes in Christ.").

Let it then be carefully noted that chief among the things that hinder spiritual growth are envying, strife, and divisions. "Wherefore," says the Apostle Peter, "laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:1–2). Paul goes on to say that God had revealed those things to him (or to "us," Paul and Sosthenes) by His Spirit, Who searches all things, they having received, not the spirit of the world which knows nothing of those things, but the Spirit that is of God, in order that they might know the things that are freely given to us of God (verses 10–12). Those "things that are freely given to us of God," are the same "things which God has prepared for them that love Him." Still speaking of the same things Paul tells how he communicates them to others. Even as, in preaching the Cross, he used not excellency of speech or enticing words of man's wisdom (verses 1, 4), so in communicating these deep things of God, he spoke not in the *words* which man's wisdom teacheth, but in the words which the Holy Spirit teacheth, communicating SPIRITUAL THINGS by means of SPIRITUAL (WORDS). (We think there can be no doubt that the substantive to be supplied after "spiritual" at the end of verse 13 is "words." The grammatical construction indicates it, and the sense of the passage demands it.)

We thus learn that the things prepared by God for the coming age, which are "for our glory," are "*spiritual things*," notwithstanding that they are the material works of His creative wisdom. And not only are they spiritual things, but they are communicated by means of "spiritual words"; and they must be "spiritually discerned" (verse 14).

CHAPTER 8

The Eternal Purpose of God in Christ. Bringing Many Sons unto Glory.

IN connection with the subject of the preceding Chapter we would also refer briefly to a passage in Ephesians 3. The first Chapter of that Epistle, which reveals a mystery or secret, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, closes with an unmistakable reference to the eighth Psalm, which is found in verse 22, "And hast put ALL THINGS under His Feet." Those are the created things specifically mentioned in Psalm 8. But the same verse contains also the announcement of something entirely new, "And gave Him to be the Head OVER ALL THINGS to the Church, which is His Body." The Church which is His Body is thus declared to be united with Him, as a part of Himself, over the "all things" of Psalm 8, Hebrews 2, Matthew 11:27; Romans 8:32, and other Scriptures.

Turning now to Ephesians 3, we find the revelation "by the Spirit" of the secret, not known in other ages, namely that, by means of the gospel, whereof Paul was made a minister, Gentiles should become joint-heirs and joint partakers (same word as rendered "fellows" in Hebrews 1:9, and "partakers" in Hebrews 3:1, 14) of God's PROMISE IN CHRIST (verses 5–6). This "promise" is said to embrace "the unsearchable riches of Christ." It is the fellowship, or sharing together of elect Jews and Gentiles, of the mystery which, from the ages, was hidden in God, "Who CREATED ALL THINGS by Christ Jesus." And this is to the intent that now to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be known, by the Church, the MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD, according to the purpose of the ages, which He purposed in Christ Jesus, our Lord (verses 9–11).

Here we have God's "purpose of the ages" in Christ Jesus, by Whom He created all things (compare Hebrews 1:2), in the carrying out of which is made known His manifold Wisdom, that purpose being carried out in the Church, which is Christ's Body. What is that purpose of the ages? By looking closely at the text we may get a clear answer. At the end of verse 11, Paul turns aside to make an important parenthetical remark, breaking off for the purpose the main thread of the discourse, as is common in his writings. In this parenthesis, verses 12 and part of 13, Paul declares that in Him (Christ) he has BOLDNESS and access with CONFIDENCE, by the FAITH of Him. *Boldness* and *confidence* by *faith* are the very things which the "Hebrews" are exhorted to "hold fast" and not to "cast away." Wherefore, since Paul has these essential things, he desires that they faint not at his tribulations for them. Here ends the parenthesis, which contains a complete topic in itself, the words "which is YOUR GLORY" completing (as we believe) the topic interrupted up to the end of verse 11. The suggested reading of the passage is as follows: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (in Whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him) which (purpose) is your glory." That is to say, God's purpose of the ages in Christ Jesus, our Lord, is "your glory." This reading brings the passage into full accord with what is stated Ephesians 1 (see particularly verses 5–6, 9–12), and with other Scriptures. The tribulations of Paul could not be the "glory" of other saints; but it is the purpose of God in Christ to present to Himself a "Church of GLORY" (Ephesians 5:27). Moreover, the word "which" is followed by a verb in the singular, "is," indicating that its antecedent is a singular noun. We think there is no doubt that the antecedent is the "purpose" of God, not the "tribulations" of Paul.¹

Another distinct foreshadowing of God's rest to come is given to us in the history of Noah, whose very name signifies "rest" or "comfort." His father, Lamech, "called his name Noah, saying, This same shall COMFORT us concerning the work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed" (Genesis 5:29). This passage conveys a strong intimation that the rest to come will ensue upon the removal of the curse that God laid upon the earth, because of the sin of Adam. It also presents to us a foreshadowing of the One Who will give complete rest concerning the work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which God has cursed. We know now that the removal of that curse is one of the results of the work of Christ on the Cross, where He bore the curse Himself and tasted death for everything.

Noah is the third on the list of true "Hebrews" given in Hebrews 11. "By faith," he prepared an ark "for

¹ I am not aware whether the parenthetical character of Paul's reference to himself in verse 12 and the first part of verse 13 has been pointed out in any of the commentaries on Ephesians. For this valuable suggestion I am indebted to a brother in the Lord.

the SALVATION of his house." The "salvation" of Noah's house consisted, not merely in escaping the doom of the world that then was, which perished in the flood, but in being brought into the possession and occupation of the renewed earth, after the waters of judgment had subsided.

The ark of Noah "rested" on the mountains of Ararat on the 17th day of the seventh month. The reason why this date was recorded is now apparent. It is the day of the Resurrection of Christ, when He, having finished His works, entered into the rest of the new creation, as the Beginning, the First Begotten of every creature. The Paschal Lamb was killed on the 14th day of the seventh month (afterwards made the first month of the Jewish calendar, see Exodus 12:2, 18), that being the day on which Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us; and three days later, that is to say, on the seventeenth day of the same month, which was the anniversary of the day when the Ark rested on Ararat, He rose from the dead.

Noah's first recorded act upon entering the purged earth was to build an altar, and offer burnt offerings thereon. "And the Lord smelled a savor OF REST" (Genesis 8:21 *margin*). This Scripture stamps the scene as a type of God's rest to come, which will be the fruit of the true Burnt Offering of the Son of God in the Body of His Flesh, when He, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot unto God. God perceived the savor of that rest to come in the sacrifice offered by Noah.

Isaiah 11 contains a distinct prophecy concerning the rest of God that remaineth, and verse 10 defines in one significant word the character of that rest: "And His rest shall be GLORY" (the original word is the noun "glory," not the adjective "glorious.").

The context speaks of the One on Whose works that rest will be based. "There shall come forth a Rod (or shoot) out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of His roots; and the Spirit of the Lord shall Rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:1-2). Some of the leading features of that rest are mentioned. First He will judge (do justice to) the cause of the poor, and reprove with equity on behalf of the meek of the earth (comp. Matthew 5:5); and shall smite the earth with the rod of His Mouth, and with the Breath of His Lips shall He slay the Wicked One (*cf.* 2 Thessalonians 2:8). "And righteousness shall be the girdle of His Loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His Reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11:5-6).

There is no need to quote this Scripture in full. The important point for our present purpose is that this blessed scene of glory, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9), is specifically called "His rest." Inasmuch as the Scriptures speak only of *one* rest to come, "a rest that remaineth," there can be no doubt but this prophecy deals with the same subject as the fourth of Hebrews. "We should labor, therefore, to enter into *that* rest." We would specially commend the eleventh, and twelfth chapters of Isaiah to the attention of our readers.

In connection with the foregoing Scripture, we would notice several passages in second Thessalonians, in which is found a similar reference to "that Wicked (One)...whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His Mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His Coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8). This is evidently the same event as referred to in Isaiah 11:4, quoted above. In the same Chapter (2 Thessalonians 2:13) Paul gives thanks because God has chosen those saints "to SALVATION, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." This is evidently the salvation to be enjoyed in the coming age, for it is defined in the next verse as "the obtaining of the GLORY of our Lord Jesus Christ." With this we may compare 1 Thessalonians 5:8-9, where Paul exhorts us who are of the day, to "be sober, putting on the breastplate (guarding the heart) of faith and love, and for an helmet (guarding the thoughts) the HOPE OF SALVATION. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to OBTAIN SALVATION by our Lord Jesus Christ." This salvation is one that is *to be obtained*, and hence is yet future.

Returning to 2 Thessalonians 2, we find in this connection exhortations similar to those which occur in Hebrews: "Therefore, brethren, STAND FAST, and HOLD the traditions which ye have been taught" (verse 15).

In the first Chapter of 2 Thessalonians, Paul gives the reason for the assurance he had concerning those saints, namely, "because that your FAITH groweth EXCEEDINGLY, and the *love* of every one of you all toward each *other* aboundeth" (verse 3). This is the answer to the apostle's prayer in 1 Thessalonians 3:10, 12; 4:9-10). Continuing at 2 Thessalonians 1:4 we read: "So that we ourselves glory in you in the Churches of God for your *patience* and *faith* in all your *persecutions* and *tribulations* which you *endure*." Here are the things mentioned in Hebrews as essential. What follows is specially important. "Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be COUNTED WORTHY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD, for which also ye suffer." This is in full agreement with many Scriptures which testify that the reward of sufferings for Christ's sake is to be the participation with Him in the Kingdom of God — and this is said in this Epistle directly to members of the Church of Christ. "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation

to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled REST with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels (the angels of His Power) in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the GLORY of His Power." The connection of this Scripture with those previously considered, is manifest. The reference it contains to the tribulation of the saints, to the recompense that awaits them, "rest with us" (the apostles of Christ), the place of that rest, namely, in "the Kingdom of God," and the period when it will be entered namely, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with the angels of His Power, in flaming fire, and shall manifest the "glory of His power," serves to show clearly the application of the Epistle to the Hebrews directly to the saints of this dispensation.

We have seen that God's Rest, as to its character, will be "glory." The Scriptures further inform us that, as to its location, it will be MOUNT ZION. There is the city of our God, the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation is Mount Zion, the joy of the whole earth; and on the north sides thereof is the CITY OF THE GREAT KING (Psalm 48:1-2). "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. THIS IS MY REST FOR EVER. Here will I dwell, for I have desired it. There will I make the Horn of David to bud. I have ordained a lamp for Mine Anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame; but upon Himself shall His Crown flourish" (Psalm 132:13-18). There shall the "brethren" dwell together in unity, and there shall "the blessing," commanded by the Lord, descend, like the precious ointment upon the head, and like the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountains of ZION: "for THERE the Lord commanded THE BLESSING, even LIFE FOR EVERMORE" (Psalm 133). And there is the House of the Lord, where His servants stand to bless Him. There, too, is "THE SANCTUARY," where they lift up their hands to Him. And this is His word of blessing which He speaks. "The Lord that made Heaven and earth" — the creator Who delights in the works of His Hands — "bless thee OUT OF ZION" (Psalm 134). For what purpose were these wondrous words spoken, and what end are they intended to serve, if it be not to encourage the hearts of God's pilgrims, to whom the comforting assurance has been given; "For ye are not come to the Mount that might be touched and that burned with fire (Sinai)...But ye are come unto MOUNT ZION, and unto the CITY OF THE LIVING GOD, the HEAVENLY JERUSALEM" (Hebrews 12:18, 22)?

CHAPTER 9

The “Glory” to be Revealed in Us

ANOTHER Scripture which presents remarkable points of agreement with the truth set forth in the first four chapters of Hebrews, is found in the eighth Chapter of Romans, verses 14–39. The prominent subject of this passage is the “SONS of God,” and it carries our minds to the period of “the GLORY to be revealed in us,” the age of “the liberty of the GLORY of the children of God.”

The passage begins by defining the “sons of God,” saying, “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” It is obvious that one may be *born* of the Spirit of God without being *led by* the Spirit; for many children of God are manifestly walking and living, not according to the Spirit, but according to the flesh.

Sharing with Christ in the inheritance is also mentioned in this passage. “If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” But there is an “if” at this point, if so be that we SUFFER with Him that we may be GLORIFIED together.” Many Scriptures testify to the fact that the glory depends upon the suffering (2 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Timothy 2:12; 1 Peter 4:13; 5:10, etc.). This explains why Paul so earnestly desired to know “the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings” (Philippians 3:10). May the Lord give to all His saints the same intense longing. To encourage this desire, we have the assurance that “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the GLORY that shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

This present world is the place of Christ’s sufferings, and is the place where His saints are appointed to suffer with Him. If this truth be grasped it will be seen that it is a very grievous thing in His Eyes for His saints either to seek gratification in the world, or to take part with the citizens of the world in their schemes for improving and embellishing the world, with a view to making it a place of satisfaction and enjoyment. To these saints the word of the prophet Micah is applicable. “Arise ye and depart; for THIS IS NOT YOUR REST. Because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction” (Micah 2:10). The line is clearly drawn; the choice is clearly presented to the people of God between this present evil age, and the age to come. Those who seek their “rest” in this place will surely find to their sorrow and shame that, because it is polluted, it will destroy them with a sore destruction. Those who in their hearts turn back to the things of this age, as Demas did, are they “that draw back unto destruction” (Hebrews 10:39).

Continuing our examination of Romans 8, we find that the inheritance, whereof the children of God are heirs, is the creation itself, delivered (as it will be in the age to come) from the bondage of corruption. We read that the earnest expectation of the creation *awaits the manifestation of the sons of God*. Creation itself is suffering from the effects of sin; for the curse rests upon it. Everywhere in nature are evidences of the discord, confusion, and strife, which are the result of sin. There are violent and destructive convulsions, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tornadoes, tidal waves, avalanches, fires, and floods. There are periods of withering heat and of blasting cold. There are deserts and waste places, thorns and briars, disease carrying germs, poisonous plants, reptiles, and insects. In the striking language of the inspired apostle, “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” Surely there is in this fact a stern rebuke to those children of God who, while the groaning creation, convulsed with pain, awaits with ardent expectation the revealing of the sons of God, are themselves seeking in that very groaning creation their pleasures, honors, possessions, and other satisfactions. Creation, moreover, became subject to vanity, *not of its own will*, but by reason of him (Adam) who subjected the same. But, though subject to the bondage of corruption, it is subject “in hope that creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the GLORY of the children of God” (verses 20–21)¹.

Through the first man, Adam, creation became subject to bondage. Through the Second Man, Jesus Christ, creation will be delivered from the cruel bondage, and will become the scene of the liberty of the glory of the children of God. It will then be subject, not to vanity, but to the glorified Son of Man. “For not unto angels hath He (God) put in subjection the habitable earth to come, whereof we speak”; but He has put all things in subjection under the Feet of Him Who was made, for a little while, lower than the angels, that He, by the grace of God, should taste death *for everything*. And not only does creation groan, but “we also ourselves, who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, awaiting adoption, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23). This reference to the Holy Spirit is very important. In Ephesians 1:14 it is stated that the Spirit is “the earnest of our inheritance.” Also in Hebrews 6:4, reference is made to those who “were made partakers of the Holy Ghost.” In all these Scriptures, the complete inheritance that awaits

¹ The words “in hope” at the end of verse 20 manifestly belong to verse 21.

the sons of God, whereof the Spirit is the earnest or first-fruit, is in view. This is prominent in Hebrews and Romans 8, as has been already shown. In Ephesians 1, also, the passage relates to those whom God predestinated to the "adoption" through Jesus Christ unto Himself (verse 5), according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself that, in the dispensation (or economy) of the fullness of times, He might gather together into one (literally, *might "head up"*) ALL THINGS in the Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth, in Whom (Christ) we have obtained an inheritance (verses 9–11). The "all things" that are to be "headed up" in Christ in the dispensation of the fullness of times, constitute the "purchased possession" (verse 14).

Those who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit do not rejoice or take pleasure in the present condition of the things they are to inherit. In proportion as they are led and taught by the Spirit, and are made aware of the pain in which creation now groans and travails, they also themselves groan within themselves, awaiting the adoption, the redemption of our body, when the groans of creation will cease, and will give place to rejoicing. For then the heavens shall rejoice, and the earth be glad, and the field be joyful and all that is therein; then all the earth shall make a joyful noise unto the Lord, and sing praise; then the floods shall clap their hands, and all the trees of the wood rejoice, and the hills be joyful together before the Lord (Pss. 96–98).

The word "adoption," occurring in Romans 8:15, 23 and Ephesians 1:5, is compounded of two words "sons" and "placing"; so that we may take it as signifying the act or ceremony of placing the sons of God in the position appropriate to that high and holy relationship, and of investing them with the honor, wealth, and glory, which it is the good pleasure of the Father to bestow upon them. The "adoption," then, will be the consummation of the Father's purpose in "bringing many sons unto glory." We thus see that the connection between Romans 8, Ephesians 1, and the opening chapters of Hebrews, is very close. The more they are studied together, the more clearly will that connection be seen.

Another effect of receiving the Spirit as the earnest or first-fruit of our inheritance, should be to place and keep us in the attitude of "awaiting" the happening of something, which is about to take place, according to the Word of the Lord spoken to us. The word "awaiting" (sometimes rendered "looking for") is a prominent and important word in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Son of God Himself is "henceforth expecting (same word rendered *awaiting*) until His enemies be made His footstool" (Hebrews 10:13); and He will appear the second time to those who look for (*await*) Him for salvation (Hebrews 9:28). The "waiting" state is that which essentially characterizes the true Hebrew. It makes a vast difference whether one is adapting himself to his surroundings with a view to making the best of them, or is waiting, and holding himself constantly in readiness for something entirely different. That was what distinguished "Abram, the Hebrew" from Lot. Abraham "looked (*waited*, again the same word) for the city which hath the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10); and that expectation kept him quite aloof from the flourishing city of Sodom.

Lot was doubtless influenced by the plausible reasoning, so commonly heard and followed at the present day, to the effect that the people of God ought to take part in, and do all they can to improve, the political affairs of the communities in which they reside. We do not doubt that it is an advantage to the community to have the participation of Christians in its political affairs. No doubt Lot made an excellent magistrate during the time he administered the affairs of Sodom; and it is very significant that even the Sodomites, depraved as they were, "wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly" — realized the advantage of having "righteous Lot" in the office of magistrate. But the Word of God makes it unmistakably plain that participation in the politics of this present evil age, which is about to be overthrown, as the world was overthrown by the waters of Noah, and as the cities of the plane were destroyed by brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven, is utterly incompatible with the position of sons of God, and with the character of God's pilgrims. The example of Lot is one of the most striking, and the lesson it teaches is one of the clearest, on the pages of Scripture; yet there is hardly a lesson that is so completely disregarded among Christians, or those who profess to be such, at the present day. Furthermore, the participation of Lot in the political affairs of Sodom did not improve its moral tone, or "elevate the masses," or tend in the slightest to avert its doom. On the contrary, Lot failed to rescue even his own sons-in-law. He lost his married daughters, and his unmarried daughters were corrupted. His stay in Sodom was an unmitigated disaster. On the other hand, Abraham, who kept aloof from the affairs of Sodom, was able to rescue those citizens of Sodom who were captured by Chedorlaomer and his allies.

Let us, then, submit ourselves to be searched by these Scriptures, that we be not led off by any specious arguments to participate in the affairs of this world, that we be not hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and that we may know whether or not we are really awaiting the adoption, the appearance of Christ for salvation.

That is clearly what the Apostle is speaking of in Romans 8; for the next verse says, "For we are (were) SAVED IN HOPE; but hope that is SEEN is not hope. For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if

we hope for that we SEE NOT, then do we with PATIENCE WAIT FOR it" (Romans 8:24–25).

These verses speak of salvation, hope, patience, and waiting for things not seen, which are the very subjects to which prominence is given in Hebrews. This is so obvious that we need not take the time to point it out to the reader. The "salvation," which we "see not," but "hope for," is the "placing of the sons of God" in the "glory" of the renewed earth, delivered from the bondage of corruption in the age to come. If we truly "hope for" so great salvation, then will we "with PATIENCE wait for it." "For ye have need of PATIENCE, that, after ye have done the Will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:36).

Finally, we would call attention to the "purpose" of God as set forth in Romans 8, which is the same as stated in Hebrews with respect to the "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." In Romans 8, we read of "them who are the CALLED according to His PURPOSE," whom He predestinated "to be conformed to the Image of His Son, that He might be FIRST-BORN among MANY BRETHREN"; and furthermore, it is stated that His ultimate purpose for them is that they may be "glorified" (Romans 8:28–30).

It is clear, then, that in this passage in Romans 8, the Spirit is speaking of the same things that are spoken of in Hebrews. The difference between the two Scriptures seems to be mainly this: In Romans the stress is laid upon the Divine side of the plan, showing that, notwithstanding all hindrances, God will carry out His purpose; while in Hebrews, stress is laid upon the human side of the subject, showing that, while God's purpose will surely be carried out, there is nevertheless a grave danger lest some of us, to whom the call is given, may not secure a share in it. Just as the righteousness of God is proclaimed by the Gospel unto *all* men, but is only *upon* them that believe (Romans 3:22; Titus 2:11), so the "Rest" to come is announced to all the redeemed people of God, but it is entered into only by those who believe to the end. "For we which have believed do enter in, as He said."

It is not easy for us to harmonize in our minds the doctrine of the sovereignty of God in the election of His saints, and that of the responsibility of those to whom the Gospel of God's grace is preached to repent and believe that Gospel. But the doctrine of God's election, and the doctrine of men's freewill and responsibility, are both clearly taught in the Word of God. Our part, therefore, is not to exercise our ingenuity in trying to reconcile those doctrines, but simply to believe them.

In like manner it may not be easy to reconcile the doctrine of God's sovereign and irresistible purpose with reference to the glorification of all the members of the Body of Christ, as stated in Romans 8 and Ephesians 1, with the doctrine of the responsibility of those who are called, as stated by the Lord in the Gospels, and by His apostles in Hebrews, Peter, and elsewhere, to make their calling and election sure, by obedience, steadfastness, endurance of tribulations, diligence, and hope, unto the end. But again, our part is not to devise a reconciliation of these several doctrines, but to believe them implicitly, and especially to give earnest heed to every warning and admonition spoken to us by the Spirit of the Living God, through His living Word.

CHAPTER 10

Judgment Beginning at the House of God

THE application of the foregoing Scriptures is, as to their main features, at least, clear enough; though as to some of the details there may be room for questions, and need of further light.

Canaan is put before us plainly as a type of the rest that remaineth for the people of God, and of the inheritance that the heirs of God are to share with the Firstborn in the age to come. That the rest and the inheritance are identical, or at least are very closely connected, appears from Deuteronomy 12:9: "For ye are not as yet come to the REST and to the INHERITANCE which the LORD your God giveth you." What corresponds to this type is the renewed and restored Creation delivered from the curse, blessed with fruitfulness, and radiant with the glory of the Personal Presence of the Lord of Glory. That will be the place and the era of the Kingdom of God, the fulfillment of innumerable prophecies, when God shall set His King upon His holy hill of Zion. It will be the dispensation of the fullness of times, when the "adoption," or placing of the sons of God will occur. It will be the times of restitution of all things which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

From the Scriptures discussed above we understand that the entrance into the glory of that Kingdom is a *prize*, or *reward*. A man must be born again in order to enter, or even *see* the Kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5); and also in order to enter that Kingdom he must *do the will of God*. For the Lord has plainly declared, "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the Will of My Father, Who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). So also Hebrews 10:36 says that it is after we have, in patience, *done the Will of God* that we are to receive the promise. The Kingdom is for the poor in spirit, and for those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake (Matthew 5:3, 10). It is to be *sought*, and the Father's good pleasure it is to give it to the "little flock" who sell that they have, and give alms, and provide themselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens, that faileth not (Luke 12:31-34). No man looking back is fit for it (Luke 9:62). It is difficult for a rich man to enter it (Luke 18:24-25). The Apostle Paul exhorted the disciples, in various places, to *continue* in the faith, telling them, "that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). And again he wrote commending the saints at Thessalonica for their *patience and faith* in all the persecutions and tribulations they endured, telling them that it was a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that they might be *counted worthy of the Kingdom of God*, for which they also suffered. We also understand from the Scriptures that the prizes or rewards of the Kingdom are graded and proportioned to the endurance, faith, and obedience of the children of God. There will be many places and stations in that Kingdom, more or less honorable, according to their nearness to the Person of the King. The Epistle speaks of the "habitable earth to come" of a "country" which will be in the earth, of a "city" which will be in the country, and of a "house" which will be in the city.

The dominion and authority of the Son will, of course, extend over the whole creation, which is broader even than the "habitable earth to come." But we know that, even on earth, there will be nations who will render to the Lord only "feigned obedience," and whom He must rule with rigidity — with a rod of iron. Those nations will rise in rebellion after the millennium (Revelation 20:8). During all the Kingdom of the Son, there will be "enemies." "Rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies" is the word of Psalm 110; and in Psalm 45 we read, "Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies." The Son must reign until He hath put "all enemies" under His Feet; and the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then will He deliver up the Kingdom to God even the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

From these and other Scriptures it is evident that there will be, within the domain ruled by the Son, locations varying widely as to their conditions, from positions of the highest honor, glory and blessedness in "His own House," to positions just the reverse among His "enemies." There will be both the light of His own Presence within, where there is rejoicing and singing, and there will be also the "outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30). The idea, which many Christians entertain, that the conditions prevailing in the coming Kingdom will be those of uniform blessedness, all saints being on exactly the same level, is certainly not according to the teaching of Scripture. On the contrary, it very clearly appears from the testimony of the Word of God, that there will be conditions of very diverse character; inasmuch that each believer may be assigned to just such a place as, according to the righteous judgment of the Lord, Who will review all his works, not overlooking so much as one "idle word," he has merited.

According to our understanding of the teaching of God's Word on this most solemn and important subject, *all* believers who sleep will be raised, and *all* believers who are alive and remain at the Coming of the Lord, will be changed and clothed with immortality, and *all* together will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Corinthians 15:23, 51-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17). "For we must ALL appear before the judgment

seat of Christ; that EVERY ONE may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether GOOD or BAD" (2 Corinthians 5:10). In view of this judgment of the believer's works and conduct, the Apostle adds, "Knowing, therefore, the TERROR OF THE LORD, we persuade men"; a comment he certainly would not have been inspired to make, if nothing but rewards and blessings were to be bestowed at the judgment seat of Christ.

Inasmuch as judgment must begin at the House of God (1 Peter 4:17), we believe that at Christ's judgment seat, the works of every saint of this dispensation will be passed upon, and each saint will be assigned to an appropriate place in the Kingdom of the Son. Whether or not, during the thousand years, there will be opportunity for gaining promotion, is not revealed in the Bible, so far as the writer is aware. But certainly, not all who stand at Christ's judgment seat will be assigned to places of honor, glory, and blessing. The Apostle John urges the little children to abide in Him "that (as the AV reads) when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John 11:28). This rendering does not give the force of the passages. The Apostle says, "And NOW, little children, abide in Him, that WHEN HE SHALL BE MANIFESTED, we may have confidence, and not be PUT TO SHAME FROM BEFORE HIM at His Parousia." Abiding in Him *now*, at the present time, will give confidence *then*, and will insure us from being sent away in disgrace from His Presence.

Other Scriptures, particularly the words of the Lord Jesus Himself, add their clear warnings. In Matthew 25, where the Lord is speaking to His own disciples, not to the multitude, He instructs them as to the importance of *watching*, and of serving with diligence in regard to the responsibilities severally committed to them. He clearly states that the faithful servant will hear the word, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," and will be made "ruler over many things," while the slothful and unprofitable servant will be cast into the outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:14–30). It should be observed that this judgment takes place just before "the Son of Man shall come in His glory" (verse 31).

So also, in Matthew 24, He describes the conditions on earth just previous to His coming, as similar to those existing in the days of Noah, just before the flood. "For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the Ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:38–39). The Lord does not speak here of the evil deeds and immoralities that the men of that day committed, but merely of the fact that, disregarding all warnings, they continued wholly absorbed in the things of this life, as if its course were never to be interrupted. In view of this, He counsels His disciples to "watch," and says, "Therefore, be YE also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." Inasmuch as a like warning is given to the Church in 1 Thessalonians 5:6, we shall greatly err if we think the above quoted words of the Lord have no meaning for us. In that connection, the Lord declares what the punishment of the wicked servant would be, namely, that "the Lord of that servant shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion (or share) with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:51). The hypocrites, according to Matthew's Gospel, are the Scribes and Pharisees. The extent and duration of the "portion," or share, which the wicked servant will receive with the hypocrites, is not indicated. Doubtless, it will be determined according to all the circumstances of each several case. In passing judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar, the heavenly messenger said, "Let his *portion* be with the beasts of the earth;...and let seven times pass over him." In another Scripture (Luke 12:45–48), the Lord indicates that the punishment will be proportional, saying, "And that servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to His Will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required."

Again, in another place He said to His own disciples, "And take heed TO YOURSELVES, lest at any time YOUR hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon YOU unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch YE, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be ACCOUNTED WORTHY to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:34–36). To stand before the Son of Man will be the privilege of those who are accounted worthy of entrance into the Kingdom. That these words apply to believers of the present dispensation is evident from Paul's words to the saints at Thessalonica, when he spoke of their growing faith and abounding love, and of the tribulations they endured, as a token of God's righteous judgment that they might be "COUNTED WORTHY of the Kingdom of God for which they suffered" (2 Thessalonians 1:3–7); and when he further said, "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would COUNT YOU WORTHY of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith, with power" (verse 11).

Let us, therefore, give heed to the things that we have heard, and let us give all diligence to enter into that glorious rest that remaineth to the people of God.

Having considered the rewards promised to those who have heard the call to become Hebrews, and

who have held the beginning of their confidence firm to the end, and having also considered the dangers to which they are exposed, let us again, at this point, bring to mind the resources that God has made available to offset those dangers, and to save His pilgrims therefrom.

First of all, we have a great High Priest Who has passed through the heavens — Jesus, the Son of God. He is able to save to the uttermost — that is, *from* every danger that threatens, and *to* every blessing that God's grace has provided, them that approach God by Him. Therefore we should approach with a TRUE HEART in full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:22). Our approach is perfect, because it is in virtue of a perfect Sacrifice; whereas the sacrifices offered under the old dispensation were imperfect, and "the law could never with those sacrifices make the comers thereto (the approachers) perfect" (Hebrews 10:1). The approach must be in the assurance of *faith*. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh unto God (the *approacher* to God) must believe that He is, and is a Rewarder of them that seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Hence we should in faith seek constantly the services of our Great High Priest.

Second. In addition to the One Who makes intercession for us above, we have another Intercessor with us here below. "The Spirit Itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). Our High Priest is "*touched* with the feeling of our infirmities"; and the "Spirit also *helpeth* our infirmities."

Third. We have access every moment to a Throne of Grace. The Word of God exposes the thoughts and intents of our hearts, revealing the presence there of inclinations and desires contrary to the purpose of God, and which, if followed, would cause us to turn aside, and to depart from the living God. Hence the provision of "mercy" and "grace." If the thoughts and intents of our hearts were what they should be, we would not need either; because mercy is for the erring, and grace is for the undeserving.

Wonderful and blessed is the provision that God has made for His pilgrims to save them from dangers and to help their infirmities.

CHAPTER 11

An High Priest for ever after the Order of Melchizedek. Going on to Full Growth. (Hebrews 5–6)

WE have seen that chapters 2 and 3 of Hebrews contain a section which begins and ends with a reference to the High Priest of our confession. So likewise in chapters 5 and 6 is a section of the Epistle (Hebrews 5:6–6:20) which begins and ends with a reference to the Son of God as High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Christ did not glorify Himself to be made an High Priest. It was God Who thus glorified Him (Hebrews 5:4). Every high priest is taken from among men; but no man can take that honor to himself. He must be called of God, as was Aaron (Exodus 28:1). So Christ, having been perfected for that office by His Sufferings in the days of His Flesh, and, though being Son, having learned obedience by the things He suffered, became the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, having been greeted by God as High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:5–10).

Having thus introduced the subject of the new order of Priesthood, the Apostle indicates the great importance of that subject, and at the same time states the difficulty of communicating it to those who have become sluggish in hearing. He says, "Of Whom we have MANY THINGS TO SAY, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing" (verse 11). Rendered literally, this verse would read, "Concerning Whom our discourse (Gr. *Logos*) is much, and difficult of interpretation to utter, since sluggish ye have become in hearing."

We note, then, that failure in regard to the first exhortation of the Epistle (*i.e.*, to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard) keeps the believer in a backward state, or condition of spiritual infancy, in which he cannot receive information on the subject here presented. Note should be taken of the word "sluggish" (rendered "dull" in the AV), because it occurs again in this section: "And we desire that ye be not *slothful* (sluggish), but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Hebrews 6:11–12). The principle involved is that announced by the Lord Himself, Who said: "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. Take heed what ye hear...and unto YOU THAT HEAR shall more be given" (Mark 4:23–24).

The Melchizedek order of priesthood is very different from that of Aaron. Some of the differences we will briefly note.

1. The Melchizedek order is the more ancient of the two. The first occurrence in Scripture of the word "priest" is in connection with Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18).
2. Melchizedek was not only a Priest, but a King as well. He was first King of Righteousness (that being the meaning of his name), and *after that* King of Salem, which is King of Peace. This speaks clearly of the two leading aspects of the coming Kingdom of the Son, namely, Righteousness and Peace: — Righteousness first, and *after that* Peace, based upon, and the fruit of, established Righteousness. The attempts of the politicians and money powers of our day to establish peace, regardless of righteousness, provoke the wrath of God, and invite "sudden destruction," from which the false peace makers "shall not escape" (1 Thessalonians 5:3).
3. The priesthood of the family of Aaron was instituted for men in the flesh. Priests of that order were made according to the law of a carnal commandment (Hebrews 7:16), and they serve, not unto heavenly things, but unto the *example* and *shadow* of heavenly things. The Aaronic order was part of a system of types and shadows which passed away when Christ, Who is the Substance and Fulfillment of all types and shadows, came into the world, and fulfilled His mission there.
4. The Melchizedek order of priesthood is for those who are *of faith*, and especially for those who are walking and living in the energy of faith. The brief, but highly instructive, glimpse given of Melchizedek in Genesis 14, shows him as meeting Abram when he was returning, the victor in the energy of faith, from the slaughter of the Kings, as specially noted in Hebrews 7:1. The ministry of this Priest of the Most High God was confined to Abraham, the man of faith, whom he "blessed," and of whom he received tithes. This shows the superiority of Melchizedek to Abraham, who was the father of Aaron.

5. The chief duty of the Aaronic priests was to offer sacrifices, day by day, in a wearisome round of repetition, for the sins of the people. No sacrifices are mentioned in connection with Melchizedek. The Son of God was not saluted as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek until *after* He had offered Himself a Sacrifice for sin, and had been raised from the dead. Melchizedek, on the other hand, *brought forth* something — bread and wine. Christ will fulfill this type when He appears the second time, apart from sin, unto salvation.
6. Finally, in connection with Melchizedek, a special Name of God was revealed. He was the priest of the “MOST HIGH GOD, POSSESSOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.” This title is of special significance in connection with the main subject of Hebrews — the habitable earth to come. Although the heavens are at the present time occupied by “hosts of spiritual wickedness” (Ephesians 6:12), and the earth is in possessions of rebellious man, Satan being the “prince of this world,” nevertheless, God makes Himself known to the man of faith as the “Possessor of heaven and earth.” That title contains, moreover, a prophecy of the approaching day, when the Devil and his angels — the evil principalities and powers — shall be cast out of heaven (Revelation 12:9), and the Kingdom of God, and the authority of His Christ, shall be established on earth.

At that day it will be proclaimed with a “loud voice,”

“Now is come SALVATION, and STRENGTH, and the KINGDOM OF OUR GOD, and the AUTHORITY OF HIS CHRIST” (Revelation 12:10).

That will be the proclamation of the “so-great salvation which began to be spoken by the Lord”; the “eternal salvation,” whereof He became the Author to all who obey Him, having been saluted High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

The effect upon Abraham of the meeting with this priest of the Most High God was remarkable. It strengthened him in his character of true “Hebrew” to such an extent that he would not accept from the King of Sodom any reward whatever, from a thread to a shoelace. Having made the acquaintance of the priest of the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth, Abraham would not be enriched to the slightest extent out of the possessions of the King of Sodom. The men who went with him were free to take their portion; but Abram the Hebrew lifted up his hand to the Lord, the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth, and said to the King of Sodom, “I will not take from a thread even to a shoe latchet, I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich” (Genesis 14:22–23).

How important then is it that those who would be true Hebrews should know that Blessed One Whom God has, with the word of the oath, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek! Those who come to the knowledge of Christ in that office of Priest-King are rich in faith, and they will not accept, much less will they seek, favors from the rulers of this present evil age. By the word and the oath, wherewith He was made a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, they have a strong encouragement to lay hold of the hope set before them (Hebrews 6:17–18).

But this knowledge is not enjoyed by all Christians. Indeed, there are but few who have the faintest apprehension of it. This knowledge is not milk for babes, but solid food for those who are fully grown, who, by reason of habitual use, have their senses exercised to distinguish both good and evil. Only those whose faculties are so exercised can distinguish the real character of the so-called “good works,” in which the majority of Christians participate with the unregenerate, and which have for their object the betterment of this present evil age, which, no matter how much cultivation is bestowed upon it, brings forth thorns and briers whose end is to be burned.

This brings us to another characteristic exhortation. “Therefore, leaving the first principles of the doctrine (*discourse*, same word rendered in verse 11, *things to say*) of Christ, let us go on to full-growth”; (the word “perfection” here, and in other passages in Hebrews, is the same word rendered “of full age” in verse 14, signifying maturity, the adult state); “not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, etc. And this will we do if God permit” (Hebrews 6:1–3).

The things recited are “foundation” things. They are called the “first principles of the doctrine of Christ.” Certainly, everyone who has accepted those principles, having experienced repentance from dead works and faith towards God, is in Christ, and is eternally saved from condemnation. Those first principles, however, pertain to the state of spiritual infancy. Therefore, the exhortation is to “go on” from them “to full growth.”

A passage of similar import is found in Ephesians 4:8–16. Christ, having ascended up on high, gave gifts of ministry — namely, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers — for the equipment of the saints for the work of ministry, with the object of building up the Body of Christ, until we all come into the unity of the faith, and of the KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON OF GOD unto the FULL-GROWN MAN, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, to the end that WE BE NO LONGER CHILDREN. All true

ministry of Christ has this for its object, namely, the building up of the Body of Christ to its full dimensions and complete stature. This growth comes through "the knowledge of the Son of God." As we gain in that knowledge, we advance from spiritual childhood to spiritual maturity.

"And this will we do, if God permit."

The words "if God permit": are not a mere pious sentiment. The acquisition of the knowledge of the Son of God as High Priest of the coming good things carries with it such grave responsibilities, and involves the possessor thereof in such serious dangers, that God, Who knows our hearts, may not "permit" all who are on the foundation of the first principles of Christ to come to that knowledge. It is far better to enter the Kingdom as a "babe" in Christ than, having become enlightened as to the truth now under consideration, to be put to shame from before Him at His Coming. There is no blessedness in merely acquiring spiritual knowledge. There is no blessing pronounced on those who *know* these things. The Lord said not to His disciples "Happy are ye if ye know these things," but "IF ye know these things, happy are ye IF YE DO THEM" (John 13:17). Better far not to know them, than, knowing them, not to do them. "For if any man be a hearer of the word, and not a *doer*, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be BLESSED in HIS DEED (literally, *in his DOING*)" (James 1:23–25). And this is precisely what we find set forth in forcible language in verses 4–6 of Hebrews 6, which have given rise to so much discussion. This passage states that it is better not to know these things than, knowing them, to fail in the doing of them. The reason why there is a question if God will permit the immature saint to go on to full-growth in the doctrine of Christ, is that it is impossible for those once enlightened, and who have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the works of power of the age to come, if THEY should fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing that the apostasy of such as have obtained those great benefits would be equivalent to crucifying for themselves the Son of God, and exposing Him publicly.

What is called for at this point is the exercise of faith and obedience on the part of those who have the capacity to distinguish in spiritual things between "good" and "evil"; and specifically they are called upon to make a choice between the "good things" of the age to come, which God has announced to them, and the things of "this present *evil* age" (Galatians 1:4). God specifically described the Land of Promise as a "good land," using that word again and again. Moreover, the Israelites had the report of the spies that the land indeed was a land that flowed with milk and honey; and they "tasted" of the fruit of the land which the spies brought to them. They were, therefore, charged with the responsibility for their actions, being fully informed as to what they were doing. Although they had the Word of God concerning the "good land" confirmed by their own leaders, they turned back and sought to return to Egypt. In this they were not true "Hebrews"; for what characterizes true Hebrews is that their minds are set upon the country whereof God has spoken to them; and they are not mindful of the country from whence they came out, though opportunity be given them to return to it (Hebrews 11:14–16). It was after the Israelites had *heard* that they provoked God (Hebrews 3:16; 4:2). The penalty, therefore, is for those who have heard the report. Their children, who were unable to hear understandingly, and who had no voice in the decision because they were not of age, were eventually admitted into the land. God said of them, "But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised" (Numbers 14:13).

The application of the lesson is clear. Christ gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us out of this present *evil* age, according to the Will of God and our Father (Galatians 1:4). Moreover, He has testified of the world "that the works thereof are *evil*" (John 7:7). On the other hand, the coming age is an age of "good things" (Hebrews 9:11; 10:1). The Word of God concerning that age is a "good word." Those who "have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come" are in a position similar to that of the Israelites who had tasted the fruit of the good land, and had an opportunity to enter in and take possession of it. If such as have this opportunity presented to them turn back to the things of this present *evil* age, they incur a just and severe penalty. Since the Son of God died for their sins in order that He might deliver them out of this present *evil* age, according to the declared Will of the Father, those who turn back are said to crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and to expose Him publicly.

It is not necessary to our instruction as God's pilgrims that we should be able to settle the meaning of every detail of this weighty passage. We shall refer to the details presently; but first will look at the main points of the argument, and these are not difficult to grasp.

First, then, we learn that those who have gained the knowledge of the Son of God as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, and of the eternal salvation whereof He is the Author, are said to be "enlightened," to have "tasted the heavenly gift," etc. In other words, that knowledge is equivalent to, or includes, the five things mentioned in verses 4–5.

Second, we learn that, if those who come to that knowledge of the Son of God should apostatize, that is, should turn back from the things thus made known to them, and should become occupied with the seen things of this age, as the Israelites turned back from the land into which God promised and offered to bring them, they cannot be renewed unto a change of mind. That is to say, after coming to the knowledge of these things and turning from them, they cannot turn to them again. The Israelites tried to change their minds the next day after the provocation. "They rose up *early in the morning*, and got them up to the top of the mountain saying, Lo, we be here and will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised: for we have sinned." But it was too late for repentance (change of mind); and instead of gaining the Promised Land, they were smitten before their enemies (Numbers 14:39–45).

Looking now at the details of the passage, we would suggest the following comments upon the several items of verses 4–5.

"*Who were once enlightened*"; that is to say, who have received by the Word and Spirit the knowledge of God's eternal purpose in Christ, which is to be fulfilled in the age to come. That purpose lay eternally in the depths of the counsels of God. Its accomplishment involves the highest expression of His Wisdom and His Power. Those to whom it is made known are recipients of the highest privilege the Creator can bestow upon His creatures. It is a perilous thing to be entrusted with the knowledge of that greatest and most cherished purpose of God, which has to do with the glory of His Beloved Son. Those who attain knowledge of the coming era of His glory, and turn in their hearts to the things of the present era of His humiliation and rejection, do thereby incur the righteous judgment of being bound to their own choice.

"*Who have tasted of the heavenly gift*". We understand the heavenly gift to be "the Holy Ghost Who is GIVEN to us" (Romans 5:5). The Holy Spirit is the "promise of the Father" now bestowed upon the believers of this age (Acts 2:33; 15:8). In fulfillment of His appointed ministry, the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ, that is, of "the all things" given Him by the Father, and shows them unto the saints (John 16:13–15). Those who have experienced this ministry of the Spirit have tasted of the heavenly gift.

"*And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost.*" This seems to be something more than tasting of the heavenly gift. We take it as signifying what is spoken of in such Scriptures as Ephesians 1:14, which refers to those who have been sealed with that Holy Spirit of Promise, Who is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession; and Romans 8:23, which also speaks of those saints who have received the Spirit as the first-fruit, and hence are awaiting the "adoption." Those saints are no longer babes. They have been made "partakers of the Holy Ghost," having received, not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is of God, in order that they may *know the things that have been freely given them of God* (1 Corinthians 2:12). For such to turn to the things of the world is a very serious matter, for it is an insult to the Spirit of Grace, entailing much severer punishment than was awarded to those who set aside the law of Moses (Hebrews 10:29).

"*And tasted the good Word of God.*" The expression "Word of God" occurring here is not the same expression as that used in Chapter 4:12, but a different one, signifying, not the Word of God in its living energy and searching power, killing and making alive, but a good thing spoken to us by God. It signifies, doubtless, the good things connected with the age to come, the things which we have heard, the "excellent things" which the Wisdom of God speaks to the children concerning the blessing of those that keep His ways. Those who have come to the knowledge of the Son of God as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, have had a taste of the good Word of God pertaining to the era when He will exercise that Kingly Priesthood; and if they, after tasting that good word, turn back to the things of the present era, they bring serious consequences upon themselves.

"*And the works of power of the age to come.*" The coming age will be the day of Christ's power. This is said in the Psalm which promises Him the Priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. Some of these "works of power" have been wrought in this age. Hebrews 2 speaks of these as having been wrought by God for the purpose of "bearing witness" in confirmation of the so-great salvation reported to us, whereof a beginning was spoken by the Lord (Hebrews 2:3–4). The word rendered "miracle" in Hebrews 2:4, is the same word rendered "powers," literally, "works of power" in Hebrews 6:5. It should be noted that, in Hebrews 2:4, the works of power are associated with "gifts of the Holy Ghost," as in the passage we are now considering.

Whatever room there may be for questioning as to the full and exact significance of the several clauses of this passage (and certainly they are worthy of far more study than the present writer has given to them), there can be no doubt that they refer to the state of those who have come to the adult knowledge of the Son of God as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. And of such it is said with unmistakable clearness, that, if they fall away, *i.e.*, apostatize, or turn back, they cannot be renewed again unto repentance. They will be precisely in the case of the Israelites who sought repentance, saying, "We have sinned," after the provocation in the wilderness, and in the cause of Esau, who, after having despised and parted with his birthright, found no place of repentance or change of mind in Isaac, his father, though he sought it CAREFULLY and WITH TEARS (Hebrews 12:17).

Now, as to the reason given why those referred to in this passage cannot be renewed again unto repentance, it has been supposed that, because of the saying that "they crucify to themselves the Son of God," it could not apply to believers. But it seems to us that this saying could not apply to any *but* to believers. Unbelievers cannot do any act which would amount to crucifying to themselves the Son of God. They may reject the grace of God, continuing in their sins, refusing the pardon and life offered to them as the fruit of the Cross of Christ; but one and all are alike in that respect. They are dead in sins. Christ was crucified for them. They cannot crucify Him for themselves.

Furthermore, those who are said to crucify to themselves (or for themselves) the Son of God, are expressly declared to be those who apostatized after having been enlightened, after having taste do the heavenly gift, after having been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, etc. It is impossible to apply these statements to unbelievers, or to those who make merely a profession of Christianity. They describe believers and indeed a class of believers, who are specially "enlightened and are therefore no longer in the state of spiritual infancy.

Then again, only a believer can "fall away." The unbeliever has nothing of God from which he *can* fall away. The thought is similar to that expressed in Hebrews 2:1 — "Lest any of US (believers, heirs of salvation) should slip away."

And, finally, the passage speaks of the impossibility of *renewing* the persons referred to *again*. The unbeliever has not been "renewed" at all. Consequently, the passage could not apply to such.

In seeking the meaning of the words "crucifying for themselves," etc., it should be noted that there is no word in the original corresponding to the word "afresh" in the AV. The passage reads literally, "crucifying for themselves the Son of God, and exposing Him publicly." Those who, having come to the knowledge of the Son of God as the One saluted of God a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, that is, the high Priest of the *good things to come*, turn back from Him Whom they have thus known, do crucify Him for themselves, and expose Him publicly. This we must accept as a fact upon the Word of God, even though we fail to understand it. We should not be surprised at finding difficulties, for we are notified that the present subject includes things hard to be uttered (verse 11).

The Holy Spirit, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, is drawing a sharp contrast between the present evil age, in which the Son of God was publicly crucified, and the age of blessing to come, in which He will be publicly glorified. The Christians, who have come to the knowledge of *that* age, and who do not walk as belonging to it, but turn back, identifying and associating themselves with this present age, do thereby repeat for themselves that which characterizes this age, namely, the crucifying of the Son of God. In so doing, they not only bring sore punishment upon themselves, but they dishonor Him. Those true "Hebrews" of the present era, who like Enoch, Noah, and Abraham, *walk with God* as perfect strangers to the present age, awaiting the things not seen as yet, which God has reported to them, do thereby *condemn the world*. They take God's view of the One Whom the rulers of this age crucified. Those who, on the contrary, after being enlightened, walk according to the flesh, and according to the course of this world, make the Cross of Christ of none effect, utterly disregarding, as they do, that line of separation which the Cross make between the believer and the world. Christ gave Himself for their sins to the end that He might deliver them out of this present evil age, according to the Will of God the Father (Galatians 1:4). Therefore, those who, after being enlightened concerning the Will of the Father, "turn back," do thereby crucify to themselves the Son of God.

We understand the thought of this passage to be similar to that expressed in Philippians 3:18. The latter passage speaks of pressing toward the mark for attaining the PRIZE of the HIGH CALLING of God in Christ Jesus; and closes with a description of those, whose citizenship (political status) is in heaven, and who are AWAITING (the word so often used in Hebrews) the Lord Jesus Christ to come from heaven AS SAVIOR, to transform the bodies of their humiliation, and fashion them like unto the Body of HIS GLORY. In contrast with these, Paul speaks, even weeping, of another class of persons who are THE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST, whose end is destruction, whose god is the belly, (*i.e.*, the appetite that craves present gratification), the GLORY of whom is in their shame (*i.e.*, in the present state of mankind, which is that of degradation and humiliation); who mind (that is, have an inclination for) earthly things. It is clear that only Christians could be spoken of in these terms, for which reason Paul speaks of them even weeping. Particularly it is clear that the expression "enemies of the Cross of Christ," could be used only of Christians. They are not enemies of Christ, but are antagonistic to what His Cross has done for them as regards the world. They enjoy the friendship of the world, which is "enmity against God" (James 4:4). They glory in their shame, instead of in the Cross of Christ, whereby the world is crucified to the saint, and he to the world (Galatians 6:14). Peace and mercy are invoked by the apostle on those who "walk according to *this* rule," that is, the rule of separation from the present evil age (Galatians 6:16). But of the many who were walking otherwise, he declared, that they were enemies of the Cross, whose end is destruction (compare 2 Thessalonians 1:9; and Hebrews 10:39, reading "destruction" instead of "perdition").

The difference here pointed out (and where shall we look for one greater or more important), is precisely that between Paul and Demas. Paul's place in the world was a dungeon. There he could say with exultation, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have KEPT the faith," and his mind was set upon "that day" in which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give him the crown of righteousness, and not to him only, but unto all them also that LOVE HIS APPEARING." But "Demas," he says, "hath forsaken me, having LOVED THIS PRESENT AGE" (2 Timothy 4:7-10). This is the difference. It is a matter of the state of the heart. Which age do we love? This present age, or the age of His Appearing? Whichever it be, the clear lesson of the Scriptures we have examined is that we will have our portion in *the things of that age upon which we set our hearts*. Do we truly love His Appearing? Are we truly awaiting the Lord Jesus Christ to come out of heaven as Savior? Are we truly waiting for Him to appear the second time for salvation? If so, let us prove it by so walking in this present scene as to honor Him and condemn the world with all its doings; and may we submit ourselves to God in this matter, to be searched by His Word, in order that the thoughts and intents of our hearts may be shown to us.

CHAPTER 12

Two Kinds of Ground: That which Receiveth Blessing from God, And that which is Rejected. Jacob and Esau.

“For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned” (Hebrews 6:7–8).

The contrast between ground that produces herbage fit for the use of those by whom it is tilled, and ground that brings forth thorns and briers, is apparently given as an illustration of the two ages we have been discussing, namely, the present evil age, which is like the ground that bears thorns and briers, and the age to come, upon which the frequent rain of Heaven, the blessing of God, descends, and which brings forth fruit to those who till it.

The present age is “rejected,” being nigh unto a curse. The end of the things it produces is “to be burned” (literally “for burning”). The coming age, on the other hand, receives blessing from God. The mountains of Zion are in the habitable earth to come; and it there that God commandeth “the blessing,” which descends like the dew of Hermon (Psalm 133:3). This illustration, therefore, furnishes another reason why we should studiously withdraw our affections from the world, and the things that are in the world, and should set them upon the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the Right Hand of God, waiting until He shall appear “in glory” (Colossians 3:1–4).

This is entirely a Divine view and estimation of the present age and its things. That this age is “nigh to a curse,” and that the boasted products of its scientific civilization are “thorns and briers,” whose end is “for burning,” is a fact which few Christians believe, and fewer still act upon. Yet this is a fact which the Word of God sets forth with unusual fullness and clearness. “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire” (2 Thessalonians 1:7–8). “The harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are the angels. As, therefore, the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be AT THE END OF THIS AGE” (Matthew 13:40). “Whose fan is in His Hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:12). In view of these clear warnings of what will surely take place “at the end of the age,” it is sad indeed to see the time, energies, and money of Christians expended in raising a crop of thorns and briers to feed the flames of that day, when the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. For the fire test will be applied to the works of those who are on the true Foundation, as it is written: “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon THIS FOUNDATION, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man’s work shall be made manifest of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, ye shall RECEIVE A REWARD. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall RECEIVE A REWARD. If any man’s work SHALL BE BURNED, he shall SUFFER LOSS: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by (through) fire” (1 Corinthians 3:11–15).

The case of Lot illustrates this Scripture. Being a “righteous” man, he was identified, we may be sure, with all the commendable enterprises set on foot for the betterment of Sodom and its citizens. But whatever works he built, they were all consumed in the flames of judgment; and he himself was saved only as through fire.

It should not be overlooked that Lot was given a special warning and opportunity to get clear of Sodom. That warning and opportunity came when he was taken prisoner with the people of Sodom, and was rescued by Abraham. On their return, they were met by the King of Sodom, and also by Melchizedek, the King of Salem (Genesis 14:17–18). Then it was that Abraham refused to accept even a gift from the King of Sodom. Lot must have witnessed the incident, and must have understood the testimony of Abraham. Nevertheless, Lot parted company with Abraham, and returned to Sodom, perhaps deceiving himself with the thought of the many opportunities for “doing good” existing there; and the next reference to him states that “Lot sat in the gate of Sodom” (Genesis 19:1), that is to say, occupied an official post or honor and authority in the city.

So Lot stands as a type of the Christian who takes part in the affairs of the world, and attains distinction therein, but whose works are thorns and briers. Abraham, on the other hand, represents the ground that re-

ceives blessing from God; for it is written that Melchizedek “BLESSED him and said, BLESSED be Abram of the Most High God, Possessor of Heaven and earth” (Genesis 14:20). The circumstance that Melchizedek “blessed” Abraham is recited in Hebrews 7:1.

The bringing forth by the earth of thorns and briars, is not a normal thing. It is wholly abnormal, being the result of the curse which Adam, by his sin, brought upon the ground. Indeed, it is the thing which *especially bears witness* to the fact that a curse rests upon the ground. Therefore, we are confronted at this point with truth that is fundamental, truth that lies at the very bottom of the evil state of human society. When God set the earth in order for the occupation of mankind, He said, “Let the earth BRING FORTH grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind.” And God, after creating the man, put him in the garden to dress it and keep it. Thus, so long as creation was in its normal state, the earth brought forth herbs, meet for them by whom it was dressed. But when, by Adam, “sin entered the world” (Romans 5:12), God cursed the ground for his sake, and said, “Thorns also and thistles shall it BRING FORTH unto thee” (Genesis 3:17–18).

The fact, therefore, that the ground brings forth thorns and briars is a testimony that the man who dresses it is still under the dominion of sin and death. “Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth UNTO THEE,” that is, unto Adam, the natural man, now indwelt by sin. So long as the earth is possessed and occupied by the race of Adam, the natural man, it will bring forth thorns and briars. But when, in the age to come, creation shall be delivered from the *bondage* of corruption into the *liberty* of the GLORY of the children of God — those “born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” — then it will no longer bring forth thorns and briars, but will yield herbs meet for those by whom it is dressed.

The production of thorns and briars is, therefore, the characteristic of the natural man, and of this present age. Hence, when the Second Man, the Lord out of Heaven, came in the Body of His Flesh prepared for Him, wherein He offered Himself a Sacrifice for SIN, He was crowned with THORNS, signifying that He Himself bore the curse. Having borne the curse, He is qualified to deliver the purchased possession from the effects of the curse. In the age to come He will wear, not the crown of thorns, but the “many crowns” which show Him to be “the Blessed and only Potentate, the KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:12, 16; 1 Timothy 6:15). Therefore, the choice now offered to the saints of God is between the age in which their Lord and Savior was crowned with thorns, and that in which He will wear the many diadems.

The land of Canaan — the rest and the inheritance (Deuteronomy 12:9) promised by the Lord to the Israelites — is put before us as a type of the rest of God to come. God said of that land, “But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys and DRINKETH WATER of the RAIN of HEAVEN” (Deuteronomy 11:11). Thus it corresponds to the ground described in Hebrews 6:7, “which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it.” It also represents the land which “receiveth blessing from God,” for the passage in Deuteronomy continues: “A land which the Lord thy God careth for. The Eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year, even unto the end of the year” (Deuteronomy 11:12). The promise of *rain* as symbolizing blessing from God is also given in Deuteronomy 32:2: “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, My speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as showers upon the grass.” Also in Deuteronomy 33:28: “Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also His heavens shall drop down dew.”

The song of the vineyard in Isaiah 5 shows that, even under the best possible conditions, the natural man cannot bring forth fruit that is meet for God. Israel was a vineyard which the Lord Himself had planted, and which He tended. “For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts, is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah, His pleasant plant” (Isaiah 5:7). He chose for the site of His vineyard “a very fruitful hill, and He fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine press therein: and He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes” (verse 2). There was nothing more that He could have done for Israel; for He asks, “What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?” (verse 4). After showing them His mighty works in delivering them out of Egypt; after driving out their enemies from the Promised Land and planting them therein; after giving them the law, and the covenants, and the priesthood, and the sacrifices, and the promises; after sending His prophets, “rising up early and sending them,” to call them from their evil ways, what was there more that He could have done to His vineyard? We may take as a concise explanation of this parable the brief statement found in Hebrews 7:19, “For the law made nothing perfect,” literally, brought nothing to full-growth; or that in Romans 8:3–4, “For what the law COULD NOT DO, in that it was WEAK THROUGH (because of) THE FLESH, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh (in order), that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

The reason for the failure of Israel, even under the holy law of God, to produce the fruits of righteousness, is the condition of “the flesh.” It was because of the hopeless corruption of human nature that the Lord of the vineyard “looked for judgment, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry” (Isaiah

5:7).

Therefore, the Lord pronounced judgment, saying, "And now, go to; I will tell you what I will do to My vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor digged: but there shall come up BRIERS and THORNS; I will also command the clouds that they RAIN NO RAIN UPON IT" (Isaiah 5:5–6). This passage connects the song of the vineyard with the sixth of Hebrews. Moreover, the Lord Himself applied the song of the vineyard in Matthew 21:33–45. That Scripture contains the parable of the vineyard, and the Lord, in uttering that parable, uses almost the identical words of Isaiah 5 in describing the vineyard. The parable shows that the Lord's judgment on His vineyard was put into execution only after God had sent unto them His Son, saying, "They will reverence My Son"; but the husbandmen, when they saw Him, said, "This is the Heir; come, let us kill Him, and seize on His inheritance." And the parable also shows that the "inheritance" is the Kingdom of God; for the Lord said, "Therefore say I unto you, The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation BRINGING FORTH THE FRUITS THEREOF"

So Israel became, and still remains, as ground that is rejected, that is nigh to a curse, bringing forth thorns and briars, whose end is to be burned. The hedge has been broken down, and the children of Israel have been scattered among the nations of the earth, to take part in their unprofitable doings.

But deliverance from the curse is promised to them through the Son of God, coming to His vineyard, and submitting Himself to the wicked will of the husbandmen, and being Himself made a curse. In Isaiah 53, He is described as the Lamb brought to the slaughter, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and pouring out His Soul unto death. Then in Isaiah 55, is described the deliverance accomplished and through the Cross of the Redeemer, when "the mountains and the hills shall break forth — into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of THE THORN shall come up the fir tree, and instead of THE BRIER shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, and for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off" (Isaiah 5:12–13). That will be also a time of the rain coming down, as indicated by verse 10: "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater." This speaks of a land that receives blessing from God, drinking in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth, in place of thorns and briars, herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed.

The Epistle to the Hebrews gives the names of a number of persons who were true pilgrims, holding fast their confession to the end. In contrast with these, but one person is named. That unenviable prominence is given to Esau. His case, therefore, calls for special consideration. What is related of Esau in Hebrews is that he so lightly esteemed his birthright as to sell it for one morsel of food; and that afterwards, when he would have "inherited THE BLESSING, he was REJECTED: for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Hebrews 12:16–17).

Esau, therefore, is the Divinely chosen type of those who prefer the immediate gratification of the natural appetite to "the blessing" for which the heir must "wait." Hence, he became like the ground that receives no "blessing" from God; but is "rejected."

On the other hand, we read in Genesis 27 that Isaac, in blessing Jacob, supposing him to be Esau, said, "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath BLESSED: therefore, God give thee of the DEW OF HEAVEN, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine" (Genesis 27:27–28).

Believers are children of God, being "born of God" (John 1:12). They have therefore a *birthright*, as Esau had; but like Esau, they may hold their birthright in such light esteem as to forfeit it; and the way in which this great loss may be incurred — a loss which, when it takes place, is absolutely irretrievable — is by choosing in their hearts the things which the present age offers them for their immediate enjoyment, instead of the things of the age to come, of which they have heard through the Word of God, but have not seen as yet, and for which they must *wait*. Upon reading the incidents recorded in the Book of Genesis concerning Esau and Jacob, we should infer that, in respect of natural disposition or character, Esau was much to be preferred to his brother Jacob. But Jacob was the true sojourner and pilgrim. We see him journeying alone in the land promised to his fathers and to himself for an inheritance, and lying down to sleep with a stone for a pillow (Genesis 28:10–15). And there he sees the vision of a ladder set up on the earth, its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending. Thus is he marked as the heir of salvation, to whom the angels are sent forth to minister; and the Lord God of Abraham and of Isaac appears to him, and gives to him the land on which he lies, a lonely pilgrim. Moreover, God adds this gracious word: "And behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee until I HAVE DONE that which I have spoken to thee of."

Jacob's infirmities of character did not defeat the purpose of God; for the "God of Jacob" is the "God of all grace." So may the God of peace work in *us* that which is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory for ever.

We may follow Jacob in his pilgrimage and see the Hand of God dealing with him, often by means of sore affliction, but surely accomplishing thereby that which He had purposed. And so when Jacob, many years after, stands before Pharaoh, the ruler of the world, it is as a confessed pilgrim and the descendant of pilgrims; for this is his confession, "The days of the years of my PILGRIMAGE, are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage" (Genesis 47:9). Nevertheless, Jacob, though a confessed pilgrim on earth, took no blessing from Pharaoh. On the contrary, "Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh" (verse 10); "And without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better" (Hebrews 7:7).

And finally, it is recorded of Jacob, that he, "by faith, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff" (Hebrews 11:21). Thus Jacob was, at the very end, a worshipping pilgrim, for, even when he was dying, he still leaned upon the pilgrim's staff, worshipping God, and speaking of things not seen as yet.

Genesis 49 contains the last words of Jacob to his twelve sons. In one of the most beautiful, powerful, and sublime passages in all the Bible, he tells that which shall befall them in the last days. In it he speaks of the Shepherd and the Stone of Israel, of Shiloh, of the Scepter, and of the Lion of the tribe of Judah. In the very midst of this great prophecy he confesses himself a true pilgrim in these words: "I have WAITED FOR THY SALVATION, O Lord." That was what he had accomplished, "I have *waited*." It is like the confession of Paul, "I have kept the faith." God's grace had triumphed over the stubbornness of nature, and had fashioned even out of crafty Jacob, the supplanter, a true pilgrim; insomuch that from his lips, we get the first mention in all Scripture of the Salvation of God.

Surely, there is great encouragement here for the Lord's pilgrims.

CHAPTER 13

The Hope Set before Us. An Anchor of the Soul.

ALTHOUGH grave risk and responsibility are incurred by those Christians who become enlightened as to the things of the age to come, in which the Son of God shall appear in the character of Priest-King, the Apostle does not hesitate to encourage the saints to press on. He says, "But we are persuaded better things of you, beloved, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak" (Hebrews 6:9). Although he puts before them plainly and forcibly the grave consequences of departing from the living God after becoming enlightened as to His eternal purpose, he is persuaded better things of them. Of those saints he expects, not things that are connected with drawing back to destruction and loss, but things connected with pressing on to SALVATION. The recurrence of the word "salvation" at this point connects the passage with what precedes, namely, the "so great salvation" of Hebrews 2, and the "eternal salvation," whereof Christ became the Author to all that obey Him, spoken of in verse 10.

With this passage we may profitably compare what is said in Hebrews 10:26–29: "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth (*i.e.*, have become enlightened), there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (as the thorns and briers will be consumed by the flames). But though the Apostle thus speaks in the plainest terms of the consequences of willfully turning back, he says, "But we are not of those drawing back unto destruction, but of them who are OF FAITH TO THE SAVING OF THE SOUL" (Hebrews 10:39). The word "perdition" in the AV, should read "destruction." There is no perdition for the saint; but there may be "destruction" (which signifies great and irreparable loss), as the Scriptures already cited abundantly and clearly testify.

The words "of faith to saving the soul" in Hebrews 10:39, are of similar meaning to the words of Hebrews 6:9, "things connected with salvation." It is not *justifying* faith that is here spoken of, *i.e.*, believing unto *righteousness*, but believing unto *saving the soul*, which is a very different thing. (See Chapter 14.)

The reason why the Apostle took so hopeful a view of the prospects of those saints, and was persuaded better things of them, was that God would not be unrighteous to forget the work and labor of love which they had shown to His Name, in having served the saints, and in continuing so to do. This passage (Hebrews 6:9–10) shows clearly that the warnings of this Chapter are addressed to believers. It is simply inconceivable that it could be said of unconverted sinners that they showed a labor of love to the Lord's Name in ministering to His saints. Moreover, the passage speaks of a righteous *reward* of God for their work. The works of sinners are dead works for which there is no reward. The first of the foundation principles mentioned at the beginning of the Chapter is "repentance from dead works." It requires the Blood of Christ to purge the conscience *from dead works* to serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14).

Therefore, serving the saints is an acceptable ministry, since it testifies love to the Name of the Lord. But the Apostle desires *something more*, namely, that each one of them should show the same diligence to the full assurance of the hope *unto the end*. The "same diligence" seems to mean the same they had already shown in ministering to the saints. In order to insure fully the hope, the same diligence must be maintained to the end.

Another desire of the Spirit, speaking by the Apostle, is that the saints be not slothful, or sluggish, but be "imitators" of those who, by FAITH and LONG PATIENCE, inherit the promises. The word rendered "patience" in this verse and in verse 15, is not that occurring elsewhere in the Epistle, as in Hebrews 12:1, "run with patience," and which latter word means really "endurance." The word occurring in verses 12 and 15 of Hebrews 6 signifies long waiting for a postponed promise, as Jacob waited for God's Salvation, and as Abraham waited for the promised heir. In verse 15 the rendering of the same word is "after he had patiently endured." Literally, it reads, "and so, having had long patience, he received the promise."

The incident here called to mind is the strong encouragement God gave to Abraham in confirming His previously given word of promise by an oath. This oath of the Lord was given to Abraham after the testing of his faith in the matter of offering Isaac, of whom God had said, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." Then it was the Lord swore, saying, "By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast OBEYED MY VOICE" (Genesis 22:16–18).

This word, confirmed by an oath, had not to do with the inheritance of the land of Canaan, but with the multiplication of Abraham's seed as the stars of heaven, the possession by them of the gate of their enemies, and the blessing of all nations through them. It is asserted in Hebrews 6:15, that Abraham, after he had long patience, received this promise. Abraham saw no multiplication of Isaac's seed until Isaac was sixty years old. Isaac was forty when he married Rebekah (Genesis 25:20), and sixty when Esau and Jacob were born (Genesis 25:26). Consequently, Abraham's grandsons were about fifteen years old when he died (Genesis 25:7). He saw no further multiplication of his seed, so that, to the end of his life, he exercised patience in regard to this promise. The promise has not yet been fulfilled in its fullness; but the Word and Oath stand, and will be accomplished *in the age to come*. For, when God set Himself to the accomplishment of His eternal purpose in bringing many sons unto glory, "He took not hold of angels" for that purpose; but "He took hold of the seed of Abraham" (Hebrews 2:16); that is to say, of those who are "of faith," as it is written, "Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7). And again, "Therefore it (the promise) is OF FAITH, that it might be by grace; to the end of the promise might be sure to ALL THE SEED; not to that only which is of the law; but to that also which is OF THE FAITH of Abraham; who is the father of us all" (Romans 4:16).

Let it be noted, then, that the faith of Abraham exhibited in the incident recorded in Genesis 22, was the *obedience* of faith, as the Lord said, "Because thou hast obeyed My Voice." That is what gives it pertinence to the lesson enforced in Hebrews 6. This word and the oath of the Lord are the two immutable things whereby God has been pleased to show to the heirs of promise the unchangeableness of His counsel, to the end that we, who have fled to Him for refuge, according as it is written, "The God of Jacob is our Refuge" (Psalm 46:7), might have a strong consolation (encouragement) to lay hold upon the hope set before us.

Laying hold of the hope *set before* us is in contrast with turning *back* to the things of this age. The period of the fulfillment of all the promises that have been made to the heirs of promise, is the coming age. Christ made no unconditional promise to His disciples for the present age except that of tribulation. "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). Of course, the saints have many blessings and promises available at the present time, but none connected with, or proceeding from, the world. From that quarter they can count upon nothing with certainty but tribulation. We should not, however, faint in tribulation, but rather "glory" therein, because "tribulation worketh patience, and patience, experience, and experience, HOPE" (Romans 5:3-4). Therefore, in order that we may be stimulated to lay hold upon the hope set before us, we have the Word of God confirmed by an oath.

In seeking a more definite idea concerning the nature of this hope, help may be derived from the connection in which the same words, "set before," are used in Hebrews 12. There we read of "Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith, Who, for the joy *set before Him*, endured the Cross." The *joy set before Him*, which He will have in those whom He is not ashamed to call His "brethren," is closely connected with the *hope* that is set before them. This hope is likened unto an *anchoria*, a massive stone embedded firmly in the ground near the water's edge of a harbor, to which a line from a vessel might be fastened, so that the vessel might thereby be drawn to the shore when it could not beat its way in against wind or tide. Our hope enters into that within the veil, whither as Forerunner is for us entered Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. The hope we have is, therefore, connected directly with the Son of God in the character of High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. This brings before us once more the lesson that the knowledge of the Son of God in this character is that which distinguishes adult sons of God from babes, showing the great importance of laying hold of this knowledge.

There is an instructive parallel between the word and oath of God to Abraham, and the word and oath of God to the Son, in Psalm 110. The "word" is found in verse 1, "the Lord SAID unto my Lord"; and in oath in verse 4. "The Lord SWARE, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." That the parallel is intentional is evident from the fact that the oath to Abraham is mentioned in direct connection with that to the Son (*cf.* Hebrews 6:13 and 7:21); and in the same connection the meeting of Melchizedek with Abraham is described. Surely, that incident foreshadowed the coming meeting of the great Antitype of Melchizedek with the seed of Abraham who are overcomers by faith, teaching that the word of promise to Abraham, which God confirmed by an oath, will have its fulfillment in that One Whom God, by "the word of the oath" (Hebrews 7:28), made a Priest for evermore.

It must be remembered that, while Abraham did not have in his lifetime the fulfillment of the promise recorded in Genesis 22, which is the most extensive of all the promises, he *did* obtain the promised son, Isaac, through whom it, and all his other promises, were to have their fulfillment. The promises were all attached to Isaac. So with Abraham's spiritual seed, the heirs of salvation. They have not yet receive the fulfillment of the promise; but God has imparted to them the knowledge of the One in Whom all God's purposes are to be fulfilled. Every promise attaches to Christ, Who is now entered within the veil as the "Forerunner" for us. Therefore, our hope, which attaches to Him, enters into that within the veil. It attaches to that which is "sure and steadfast." That attachment *cannot* fail or become loose. Hence, we have simply to hold fast to the end.

Furthermore, in another aspect of the matter, Christ being Himself the Seed of Abraham, as it is written, "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to thy Seed, Which is Christ" (Galatians 3:16), we who are begotten again in Christ, are established in Him as the spiritual seed of Abraham, and therefore are heirs of the promises.

The doctrine of the Melchizedek Priesthood of the Son of God, which occupies the seventh Chapter of Hebrews, has been so often and so fully commented upon that we shall not dwell long upon it here. The main thing for us to notice is that the establishment of another Priest after a different order from that of Aaron, the Priest of the new order being established with an oath, and being the Antitype of the Priest-King of Salem, who was much greater than Abraham, marks a profound change in the dealings of God with His people. We are specially admonished at this point to "consider how great this man was unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils"; and it is also pointed out that Levi, the father of the Aaronic priests, in effect paid tithes to Melchizedek.

It follows from these considerations that the entire system connected with the Levitical priesthood, — the covenant, the law, the sacrifices, the ordinances, and the services, — was of necessity set aside and abolished when the Risen Son of God was saluted of God the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, Who was made High Priest, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. The Excellency of this High Priest is so incomparably greater than that of the Levitical order, that the system, whereof He is the Center, leaves no room whatever for any part of the old order. "The priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change of the law also" (verse 18), "For there is verily a disannulling of the *commandment* going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof; for the law brought nothing to full-growth" (Hebrews 7:18–19).

The *covenant* also was displaced, because Jesus became the Surety of a BETTER COVENANT; the new covenant being as much better than the old as the Priest made with the oath was better than those made without an oath (Hebrews 7:20–22).

The *sacrifices* also ceased, because such an High Priest as became us, Who was made higher than the heavens, needs not daily, as those high priests of the old order, to offer up sacrifice; for this He did once for all when He offered Himself (Hebrews 7:26–27).

Our hope, therefore, being attached firmly to the High Priest of the new and eternal order, entitles us to all the benefits of the new system. On the other hand, the relatively smaller benefits of the old system no longer exist; since that entire system has been abolished by Him Who established it. Its purpose was temporary, and has been attained. It was composed of "shadows," whereof the Substance, Christ, has now come. Jews may continue to observe the remnants of the old ordinances, and Christian denominations may devise forms of "worship" (so-called) in imitation thereof; but the system itself was, and "of necessity," utterly brought to an end by the Death and Resurrection of Christ.

Now, the great point involved in this part of the Epistle, and the point which is of chief importance for our purposes, is the effect which the new system has in the *perfecting*, or *maturing* of the sons of God. This is the practical end in view, as is evident from the fact that the entire section begins with the exhortation, "Let us go on to perfection" (Hebrews 6:1); and the teaching of the section proves that, in order to go on to perfection (full-growth), it is necessary to attain to knowledge of the Son of God as High Priest of the New Order. In pursuance of this practical point, the Apostle asks, "If, therefore, PERFECTION were (attainable) by the Levitical priesthood, what further need were there that another (literally, a *different*) Priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek?" (Hebrews 7:11). It appears by this question that the PERFECTING OF THE SONS OF GOD was the practical object in view in consecrating the Son of God as the High Priest of a new and unchangeable order. This links the subject of the Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ with the purpose of the Father, stated in Chapter 2, namely, "bringing many sons unto glory."

Again, it is distinctly stated that there has been "a disannulling of the commandment going before," that is the fleshly commandment, according to which the Levitical priesthood had been established, which disannulment was decreed on account of "the weakness and unprofitableness thereof"; and the weakness and unprofitableness of that law consisted in this, that it "made nothing perfect." On this account, and on no other, so far as stated in the text, the old system of the Levitical Priesthood was abolished. God must have, for the accomplishment of His great purpose, a Priest able to save *to the uttermost*. Therefore, the old priesthood, and everything connected with it, had to be displaced, and superseded by a different order, and an order capable of bringing the sons of God to full-growth.

The conclusion, then, of the whole matter is that the inauguration of the new system, *i.e.*, the new priesthood, the new covenant, and the new manner of worship in the true Sanctuary, had for its grand object, the perfecting of the many sons whom God is bringing unto glory. Surely, the knowledge of this truth will animate us with a fixed determination to "go on to perfection."

How, then, is this purpose furthered by the great change here described? Two things that contribute to

this end are mentioned, *first*, the bringing in of a BETTER HOPE (Hebrews 7:19), and *second*, the INTERCESSION of the High Priest (Hebrews 7:25). As to the “better hope,” we have nothing to add at this point, having fully set forth our understanding on that subject. We would, however, for the sake of clearness, give the reader a literal rendering of verses 18–19, the meaning whereof is obscured by the AV rendering.

“For there is a disannulling of the commandment going before, because of its weakness and unprofitableness (for the law brought nothing to maturity); and (there is also) the introduction of a better hope by which we draw near unto God.” In other words, two things are said to have taken place; *first*, the disannulling of the old commandment, and, *second*, the introduction of a better hope.

The intercession of the great High Priest, Who ever liveth, is a mighty factor in the perfecting of the many sons. He is “able.” All the necessary power is lodged in Him; and He never ceases putting it forth for the accomplishment of the Father’s purpose. He is “merciful,” He is “faithful,” He is “able.” What more do we require in order to confirm our confidence in Him, and to encourage us to maintain it “unto the end”? He is able to save them completely — that is, to bring them into the right state for participating in the salvation whereof this Epistle treats — who approach to God by Him. The old priesthood availed nothing to that end. By means thereof the purpose of the Father could not be carried out. Therefore the Son of God came into the world to do the Will of His Father. On earth He accomplished that Will by suffering and *dying* in the Body prepared for Him, as a Sacrifice for sin; and now He ever *lives* to complete the purpose of the Father by interceding for those who are the called according to His purpose. “For such an High Priest became us, Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens” (Hebrews 7:26).

CHAPTER 14

The Minister of the True Tabernacle. The Worship of God's Pilgrims.

AT the beginning of Hebrews 8, the writer of the Epistle sets forth "the sum," that is to say, the chief or capital point, of the things whereof he has spoken. That chief or essential matter is that "we have such an High Priest, Who is set on the Right Hand of the Throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the Sanctuary, and of the true Tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man."

The language here used is such as to call very special attention to the truth set forth. At this point *everything* pertaining to the service and worship of God is transferred from earth to heaven, from the tabernacle which man pitched by the Lord's command, to the true Tabernacle which the Lord Himself pitched; from the holy places made with hands, which were but the figures of the true, into heaven itself. Moreover, the service of God is taken out of the hands of an order of priests composed of men in the flesh, and placed in the hands of the risen Son of God, Who has obtained a ministry as much more excellent than that of the old order of priests, as the covenant, whereof He is the Mediator, is better than the old covenant, and the promises on which it is based are better than the old promises (Hebrews 8:5-6).

The previous portions of the Epistle had to do specially with the trials, dangers, and difficulties besetting the *path* of the pilgrims, on which account stress is laid upon the prospect before them in the Kingdom of God that is to be established in the age to come. The present portion of the Epistle (Hebrews 8:1-10:25, inclusive), has to do with the *worship* of God's pilgrims, on which account prominence is given to the present ministry of the Son of God, now appearing in the Presence of God for us, and to the One Sacrifice Which He, when on earth, offered for sin; in virtue of which we may boldly draw near to God. Those two topics, the present ministry of Christ on high, and the One Sacrifice offered by Him on earth, are kept constantly before us in this section of the Epistle.

The matter of worship is one of great practical importance to God's pilgrims, and has much to do with the perfecting of the sons whom He is bringing unto glory. The leading characteristics of the life of the true Hebrew are symbolized by two objects, the *tent* and the *altar*. We have been thus far occupied mainly with that which pertains to the tent, that is to say, with that which marks out the true Hebrew as a sojourner in the earth. We shall now give our attention briefly to that which pertains to the altar. We shall not dwell upon this subject at great length, for the reason that the nature of true worship, as taught in this Epistle, has been explained in many excellent treatises. We, however, are exploring this portion of the Word of God with the special object of noting the bearing it has upon the revealed purpose of God with respect to those whom He has, in love, predestinated to the position of sons unto Himself by Christ Jesus.

The services of God's priests of the Levitical order were available to all His people, and some of those services, such as the "continual burnt offering" offered day by day (Numbers 28:3-8), were of general application and efficacy for all the people, being a continual daily reminder to God, morning and evening, of the true Burnt Offering. This is true also of the service of the high priest on the great Day of Atonement, when the sin offering for the whole congregation was slain according to the solemn rites appointed by God, and its blood was taken into the Holy of Holies by the high priest (Leviticus 16). The service of the day of Atonement is the type that has its special fulfillment in the present ministry of Christ in the heavens, as very clearly appears from the text of this portion of Hebrews (Hebrews 8:1; 10:25). It was expressly commanded that "there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he (the high priest) goeth in to make atonement in the holy place *until he come out*" (Leviticus 16:17). The congregation awaited the reappearance of their high priest. Thus there was enacted once each year a scene typical of what is set forth in Hebrews 9:24-28). Christ appeared once in the end of the age (preceding this), to put away sin by the Sacrifice of Himself as the Sin Offering of the Atonement for the whole congregation. Then He entered, by His own Blood, into the holy place (heaven itself), now to appear in the Presence of God for us; and He will presently come forth to those in the outer court who wait for Him for Salvation.

But while the services of the priesthood were *available* for all, they were *profitable* mainly to those who approached the tabernacle to avail themselves thereof. The law contemplated voluntary, individual offerings. "If any man of you bring an offering unto the Lord" (Leviticus 1:2, etc.). "And when any *will offer*," *i.e.*, offers of his own will, "a meat offering unto the Lord...he shall bring it to Aaron's sons, the priests" (Leviticus 2:1-2). All the five offerings described in detail in the opening chapters of Leviticus (the whole burnt offering, the meat offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering), were to be made by individuals. The priest acted only in an official capacity, to present to God, in the prescribed manner, the offerings voluntarily made by the people. Unless the people brought offerings there would be nothing for

the priests to present on their behalf to God.

Therefore, at the outset of this part of the Epistle it is written: "For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this Man have somewhat to offer." The saints of this dispensation have not to offer the blood of animals, for the Blood of Christ has been offered by Himself (Hebrews 9:11–14), and this is effective to purge our consciences from *dead* works to serve the *living* God. But there remains for us also a "continual" offering, to be offered "day by day"; as it is written, "By Him, therefore, let us offer the SACRIFICE OF PRAISE to GOD CONTINUALLY, giving thanks to (literally, *confessing to*) His Name" (Hebrews 13:15). Surely, in respect of worship, the saints of this era, who have access to God through Jesus Christ, the great High Priest, and the Mediator of the new covenant, should not fall below the standard set for the Israelites. They offered every day, morning and evening, the memorial lamb, besides all the voluntary offerings. They were taught scrupulously to present to God of the best that He had given them. For an Israelite to appear before God with empty hands would be to say that God had not blessed him. Surely then, it is for us to fill the Hands of our High Priest with sacrifices of praise continually, presenting to God thanksgiving for the unspeakable Gift of His love to us.

Our sacrifices are to be offered "by Him," "confessing to His Name." This admonishes us of a fact that is commonly lost sight of, namely, that men can approach God only through a priest duly appointed for that purpose by God Himself. Although the saints of God on earth have received a new birth from God, the washing of regeneration, nevertheless they have sin in them, and are occupying the mortal (death doomed) bodies of their humiliation. Therefore they may approach God only through the High Priest, the Minister of the Sanctuary and of the true Tabernacle. "For THROUGH HIM we both have access by one Spirit to the Father" (Ephesians 2:18). Christ said, "I am the Way, no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). So also it is written in Hebrews, "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the Blood of Jesus, by a new and living way" (Hebrews 10:19–20); and again, "By Him let us offer continually" (Hebrews 13:15).

Unquestionably, this command is intended to be carried out just as literally as the similar commands given to the Israelite. It cost the latter time and trouble to procure his offering and present it at the door of the tabernacle. So, if we are faithful in regard to our sacrifices, it will be at the expense of time and diligence. God was not honored by, nor would He accept, anything but the very best of that with which He had enriched His people; and our offerings to Him, to be acceptable, should be of the very best of our time, especially the early hours of the day, and of the most excellent of our praises.

If one is poor in his knowledge and appreciation of the riches that are his in Christ, his offering of praise will be correspondingly meager. But the more he possesses of "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ," the richer will be his offering. Therefore, poverty in the sacrifices of thanksgiving is due to lack of diligence in reading and meditating in the Word, by which comes "the knowledge of the Son of God" (Ephesians 4:13).

"Confessing to His Name," or offering praise or prayer in His Name, does not mean using His Name as a closing formula. His Name stands for Himself, and for His relations to God and to men. To offer in His Name is to present our offering to God in all the merit of His Person, and of the work whereby He glorified God in the earth. He Himself, therefore, should form the very Substance of our praises, for in praising God for Christ, we praise Him for all. In Christ all fullness dwells, and He is all and in all. May we, then, be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith. If He dwells in our hearts, then the praises of our hearts will be unto God a sweet savor of Christ. So let us give thanks "always for all things unto God and the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20).

Mention is made in Hebrews, and in other Scriptures, of other sacrifices which are acceptable and well-pleasing to God. "But to do good, and to communicate (or distribute to other saints of what we have), forget not. For with SUCH SACRIFICES God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:16). This applies to material and also to spiritual things.

The essence of love is the giving or sacrificing of oneself. In this the children of God are bidden to be "imitators of God." "Be ye, therefore, followers (imitators) of God as beloved children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us and given Himself for us, AN OFFERING AND SACRIFICE TO GOD for a sweet smelling savor" (Ephesians 5:1–2). The reference here is to those offerings which were known as "sweet savor offerings," namely, the whole burnt offering, the meat offering, and the peace offering. In like manner the saints are called upon to offer themselves for others by walking towards them in love.

In regard to this matter of doing good and communicating, viewing it as a sweet savor offering to God, when done in the Name of Christ, Paul highly commends the saints at Philippi, saying, "I can do all things through Christ, Who strengthens me. Notwithstanding ye have done well that ye did COMMUNICATE with my affliction" and he tells them that "no church communicated unto me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire

a gift, but I desire FRUIT THAT MAY ABOUND TO YOUR ACCOUNT. But I have all things, and abound; I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, AN ODOR OF A SWEET SMELL, A SACRIFICE ACCEPTABLE, WELL-PLEASING TO GOD" (Philippians 4:14–18).

These Scriptures instruct us clearly as to the sacrifices which are acceptable and well-pleasing to God from His pilgrims of this era. Therefore, among the exhortations with which this section of Hebrews closes occurs the following: "And let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24).

That exhortation is preceded by another, to which the chief prominence is given in this portion of the Epistle, namely:

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the Blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having a High Priest over the house of God, LET US DRAW NEAR" (Hebrews 10:19–22).

This drawing near, or *approaching* to God, is the act of worship in spirit and truth. It is essential to the character of God's pilgrims. They approached Him by means of a sacrifice, offered in faith. The Perfect Sacrifice has now been offered for us. Because of the Blood of Jesus we may have "boldness to enter the holiest." We approach by the new and living way that has been consecrated "FOR US." Therefore, and because we have such an High Priest over the House of God, our approach should be "in the full assurance of faith."

Availing ourselves of the privilege of worship has much to do with securing the great salvation spoken of in Hebrews. Our High Priest is able to save to the uttermost them that *approach to God* (as worshipers) *by Him*. Therefore, it is written: "Having a High Priest over the House of God, *let us approach* in full assurance of faith," that is to say, believing God implicitly as to the access we have through Christ, as to the value of His Blood, and as to His present ministry before God for us, which are unseen things, that exist only for *faith*. Point is given to this lesson in the next Chapter, where it is brought to mind in regard to Enoch that, before his translation, he had witness borne him that he had been *well-pleasing to God* (Hebrews 11:5). From this it is deduced that he must have exercised faith towards God, for "without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he who APPROACHES TO GOD must believe that HE IS (exists as a living God), and is a Rewarder of them that seek Him out" (Hebrews 11:6, *Greek*). This proves also that the manner in which Enoch approached God in faith, and thus found favor with Him, was in the appointed way, by means of a sacrifice, as did Abel, Noah, Abraham, and the other "Hebrews."

This lesson is of the utmost importance. According to the Word of God, man is a sinner and justly under the condemnation of death. His hope is in a God Who raises the dead, and through a Sacrifice which fully pays the penalty of his sin. None but God Himself could supply a Sacrifice adequate to discharge that penalty. Hence, He sent forth His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, to be a Sacrifice for sin. The One Sacrifice, offered by Jesus Christ once for all, is the heart of the work of redemption; and believing God as to is absolutely essential to acceptance with Him. Therefore, when the man of faith of old approached God with an innocent victim, and sacrificed it before the Lord, that man confessed himself a sinner, deserving the death suffered by the victim; and he also confessed his faith in God as the Author of a way of redemption for the death deserving sinner. To us, the meaning of those oft-repeated sacrifices, which could never take away sins, or make the "approachers" perfect (Hebrews 9:9; 10:1, 4), has been made plain. By the Will of God we have been sanctified through the offering of the Body of Jesus Christ once for all (Hebrews 10:10). Therefore, we ought continually to approach, in full assurance of faith, availing ourselves of the powerful ministry of our Great High Priest, in order that thereby the purpose of the Father may be accomplished in us.

CHAPTER 15

Sinning Willfully. The Discipline of the Sons of God. The Cloud of Witnesses, and the Easily Besetting Sin.

THE passage beginning in Hebrews 10:26, contains warnings similar to those of Chapter 6, which have been already referred to. There are, however, some further comments that may be made to the profit of the reader.

“For if we sin willfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:26–27).

This passage further declares the risk we incur “after we have received the knowledge of the truth.” The penalty described in this passage is that for sinning “willfully.” This brings to view an important distinction which the law of God made between what were called “sins of ignorance” (Leviticus 4:2, 13, 22, 27, etc.) and “presumptuous sins.” An instance of the latter is given in Numbers 15. Sins of ignorance or errors are described in verses 22–29; and for sins of this class sacrifices were provided. “And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that SINNETH IGNORANTLY, when he sinneth by ignorance before the Lord, to make an atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him” (verse 28). “But the soul that doeth PRESUMPTUOUSLY (or highhandedly), whether he be born in the land or a stranger, the same REPROACHETH THE LORD, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because He hath despised the Word of the Lord, and hath broken His commandment, that soul shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him” (Hebrews 10:30–31).

Then is related, as an instance of presumptuous sin, the case of the man who violated the Sabbath, and was stoned to death.

This distinction is observed in the Epistle to the Hebrews. At Chapter 9:7 is a reference to the atonement which the priest made for the “errors,” literally, the “sins of ignorance,” of the people. The passage quoted above from the tenth Chapter of Hebrews brings to mind that, for a *willful* sin by one of God’s people, there was no sacrifice provided, but instead, there was a certain expectation of judgment, namely, the cutting off of that soul.

The reason for the severity of the punishment prescribed for presumptuous, or high-handed sins, was that he who committed such a sin had reproached the Lord, despised His Word, and broken His commandment.

A sin of this nature, committed by one who has “received the knowledge of the truth,” is a yet more serious matter, and deserving of sorer punishment; for such a one has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant wherewith He was sanctified an unholy thing, and has done despite to (insulted) the Spirit of Grace.

The Apostle is certainly speaking here of sins committed by the people of God; for, in support of the warning, he quotes the Scripture, “The Lord shall judge HIS PEOPLE” (Hebrews 10:30).

We understand that sins of the kind here spoken of are what the Apostle John refers to in the passage, “If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He (God) shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. THERE IS A SIN UNTO DEATH: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin. And there is a sin not unto death” (1 John 5:16–17). The “death” here spoken of is physical death, being “cut off” — not eternal death or perdition (compare Romans 8:13). The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was of the kind referred to as a “sin unto death.” The Apostle Peter defined their offence as lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3–4).

Manifestly, the sins here contemplated, and for which so severe a penalty is awarded, are of a very grievous nature, such as the deliberate and intentional defiance of God by one who knows Him, has experienced His kindness and redeeming love, and who knows His commandments. The reference to the “judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries,” that is, those who high-handedly withstand God, carries us to the rebellion of Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, who were priests of the Lord. Of the judgment passed upon them it is recorded that “there went out FIRE from the Lord and DEVoured them,

and they died before the Lord" (Leviticus 10:1–2).

In every one of the examples given us of the offenses that are visited by an irrevocable judgment, cutting off the soul from the blessing and inheritance promised to the people of God, there was, on the part of the one thus punished, a conscious, intelligent choice made, and that choice was made by one who knew the will and purpose of God, and knowing it, deliberately made choice of that which was contrary thereto. Such was the case of Esau, and that of the Israelites in the day of the trial of their faith in the wilderness; and so it was with Lot, and with Demas. The offense committed was willful and flagrant disobedience, back of which was disbelief of God's Word.

On the other hand, we have for our encouragement the record of the grace of God to David, after an act of great moral wickedness, and to Peter, after the denial of his Lord; and we ourselves have access to the throne where that grace is dispensed to all who seek it there. Wherefore, let us not be downcast or discouraged because of our past failures and present infirmities. Doubtless, the great Opposer of the purpose of God delights to plunge the children of God into despair concerning their prospects for the age to come, and to make them think they have been irrevocably cut off. The very circumstances which cause depression of our spirits may be in reality the evidences of the discipline of the Father, whereof *all sons* are partakers. Therefore, a most important exhortation is given us in Hebrews 12, not to forget that whom the Lord *loveth* He chasteneth, and scourgeth *every son* whom He receiveth. If we are enduring discipline, that should not tend to discourage us, but quite the contrary, for it is a clear proof that God is dealing with us as with sons; for what son is there whom the Father chasteneth not?¹

For those who endure trial, affliction, and distress, the Word of God abounds in comfort. Their part is to recognize and to despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor to faint when rebuked of Him. For if, when the fathers of our *flesh* corrected us we gave *them* reverence, shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of *spirits*, and live? Our Father knows that no chastening at the time seems a matter of joy, but rather of grief. Nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been exercised by it. It is by means of chastening that the soil of our hearts is prepared, that it may bring forth fruits meet for those by whom it is dressed.

Wherefore, being thus instructed by the Word of God as to the real significance of trials and sufferings, let us not be discouraged. Lift up the hands that hang down, and the enfeebled knees, and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned aside; for God's will is, not that it be turned aside, but rather that it may be healed.

The test or trial of faith is to be expected by the children of God, and they should not wish to avoid it; for the trial of their faith is more precious to God than that of gold which perishes (1 Peter 1:6). Therefore, they should greatly rejoice in the "living hope" of "the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time," even though at present they be in heaviness through manifold trials (verses 3–6). The object is that the faith, when tested, may be found unto praise, and honor, and GLORY, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

The saints have one great, unailing, and all-sufficient Resource in the time of affliction. Therefore, in Hebrews 12, they are exhorted to "look away unto Jesus, the Leader and the Finisher of faith." In order to run with *endurance* the race set before them, they must be like Moses, who *endured* as seeing, that is, just as if he actually saw, Him Who is invisible. Thus does faith always, in the testing time, prove that it *is* faith, by resting upon that which is "not seen."

In like manner, the Apostle Peter, in the passage referred to above (which may be profitably studied in connection with Hebrews), after referring to the reward of tested faith at the appearing of Jesus Christ, adds, "Whom having NOT SEEN ye love; in Whom, though now ye see Him not, yet BELIEVING YE REJOICE, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, the SALVATION OF YOUR SOULS" (1 Peter 1:8–9).

We would note again that the end in view, in the perfecting of the sons of God through trials and afflictions, is the saving of their SOULS, whereof we purpose to speak later on. But at present it is the testing of faith that we are considering, and in concluding this subject we would say that since the saints of God know not when nor how the test will come, it is above all things important to be prepared for it. Among the lessons taught in Hebrews, one of the clearest is this, that the way to insure preparation for the "day of temptation in the wilderness" is *first*, to pay constant and earnest heed to the *things that we have heard*, which are *things not*

1 We introduce at this point the comments we wish to make on Chapter 12, passing over for the present the concluding verses of Chapter 10 and the whole of Chapter 11. We return to this section in our next chapter.

seen (for "faith comes by HEARING," and is the conviction of THINGS NOT SEEN"); and, *second*, to "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus," even looking away from ourselves and from the seen things unto Him, from Whom our faith originated, and by Whom alone it can be finished. Thus may we be strengthened in faith to meet the trial when it comes.

The subject of the race which the saint is called upon to run is introduced by words which are very familiar, but perhaps not generally understood. "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

The "great cloud of witnesses" is often taken to mean the exemplars of persevering faith named in the preceding Chapter, as if they were viewing or witnessing, as spectators, the race we were running. But careful attention to the text shows that this is not the sense of the passage at all. There is no warrant for supposing that the departed saints are occupied as spectators of our course on earth; nor are we to be spurred with the thought of acquitting ourselves well in their sight. Such a thought is quite repugnant to the teaching of Scripture. The departed saints are not the cloud of encompassing witnesses. In fact they do not encompass us at all. The sense of the word "witnesses" is to be learned from the use of the same word in Chapter 11. Unfortunately, the presence of that word in Chapter 11 is concealed by the rendering of the AV. Hence the erroneous inference as to the meaning of Chapter 12:1. Chapter 11:2 reads literally: "For by it (faith) witness was borne to the elders," that is, borne from God; and the incidents of the entire Chapter illustrate this statement. By faith witness was borne to Abel as being righteous, *God bearing witness to his gifts* (verse 4). By faith witness was borne to Enoch that he was well-pleasing to God (verse 5).

The "witness," then, is from God; and we also are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses from God, for the support and assurance of our faith. We take it that the reference is to Hebrews 2:3-4, which mentions the witnesses that have been borne to us, regarding the great salvation before us, which is the goal of the race. Of this salvation the Lord Himself, Who is the "faithful and true witness," began to speak. It has been confirmed to us by those, His chosen "witnesses" (Acts 1:8; 2:32; 10:39), who heard Him, "God also BEARING WITNESS, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own Will." This we take to be the "cloud of witnesses" with which God has encompassed us, and which testify to us that we should lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily besets us, and look away from all seen things unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith.

It is easy to understand what is meant by laying aside every weight. Whatever adds to the difficulty of our progress towards the better country we are seeking is a "weight," and should be laid aside. But the expression "and the sin which doth so easily beset us" is not so readily understood. The common phrase "besetting sin," signifying some special sin to which one is disposed, which may be one thing in the case of one person, and another in the case of another, does not correctly represent the sense of this passage. The word rendered "easily beset" furnishes the clue to the meaning. The idea expressed by this verb is that of something which surrounds and clings to the person, as a close-fitting mantle, and impedes the freedom of motion of the wearer. Therefore it should be *laid aside*. This involves a struggle, since the nature of sin is to cling to us. The words of verse 4, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin," indicate the effort required to thrust aside the impediment of sin which presses close upon us.

Sin is our environment. It easily surrounds us, urging its things upon us. They are deceitful things, having a false attractiveness, and appearance of harmlessness. The attractions that surround the would-be pilgrim, and which he must resolutely thrust aside if he would press forward to the country whereof he has heard, often wear the guise of innocence. It is easy to persuade oneself, for alas! Thousands of Christians have done and are doing so, that these pleasant things have been put here for our immediate enjoyment. And so they become hardened to the Voice of God *by the deceitfulness of sin*. This is the reason for the warning, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any(one) of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God, but exhort one another daily (literally, encourage yourselves every day) while (so long as) it is called "Today," lest any(one) of you be HARDENED THROUGH THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN" (Hebrews 3:12-13).

Nothing is plainer than the commandment, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of THE FATHER is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of THE FATHER, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that DOETH THE WILL OF GOD abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17). These words are addressed to the little children, especially for those at the time of the end, for the next words are, "Little children, it is the last time."

This, then, is the choice set before the children of God, namely, a choice between the Father and the world. "By one man sin entered the world," and sin has filled the world with its deceitful things, things which gratify the desires of the flesh (the natural heart) and of the eyes (which are always restlessly looking

for some new sights), and things which contribute to the vainglory of the life that now is. These things, however harmless they may seem to those who “judge by appearance,” are, according to God’s Word, not of the Father, but are of the sin-cursed world. And the world passes away, and the desire thereof — for when the world shall have been righteously judged none will desire it any more than Sodom was desired after God’s judgment fell upon it — but “HE THAT DOETH THE WILL OF GOD abideth for ever.”

The Son of God, in the hour of His rejection, said, as He stretched forth His Hand towards His disciples, “Behold My mother and My brethren. For whosoever shall DO THE WILL OF MY FATHER which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother” (Matthew 12:49–50).

These Scriptures show how very important it is that we should do the Will of God. Wherefore it is also written in the passage we are now considering, “Ye have need of ENDURANCE, that, AFTER YE HAVE DONE THE WILL OF GOD, ye might receive the promise” (Hebrews 10:36).

The case of Moses is cited to illustrate the lesson now before us. Egypt is the type given in Scripture of the world in its magnificence, vainglory, and pretentiousness. Moses was surrounded with the good things of Egypt. Its highest honors, choicest productions, and greatest riches were within his reach. The pleasures of Egypt encompassed and pressed upon him; and we should carefully note that these are expressly named “the pleasures of SIN” (Hebrews 11:25). That Scripture shows plainly that by “pleasures of SIN” are not meant merely or chiefly the things which are craved by vicious and depraved tastes. It means the choice and attractive things by which the world, which sin has invaded (Romans 5:12), rewards those who are born to eminence therein, or who attain it by their own efforts.

Moses made a deliberate choice, and committed himself to that choice for life. Being fully advised of what he was doing, he chose rather “to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” He estimated “the reproach of Christ (to be) greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.” In making this estimate he judged not by the appearance of things, but solely by the Word of God; and being convinced by God’s Word concerning the “things not seen,” he had respect “to the recompense of the reward.” So “by faith he forsook Egypt.” He laid aside the easily surrounding sin, and he braved also the wrath of the king. This was the endurance of faith. “For he endured as seeing Him Who is invisible.”

Therefore, in order that we too, though having in ourselves no powers wherewith to resist the pressure of the things that beset us, may be able to run *with endurance* the race that is set before us, let us consider well Him Who endured so great contradiction of sinners against Himself, to the end that we be not wearied, fainting in our souls¹ (Hebrews 12:3).

1 The word in the original is not “minds”, but “souls”, i.e. the natural life, the *psuche*.

CHAPTER 16

Faith to the Saving of the Soul

WE come now to the important words which bring the tenth Chapter of Hebrews to a close, and introduce the great theme of Chapter 11: "Now the just shall live by faith, but if he draw back MY SOUL shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them that draw back unto destruction, but (of them that are) of FAITH TO SAVING THE SOUL" (Hebrews 10:38–39).

The foregoing is a literal rendering of the original text; and we would at the outset call attention to several corrections that need to be made in the AV.

1. The words "any man" are introduced by the translators as the subject of the verb "draw back"; but they are wholly without warrant in the original. The antecedent subject is the "just man," who is to live by faith. The expression is the same that Paul used of himself in Galatians 2:20, "the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith of the Son of God." Jesus Christ is not only the Author, but also the Finisher of faith. As already seen it is only the believer, the man who has been justified by faith, that *can* "draw back." There is no question at all as to the correctness of the reading, "if he draw back." The drawing back to destruction is put in direct contrast with the living by faith, and *going on* to the saving of the soul. It is true that the believer cannot draw back from his standing in Christ. He cannot draw back from eternal life. But he can draw back from the pilgrim's place, and return to the world.
2. We have already seen that the word "perdition" should be "destruction." The difference is important. The people of God will surely suffer destruction if they draw back into the world. Because it is polluted, it will destroy them with a sore destruction (Micah 2:10); that is, will involve them in great and irreparable damage or loss. But they will never come into "perdition."
3. The words "of them that believe," should read "of faith." The original has not a verb "that believe," but a noun "of faith"; and that word "faith" is a most important one because it leads into the theme of Chapter 11, which is given to the people of God for the very purpose of instructing them as to the character or nature of that "faith" that is effectual to *saving of the soul*. The next words are "Now faith," (that is, the faith by which the soul is saved), "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence (or conviction) of things not seen." Then follow examples of those who lived, to the end of their days, according to that faith which is the substance (that which *stands under* and thus supports) things hoped for, and the conviction as to the reality of things heard of, but not seen.

So far as the present writer is aware, the subject of the salvation of the soul has not been satisfactorily treated in any of the books of teaching now in the hands of the people of God. The manner in which this expression is commonly used indicates that "*saving the soul*" is regarded as meaning the saving of the individual man from condemnation, that is to say as equivalent to the justification of the sinner, and the imparting of eternal life upon believing the Gospel of God. In other words, being "born again," and "saving the soul," are generally taken to be identical. But according to the Scripture, the two are very different. In every case where the salvation of the soul is mentioned it is distinctly referred to as something *future*, and as something *conditional upon the behavior of the individual himself*. Eternal life is the *gift* of God, freely bestowed on every believer in Christ. But *the saving of the soul* is distinctly set forth in many Scriptures, particularly in the words of the Lord Himself, not as a gift, but as a *reward* to be earned by diligence, steadfastness, and obedience to His commands.

The chief reason for the misconception that exists on this point is the failure to distinguish between *soul* and *spirit*, a distinction which is carefully made in the Scriptures, as we shall take pains to show. The matter is of such surpassing importance, and so great consequences hinge upon it, that we strongly urge our readers to pay the closest attention to the sayings of the Lord Jesus, and to the other Scriptures cited in this Chapter.

As an instance of the mention by our Lord of the saving and losing of the soul, we quote Matthew 16:25–27, calling attention to the fact that the word rendered "life" in verse 25, is the *same word* rendered "soul" in verse 26. "If any man *will* (is willing, that is, has finally resolved, to) come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whosoever *will* (is willing to) save his life (soul) shall lose it; and whosoever *will* (is willing to) lose his life (soul) for My sake shall find it. For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his soul? Or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works."

We see clearly from this Scripture that the saving or losing of the soul is a matter of the *will* or *choice* of the man himself; and this is the teaching also of every Scripture that deals with this subject. We see furthermore

also that the time when those who choose to lose their souls now for Christ's sake will gain their reward, that is, will find their souls again, is to be when the Son of Man shall come in the GLORY OF HIS FATHER, with HIS ANGELS. From this Scripture alone it is clear that by the salvation of the soul is not meant salvation from eternal condemnation. The salvation of the sinner from the wages of sin is not dependent upon denial of self, taking up his cross and following the Lord Jesus; but is the gift of God's grace, instantly and eternally granted the moment the sinner believes in the Crucified and Risen Savior. It is only a believer who can make the choice to deny himself, take up his cross, and steadfastly follow his Lord in the way He went. To them who thus follow unto the end, a "reward" is promised. That reward is the finding, in the age to come, of the "soul" they purposely "lost" in this age. It concerns us, therefore, to ascertain, as may be done by diligent and prayerful inquiry, what the Lord meant by a man's losing and saving his own soul. That is the salvation of which the Lord "began" to speak, and which has been "confirmed to us by those who heard Him," that is, by His apostles. Whatever may be embraced in the meaning of the words "saving the soul," it is at least clear that they do not refer to the justification of the sinner by God's grace through faith in Christ, but to something in the nature of a reward set before those who have been already justified. The "salvation of the soul" is not something received at the beginning of the Christian life on earth; but something to be gained at the end thereof.

That the "saving of the soul" is not the salvation of the sinner from eternal doom in the Lake of Fire, and that the *losing* of the soul is not the damnation of the sinner, is clear from the simple fact that the Lord promises a great reward to the man who *loses his soul* in this world. Therefore, losing the soul and eternal damnation are totally different things.

In the sayings of the Lord Jesus, to which we will refer, the *man* is distinguished from his *soul*, inasmuch that the soul is spoken of as a possession of the man, which he can keep or lose. Nevertheless, this distinction is practically obliterated, or at least ignored, in the theology of today. Indeed, there are those who expressly force the word "soul" to mean the man himself, wherever that word occurs in the Bible.

Another cause of the misconception referred to is (as it appears to us) the relatively little heed that is given in many quarters to the words spoken by the Lord Jesus Himself. There is no room for dispute or doubt as to the value of the words of the Lord according to His own estimate thereof. They are "spirit and life" (John 6:63). They are the very words His Father commanded Him to speak, and are what will judge those who receive them not (John 12:47-50). His Sayings are HIMSELF (John 8:25). The giving of His Father's words was the fulfillment of the purpose for which His Father sent Him into the world (John 17:8, 14). His disciples recognized Him as the One Who had "the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). *Keeping His words* is the test of love for Himself, and has the promise of a great reward. "If a man love Me, he will KEEP MY WORDS." "Because thou hast KEPT MY WORD OF MY PATIENCE" (John 14:23; Revelation 3:8, 10). Whereas, being ashamed of His words will be visited with disastrous consequences (Mark 8:38).

Notwithstanding these weighty and unmistakably plain utterances from the lips of the Lord Jesus Himself, it must be admitted that, in some of the teaching of today, the words of the Lord, recorded for us in the Gospels, are assigned to a place of *distinct inferiority*. In order to maintain certain dispensational views, it is necessary to relegate the ministry of Christ in the days of His Flesh to the "Jewish remnant, and to treat His utterances as having but a remote or indirect reference and application to *the members of His own Body, the Church*. One consequence of this teaching has been to foster a neglect of His words, and to render the hearts and consciences of many saints insensitive to the wholesome exhortations and warnings uttered by Him, which they are taught to regard as applicable only to an insignificant remnant of Israel. A further consequence has been to blind the minds of the saints to the transcendently important matter of the *salvation of their souls*. On the other hand, the study of the doctrinal Epistles has been exalted to the position of first importance, the very highest value being placed upon the ability to comprehend doctrinal points, and to state them with verbal precision according to accepted theological standards. Failure on these points has been, and is, severely visited; while failure in the weightier matters of the law of Christ — particularly in the matter of love for all the saints — has been viewed with indifference. Surely we should say "these things ought we to have done, and not have left the other undone."

What, then, is the "soul" of a man, concerning the salvation of which the Lord Himself made a BEGINNING of speaking? It is clear from the Scriptures that the "soul" is quite distinct from the "spirit"; and by attention to the teaching of the Word we may learn that the "soul" signifies the *natural life* of the man. This embraces all his own exclusive personal experiences, sensations, and emotions; and these in turn arise from his relations and associations with the *created things about him*, especially from his relations with his fellow human beings. It is distinctly the *self-life*, that is to say, the sum of every experience which pertains to the *man himself*, to his own *separate personality*, as distinguished from every other man. It embraces all his own distinct and personal desires, ambitions, gratifications, honors, and pleasures. It takes in all the plans and arrangements he devises to secure *his own* satisfaction, entertainment, enjoyment, and so forth. The instinctive longings of the soul are what impel men to pursue riches so ardently. For it is by means of money that the de-

sires of the *soul* may be gratified, so far as it is possible to procure gratification for them in this world. Wealth commands distinction, attention, worldly pleasures, and high social position, and by means of it may be procured nearly everything that *this world* can supply for the satisfaction of the *soul* of man. Hence, the Lord says, "Beware of covetousness," and His Apostle says, "Covetousness is idolatry."

Important instruction on this point is given by the Lord in Luke 12, in the parable of the rich man. He spoke this parable for the express purpose of enforcing the warning: — "Take heed, and beware of covetousness, for a man's SOUL consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (verse 15). Then He tells of the rich man, whose ground brought forth plentifully, insomuch that he had not room enough to store his fruits. Therefore, the man laid his plans for *his own* advantage, that is for his SOUL. He said, "I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and all my goods. And I will say to MY SOUL, SOUL, thou hast much goods, laid up for many years; take THINE EASE, EAT, DRINK, and BE MERRY. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy SOUL shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

This parable gives a clear idea of what the soul of man is; and it teaches plainly that the loss of the soul is *the separation thereof from the things capable of affording satisfaction to it*. In examining this important subject of the SALVATION OF THE SOUL, we would begin with the first reference to the soul in Hebrews, which is in Chapter 4:12. We find there the important statement that the Word of God sharply divides between *the soul* and *the spirit*; a distinction, however, which teachers and commentators generally fail to observe. There are some who professedly make a specialty of "rightly dividing the Word of Truth"; which, however, may be merely the arranging of dispensational divisions according to their own ideas. It is questionable whether 2 Timothy 2:15 means that we are to *divide up* the Word of Truth. A better reading would seem to be, holding a straight course in the Word of Truth. But on the other hand, it is certain, as has been aptly said, that the Word of God *divides us up*, even to the dividing asunder of *soul* and *spirit*. The Word of God speaks of the salvation of the *spirit*, of the salvation of the *soul*, and of the salvation of the *body*; and there is a great difference between them. In 1 Corinthians 5:5, Paul speaks of delivering one of the members of the assembly of Corinth unto Satan (who has the power of death), "for the destruction of *the flesh*, that *the spirit may be saved* in the Day of the Lord Jesus." Again, in many passages which we propose to notice, the Word speaks of *saving the soul*. Philippians 3:21 speaks of the Coming of the Lord as Savior to change our *bodies*. The distinction between the *spirit* of man and the *soul* of man is recognized throughout Scripture. Thus in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, the Apostle prays for the sanctification of the *whole* man, and that "your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto (at) the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Of the Lord Jesus it is written that just before His death He commended His SPIRIT to His Father. "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit. And having said thus He *gave up the Spirit*" (Luke 23:46). OF HIS SOUL and BODY it is written in Psalm 16, quoted in Acts 2:31, "that His SOUL was not left in Hades, neither did His FLESH see corruption." It thus appears that His body went into the tomb, but saw no corruption there, while His soul went to Hades, or Paradise, the place of the departed. With this also agrees the word He spoke to the believing malefactor, "Verily I say unto thee, today thou shall be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).

The word "soul" signifies, as we have said, the natural, or personal life of the individual man, in the broadest sense, including all the experiences, sensations, and emotions pertaining thereto. In fact, the Greek word *psuche* is sometimes in our versions translated "life," sometimes "soul." When the word "life" in our versions stands for *psuche* it *never* means *eternal* life, possessed by Christ, and imparted as the gift of God to those who believe on Him. For that life the Greek word is *zoe*. It is sometimes of much importance to know what the original word is. Thus in John 10, one of these words occurs in verse 10, the other in verse 11. When Christ said "I am come that they might have LIFE," He used the word *zoe*, eternal life. When, however, He added "the good shepherd giveth his LIFE for the sheep," He used the word *psuche*, soul, or natural life; and the same word occurs in verses 15 and 17. In verse 17 we read, "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life (soul) that I might take it again." The Lord Jesus has a true human soul, an individual, personal life, like each one of us, only without sin. He laid it down; but He has taken it again. Thus the Lord speaks of laying down His own sinless Soul, and in this we have further and conclusive proof that losing one's soul does not mean damnation. It means, as we have said, the cutting off of the soul from the things created for its satisfaction and enjoyment. In verse 28, however, "and I give unto them eternal life," the word is *zoe*. That life can never be lost; for they who receive it "shall never perish." Thus the life (soul) which Christ gave for us is not the same as the life He give to us. The difference is great. Again, in John 12, both words occur in verse 25: "He that loveth his life (*psuche*) shall lose it; and he that hateth his life (*psuche*) in this world, shall keep IT (his soul, *psuche*) unto life (*zoe*) eternal." This is one of the instructive passages in which the Lord began to speak of the salvation of the *soul*. The statement is brief, but comprehensive. The man who loves his soul (*psuche*) shall lose it; and he that hates his soul IN THIS WORLD shall keep it unto life eternal. The Lord here declares clearly that the salvation of the soul is a thing *future*, and that it is dependent upon the faith, obedience, and steadfast endurance of the man himself. In verse 27 He speaks of His own soul (*psuche*) say-

ing, "Now is My SOUL troubled." In the Garden of Gethsemane He said to His disciples, "My SOUL is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matthew 26:38). In the passage quoted from Hebrews 10, He says, "My SOUL shall have no pleasure in him." It is therefore in the soul that sorrow and pleasure are experienced.

From the above passage (John 12:25) and from other Scriptures, it clearly appears, as we have already said, that the soul of man is that part of his being which is capable of experiencing sensations arising from *relations with created things* — *the world.* "The actual functions of seeing, hearing, tasting, etc. are performed by the organs of the body; but the experiences and emotions resulting therefrom are of the soul. The seeing of pictures, statues, buildings, processions, carnivals, ornate religious ceremonials, etc., etc.; the pleasures of music, literature, especially fiction, banqueting, dancing, sports, and the like; all amusements, entertainment, social functions, etc., form part of the life (or soul) of a man "in this world." It is by hating his soul, or self-life in this world, that a man may KEEP IT for the age that is coming.

The passage last above quoted does not teach that the pleasures of the natural or personal life are necessarily evil; quite the contrary. Neither does the passage teach that it is wrong for the people of God to experience gratification when some pleasing sight — as a beautiful landscape or gorgeous sunset — meets the eyes, though they should exercise care as to the liberty they allow themselves in this direction. It is because these things *are* lawful and good in themselves, and are appointed for man's enjoyment, that the Lord would have His disciples *keep their souls* unto eternal life, for then the pleasures of the created universe may be enjoyed to the full, without any taint of sin, and without any alloy of sorrow or pain. To that end the disciple must hate his self-life (soul) in this world. To love one's life in this world is much the same as to love the world and the things that are in the world. BUT CHRIST IS NOT IN THE WORLD. He laid down His Personal Life (*psuche*) in the world, and has now no part or pleasure in it. Nor could He have pleasure in the world as it is now. His portion here was always sorrow. Therefore, it behooves the disciple of Christ to set his affections on things above where Christ is at the Right Hand of God (Colossians 3:1–2). And the consequence of not doing so is that he may indeed enjoy his soul here, but will lose it hereafter. That judgment is just, and is so plainly declared in the Scripture that there is no excuse for ignorance in regard to it. Thus it is that the Word of God divides between the soul and the spirit of man.

The above-cited passage in Colossians states that "YE DIED and your life (*zoe*) is hid with Christ in God. But when Christ Who is our life (*zoe*) shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him IN GLORY." Those who are to appear with Him "in glory" are those who died with Him. It is needful on the believer's part to reckon this to be true, and to act accordingly, taking the place of one crucified to the world, and therefore having no portion in it. All that the believer has *in* the world is a path *through it*; the same path that the Master trod. The view we have presented as to the soul of man is confirmed by the passage in Matthew 10:37–39: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me is not worthy of Me."

It is quite common for a person to refer to some trial or burden he is compelled to bear, as his "cross"; but that is not at all what the Lord means by this saying. A disciple's "cross" is never something he *must* bear. In order to fulfill this saying of the Lord's the bearing must be voluntary. The disciple must, as the act of his own will, *take up* the cross, and follow Christ; that is, follow Him unto crucifixion to the world; for the sole use made of the cross is to crucify thereupon the one who bears it. The saying, therefore, is the strongest possible expression for the act of deliberately choosing to be with Christ in the place of death to the world, and to all the world has to offer those who seek their self-life there.

And the next words of the Lord are: "He that findeth his soul shall lose it, and he that loses his soul for My sake, shall find it." The literal rendering, which is preferable to the AV is: "He that *hath found* his soul shall lose it; and he that *hath lost* his soul, for My sake, shall find it."

This saying needs no explanation. It contains a clear promise that the man who has lost his soul for Christ's sake shall find it; and as clear a warning that he who has found his soul shall lose it. The words "has found," "has lost," point to the making of a settled and abiding choice. One man has found his soul in this world as it now is, and has settled down to the spending of it. He will learn in the end that he has indeed *spent* it. Another, *for Christ's sake*, has parted with his soul, in this world. He shall surely find it. Instead of *losing* it, he is really *keeping* it for the coming age. These sayings of the Lord show that the losing of the soul in this world is the parting with all that ministers gratification to the soul. It consists in taking such a position that the man is cut off from all the things the soul desires. If such be indeed the meaning of losing the soul in *this* world, it will assist us to understand what is meant by the loss of the soul in the world to come.

Turning to Mark's Gospel we find in Chapter 8:31–38, a passage in which the Lord "*began* to teach His disciples" certain things; and there we observe an important amplification of this doctrine of the Lord. We read: "Whosoever WILL (that is, purposes or chooses to) come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his

cross, and follow Me" (verse 34). In this saying the action of the man's own "will" is made conspicuous. Also the words are added, "let him deny himself," signifying the putting of self, and all personal inclinations aside, in order that he may be free to act according to the will of Another. This denying of self is the giving up of all that constitutes the self-life or soul in this world.

In the next verse we find another addition. In it the words "and the gospel's" are added to the words "for My sake." The literal reading is, "on account of Me and of the good news." We take it that "the good news" in this connection is the good news of the *so-great salvation* that awaits the sons whom God shall bring "unto glory." The opening words of this gospel of Mark are "A beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, SON OF GOD." The Epistle to the Hebrews calls special attention to the things spoken BY THE SON; and defines the "so-great salvation" as that of which "A BEGINNING" was "received to be spoken by the Lord." The correspondence is suggestive, at least, and may have more significance than appears at first glance.

Continuing to read in Mark, we come to the question: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" In this passage the word "*psuche*" is correctly rendered "soul" instead of "life," as in the preceding verses. It is the same word in the original. Verses 35–37 read as follows, giving the word *psuche* the same rendering throughout: "For whosoever will save his soul shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his soul for My sake and the gospel's, the same shall SAVE IT. For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

The Lord then adds this significant utterance: "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and OF MY WORDS in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, *when He cometh in THE GLORY OF HIS FATHER* with the holy angels." This points very clearly to the Coming of the Son of Man with the angels of His power, as the time when the saving or losing of the soul, as to the next age, will take place. It also admonishes us not to be ashamed of His words. We should take heed therefore lest we slight the words of the Lord Jesus, which He spoke concerning the age to come wherein He will reign over the earth. We greatly fear the consequences of the tendency observable in certain quarters to treat the millennial kingdom of the Son as a thing of little interest to the saints of God.

A passage almost identical with the one last quoted is found in Matthew 16:24–28, quoted in an earlier part of this volume. We call attention again to the fact that this teaching was introduced by the Lord in connection with Peter's confession of Him as the Christ, the SON OF THE LIVING GOD, and in connection with His own disclosure to His disciples of His approaching sufferings and death. And the Lord stated that "then," namely, at this moment when those who have lost their souls for His sake shall find them, would be the time when He would "reward every man according to his works."

Luke 9:20–26 also contains a passage so closely resembling the above that no further comment thereon is required. This fact, however, should be noted, namely, that the teaching we are now considering is given in each of the four Gospels, which shows the great importance attached to it by the Spirit of God. Yet, this surpassingly important doctrine has practically no place at all in the teaching received by many of the Lord's people at the present time.

We turn now to the great passage in Matthew 11. The saying of the Lord recorded there was spoken when He had been rejected by that generation to whom He had given the words the Father commanded Him to speak, and before whose eyes He had done the works of God. For their heart was waxen gross, and their ears were dull of hearing, and their eyes they had closed. So He cries, "He that hath ears to hear, let HIM hear" (verse 15). This is the Voice of Wisdom calling to all Her children to hearken to excellent things. And the Lord in this connection declares that "Wisdom is justified of her children" (verse 19). They are not like the children sitting in the market place (verses 16–18). Then He announces that ALL THINGS have been given Him of His Father; and speaks of KNOWING THE SON, saying, "And no man knoweth the Son but the Father" (verse 27). This knowledge of the Son is, as we have seen, the knowledge that is appropriate for those fully grown. Then He says: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." In the original, the words "give rest" are a verb, which may be rendered "will refresh" you. This refreshing He *gives* to all who come to Him. It is the washing of regeneration, the renewing of the Holy Spirit, the making of a new creature in Christ. Then come the important words: "Take My Yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall FIND REST unto your SOULS. For My Yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

There is, then, a "rest" that is to be *earned* through submission to the yoke of Christ, and through learning from Him meekness and lowliness of heart; and this doubtless is the "rest" referred to in Hebrews 3 and 4, that remaineth for the people of God. None need fear to submit to His yoke, for it is "easy," nor to His burden, for it is "light." "His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). But the point of chief importance for our present purposes is the doctrine that the "rest" by which the disciple of Christ is to be rewarded for his obedience, is rest to his SOUL. "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest" (Hebrews 4:11).

In another passage of great interest and importance the Lord speaks to His disciples of saving their souls. The passage is found in Luke 21. The Lord is there foretelling the time of false christs, wars and commotions, earthquakes, famines and pestilences, and of persecutions, betrayal and death for His followers (verses 8–16). For their comfort He says: “And ye shall be hated of all men for My Name’s sake; but there shall not a hair of your head perish” (verses 17–18). Then He adds the exhortation, as rendered in the AV, “In patience possess ye your SOULS.” This rendering, however, does not at all give the sense of the original. The word translated “possess” means to “gain,” as the reader can readily ascertain for himself by consulting any critical version or Greek concordance. In *Bagster’s Englishman’s Greek New Testament* the verse is thus literally rendered; “*By your patient endurance gain ye your souls.*” The only question among the competent authorities seems to be whether the form of the verb be imperative — “gain ye” — or future — “ye shall gain.” For the purpose of our study it is immaterial what may be the tense of the verb. In either view it signifies that the disciple of Christ may gain his own soul as a reward for the endurance of trials and persecutions. This is the word of Christ’s patience (2 Thessalonians 3:5, RV; Revelation 3:10).

It should be observed that, although Christ declares that some of His disciples should be put to death, He nevertheless immediately adds that not a hair of their heads should perish. This promise clearly proves the full restoration of the entire man.

It is at the close of this passage that the Lord warns His disciples against allowing their hearts to be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life (*bios*), lest “that Day” come upon them suddenly; and admonishes them to watch and pray always, that they may be accounted worthy to escape all these things, and to stand before the Son of Man. It thus appears that watchfulness and prayer are needed in order to gain the promised reward (compare 1 Thessalonians 5:6, 17).

The foregoing are the recorded instances in which the Lord made a *beginning* of speaking of the salvation of the soul. Among “those that heard Him,” and that have confirmed the teaching to us, and amplified it, was the Apostle James. This Apostle addresses believers as “my beloved brethren,” and admonishes them to be “swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath,” and he exhorts them to “receive with meekness the engrafted Word which is able to SAVE YOUR SOULS” (James 1:19–22).

In this important passage the Apostle clearly distinguishes between the “gift” of the new birth and the *reward* of saving the soul. He first speaks of the gift, saying, “Every good and perfect GIFT is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (verse 17). The next verse indicates a special *gift* from above, namely the new birth, which is the Will of God, and therefore not subject to be withdrawn, for in Him is no variableness. Note the words, “Of His own Will begat He us with the Word of Truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures” (*cf.* John 1:12–13). Let it then be carefully noted that those who have been already begotten again with the Word of Truth (having believed on Christ, Who is the Truth), are exhorted to receive with submission the *implanted Word*, which is able to *save their souls*. This clearly distinguishes the new birth from the saving of the soul. It shows that a man may have been begotten again, and yet not save his soul. The reason is that the new birth is a work done in a man’s *spirit*. “That which is BORN of the Spirit is SPIRIT” (John 3:6). If we assume that the exhortation of James 1:21 is addressed to those who have been already born again, as we must do since they are addressed as “brethren,” it necessarily follows that the saving of the soul is something distinct from the new birth.

The *new birth*, then, is a *past* event for every believer in Christ, and can never be undone. But the *saving of the soul* is a thing *yet to be accomplished*. Receiving the implanted Word is an exhortation having practically the same force as “giving earnest heed to things we have heard,” or letting “the Word of Christ abide” in us.

This much neglected Epistle of James, which by many is practically set aside as “Jewish,” contains much valuable instruction and comfort for God’s pilgrims. The very first words are strikingly appropriate: — “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (or trials).” Why? Because “the trial of your faith worketh PATIENCE”; and this is the very thing declared by the Lord in Luke 21:19, and by the Apostle in Hebrews 10:36 to be needed for attaining the promise, namely, the salvation of the soul. The next words are very important: “But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be PERFECT and entire wanting (*i.e.* lacking) nothing.” The words of the Lord recorded in Luke 21:19 show that the perfect work of patience or endurance is gaining the soul.

This Epistle belongs to a portion of the New Testament (including also Hebrews, and the Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude) which closely corresponds to the Book of Numbers, the Book of the pilgrimage of God’s people in the wilderness. This correspondence has been often pointed out, and much helpful instruction has been based thereon. But the correspondence teaches more than is generally supposed.

The Epistles of Peter are also full of valuable instruction for those children of God who would be true “Hebrews.” Here again the Word of God cuts sharply and cleanly between the new birth and the salvation of the soul. The message of Peter is addressed to those who *have been already* “begotten again unto a living hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). These are now being “kept by the

power of God THROUGH FAITH *unto salvation* ready to be revealed at the last time" (cf. 1 John 2:18). This *future* salvation is the salvation of the soul, spoken of in Hebrews 10; and the "faith" mentioned is the "faith to the saving of the soul." This is perfectly clear from verses 6–9. Those born-again ones who are in "manifold temptation" are called upon (as in James) to rejoice, and for the reason that the outcome of the *trial of faith*, is to be rewarded by "praise, and honor, and glory, at the Appearing of Jesus Christ." Through believing on Him Whom they have "not seen," they may rejoice with joy unspeakable and "*glorified*," receiving (as they shall if they hold fast to the end the hope to which they have been begotten) THE END of their faith, namely, THE SALVATION OF THEIR SOULS. We would call special attention to the fact here stated that this salvation of the soul is the "end" of our faith, not the beginning. Then we are informed that this salvation is that concerning which the prophets inquired and searched diligently, desiring to know what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ. Who was in them did signify, in testifying beforehand the sufferings of Christ and *the glory that should follow*. Unto those prophets it was revealed that, not to themselves, but *to us*, they did minister *the things which are now reported unto you* (these being "the things which we have heard") by those who preached the gospel unto you, *with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven*. All this is manifestly in close correspondence with Hebrews 2, where the "so great salvation" is mentioned. And, to make the correspondence still closer, it is stated that this is a matter in which the angels are directly interested; for the Apostle Peter adds: "which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Peter 1:10–12).

The next verse shows that the message is for pilgrims: "Wherefore," that is to say, in order to gain the end proposed (the salvation of the soul), "*gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end*, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Grace provides this great salvation, and faith attains it, through hoping *to the end*. "As OBEDIENT CHILDREN, not fashioning yourselves according to the former desires in your ignorance; but as He which hath CALLED YOU is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of behavior. And if ye call on Him as Father, Who, without respect of persons judgeth *according to every man's work*, pass the time of your *sojourning here in fear*" (1 Peter 1:13–17).

Here we have express mention of obedience, of the children who call upon God as Father, of the heavenly calling, of the judgment of believers' works, of the sojourning, and of fear as to the consequences of disobedience. These are the very topics to which prominence is given in Hebrews.

In 1 Peter 2 we find the "*holy priesthood*," who are to offer spiritual sacrifices (worshipping God in spirit) acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (verse 5), and the "*royal priesthood*" who are to show forth the excellencies of Him Who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. This exercise of the functions of the "*royal priesthood*" belongs, we take it, to the age to come, when the sons of the priestly house will *show forth* (which they certainly cannot do now) the excellencies of the Son, Who has called them into His marvelous light, which will then be displayed.

Again, in 1 Peter 2:11 is a strong exhortation addressed expressly to God's pilgrims: "Dearly beloved, I BESEECH you, AS STRANGERS and PILGRIMS, abstain from fleshly lusts (desires) which war AGAINST THE SOUL." Surely, the meaning of this is unmistakable. The cravings of the flesh, whether coarse or refined, war against THE SOUL, and if indulged will, as the Lord declared, cause the loss of the soul in the age to come. It is the "pilgrims" that are warned against enemies which make war against the "soul."

All the exhortations and encouragements of this Epistle are advantageous for God's pilgrims; but we must leave our readers to study them in detail for themselves, asking them to observe that the practical object of all is that "when HIS (CHRIST'S) GLORY shall be revealed, ye may be glad also, with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:13). We call special attention also the reference to Christ as the Shepherd and Overseer of YOUR SOULS (1 Peter 2:25); and to the exhortation to those who suffer according to the Will of God, that is, according to God's appointment instead of for wrongdoing as in 1 Peter 4:15, to commit the KEEPING OF THEIR SOULS unto Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Peter's second Epistle is also full of pertinent instruction; but we would only call attention to the things which they who "have obtained like precious faith" are to add *to their faith* (2 Peter 1:1, 5–8), in order that they be not barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:5–8). Also to the words that follow: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, *give diligence to make your calling and election sure*, for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (compare Hebrews 4:11); "for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the EVERLASTING KINGDOM OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST" (2 Peter 1:10–11).

This connects the passage directly with the Kingdom of the Son, which is the theme of Hebrews. Therefore, the instructions given are of the utmost importance to those who would gain an entrance into that Kingdom, and especially to those who seek, as every saint should seek, an *abundant entrance* thereinto. Returning now to Hebrews, we would note that the hope there set before us, and which enters into that within the veil, is as "an anchor OF THE SOUL" (Hebrews 4:19). The occurrence of the word "soul" in this passage is very significant, but the significance thereof is rarely, if ever noticed in the commentaries on Hebrews. It is

not said or implied, here or elsewhere, that a man may, by holding fast to a promise of God, save himself from perdition; but it is clearly implied in this Scripture that the heir of promise, by *holding fast* to the hope set before him, may *save his soul* for the age when joy will be complete and unalloyed. The only security for the *soul* is that afforded by the Anchor within the veil. We fervently pray and trust that the foregoing comments may be blessed of God, to the end that His saints may through study of the Scriptures cited, and by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, receive an understanding of that salvation so great, the salvation of souls, whereof a beginning was spoken by the Lord, and which has been confirmed to us by them that heard Him.

In the light of the Scriptures we have examined, the meaning of the words “faith to saving the soul” (Hebrews 10:30), is plain; and thereby also, the lesson of Hebrews 11 may be clearly perceived. We refrain from commenting upon the details of that Chapter. It must suffice for our purpose to point out that the saints of former ages who are mentioned there had not only repentance and faith towards God for redemption from sin and death, but also had faith to the end of their days, waiting for something whereof they had heard from God and therefore “hoped for,” but had “not seen.” They all became “strangers and pilgrims on earth” (verse 13), and declared plainly that they sought a country. They were free to return “to that country from whence they came out”; but they set their hearts on a better country, that is, a heavenly, and *for that reason*, “God is not ashamed to be called their God” (verses 14–16). And such as these also are they of whom it is written that Christ “is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Hebrews 2:11).

These “Hebrews” were tested in various ways. No two were tried in exactly the same way. On this point see especially verses 31–38. But, whatever may have been the test appointed by God, it served to show that the man or woman was *at heart* a true Hebrew — that the HEART was right towards Him; and that is the essential thing.

CHAPTER 17

Conclusion

WE have endeavored in the foregoing pages to set forth the main points of the teaching of Scripture concerning the rewards promised to those saints who, in this present evil age, live as strangers and pilgrims on earth. Those rewards are the things which accompany that great salvation whereof God has spoken to us by His Son, Whom He hath appointed Heir of all things. For such as have regard to the recompense of the reward, the most important thing seems to be that they should prepare their *hearts* to follow the Lord, and should go on to *full-growth*. To this end, the practical directions chiefly to be heeded, so far as we are able to discern them with the light we now have, are the following:

First. We should give the most earnest heed to the things that we have heard, and particularly to the words of the Lord Himself, treasuring them in our hearts, and meditating constantly thereon. By so doing we may insure that His Word shall abide richly in us. Those words, which are spirit and life, will fortify God's pilgrims to meet the trials and difficulties that lie in their pathway. Let us therefore receive with meekness the implanted Word, which is able to save our souls.

Second. We should attentively consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. These two titles take in all that He did for us while on earth, and all that He is now doing for us in heaven. Meditation upon such a theme will surely stir up our affections toward the Captain of our salvation, Who, in order to qualify for that office, submitted to the shame and sufferings of the Cross. We should consider well Him Who endured so great contradiction of sinners against Himself. It should be easy for us to endure our light affliction when we contemplate the hateful, stubborn, and murderous opposition of sinners against Himself, which He submissively endured, though He had power to stop it with a word.

Third. We should resort frequently to the Throne of grace, thus availing ourselves of the effectual intercessions of our great High Priest. It is of no avail to know, though never so minutely, by the study of types and offerings, the *doctrine* of the High Priesthood of the Lord Jesus, if we fail to secure the *benefit* of His priestly ministrations. The services of the priest were for the good of those who *approached God by him*; and we have a great High Priest over the House of God, Who is "able" to succor them that are tried, and "able" to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. Let us then approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

Fourth. It is written in the Book of Psalms, "Whoso offereth (literally, *sacrificeth*) praise, glorifieth Me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the SALVATION of God" (Psalm 50:23; see also verses 14–15). Let us therefore avail ourselves of the privilege of worshipping in the heavenly sanctuary, offering to God *continually* the sacrifices of praise, that is the fruit of our lips, confessing to His Name; not neglecting the sacrifices of loving ministrations to our fellow saints, with which sacrifices the Lord is well pleased.

Finally, brethren, it is the *last time*. The end of all things is at hand. The time is come when judgment is about to begin at the House of God. The things that can be shaken are soon to be removed, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore, we receiving a Kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a Consuming Fire.

"They of Italy salute you. Grace be with you all, Amen."

APPENDIX

The Wrath of God and the Chastening of the Lord.

IN view of questions that have been raised concerning certain parts of this book, namely, those which apply the warning of Hebrews and of other New Testament Scriptures to the redeemed people of God, it has seemed desirable to append a few comments so as, if possible, to give further light upon that subject. In order that readers may understand clearly the points in question we quote below an article which recently appeared in print under the title "No More Wrath." It is our earnest desire that readers may compare the statements of that article with what is said in this volume, and may carefully subject both views to the test of the Scriptures. There is need of this, seeing that the matter discussed is of very great importance. The article referred to is as follows:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). "Who delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:10). "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9). "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). "And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:3). "And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My Hand" (John 10:28).

And how many more texts might be given, which teach the complete deliverance from wrath and condemnation of the sinner who has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ! Our blessed and adorable Substitute on the Cross has accomplished the work of deliverance for us. The judgment due to us rolled over His Head. He drank the cup of wrath in our stead. Nothing we have done, or could do, can deliver us from wrath and condemnation. Equally true it is that the One Who hath saved us and delivered us will keep us. Wrath and condemnation can never, no, NEVER, be the lot of a child of God. The sins, the failures, and the shortcomings of the believer can never affect his standing in grace. Once saved means *forever* saved, independent of what we are and what we do.

The apostates mentioned in Hebrews were not true believers, but Jews that had gone to a certain extent with Christianity and were going back to Judaism. The enemies of the Cross in Philippians (Chapter 3), whose end is destruction, were not true children of God, but such as had crept in unawares (Jude, verse 4). No true Christian, who knows himself a lost sinner and is saved by grace, can ever be an enemy of the Cross. To teach that salvation depends on what we do, and that our keeping for eternal life, and the receiving of glory, depends on a surrendered and separated like, or anything else, is a dangerous thing. It leads to self-occupation and introspection; it must eventually take away from the glory and sufficiency of the work and power of our Lord. It leads simple Christians into confusion. The heart knowledge of salvation by Grace, the great love wherewith He hath loved us, the living Christ, and His love for us, produces a holy walk in the believer.

1. We rejoice in the truth, so clearly stated in the Scriptures quoted in the foregoing article, that there is no wrath in store for those whom God has justified through faith in Jesus Christ, and that they have, by His grace, perfect deliverance from condemnation. This truth is set forth in the present volume (page 17 and first paragraph of page 41, so that there is no controversy here. But, while there is no *wrath* and no *condemnation* for those that are in Christ, they are to expect *chastening* and *discipline*. The writer of the foregoing article has lost sight of the chastening of the Lord, than which there is probably no subject that is more needful at this time to be pressed upon the attention of God's people. Chastening is radically different from wrath. The latter is the portion of those who reject the Gospel; the former is wholly for *believers*. In 1 Corinthians 11:32 the contrast between *chastening* and *condemnation* is sharply drawn: "When *we* (believers) are judged we are *chastened* of the Lord, that we should not be *condemned* with the world. "The motive of the chastening of the Lord is *love*. "As many as I *love* I rebuke and chasten" (Revelation 3:19). The statement of Hebrews 12:6 is very strong: "For whom the Lord *loveth* He chasteneth, and *scourgeth* every son whom He receiveth." God *scourges* His own sons; but there is nothing penal in this. It is wholly corrective.
2. The passages of Scripture which proclaim the believer's security from wrath and condemnation apply to him *from the moment he believes*. If, therefore, those Scriptures had any reference to the Lord's chastening (which plainly they have not), it would follow that the believer would never be disciplined

at all. Clearly, then, the promises of security from wrath afford no immunity from chastening.

3. The statements in the foregoing article that "the apostates mentioned in Hebrews were not true believers," and that "no true Christian who knows himself a lost sinner and is saved by grace can ever be an enemy of the Cross," are mere assertions, for which no proof is offered. On the other hand, we have given in Chapters 10 and 11 and elsewhere, ample and convincing Scriptural evidence and arguments, showing that the warnings of Hebrews against departing from the living God are written for the admonition of His redeemed people.

Great difficulty has been encountered by expositors in attempting to classify the persons specified in Hebrews 6:1-6; and inasmuch as there are teachers and expositors of high repute who, like the able writer of the foregoing article, regard those persons as "not true believers, but Jews who had gone to a certain extent with Christianity and were going back to Judaism," it seems incumbent upon us to give fully the reasons why we cannot any longer hold to that opinion.

No doubt the particular persons to whom the Epistle was addressed in the first instance were Jews, and the situation in which they were placed had special features which do not exist in the case of Gentile Christians; and there is no doubt that the particular system into which those Jews were in danger of lapsing was Judaism, from which even Peter had difficulty in freeing himself (Galatians 2:11-12). But we maintain that they were *converted* Jews. And as one reads the several statements made in Hebrews 6 which describe the spiritual state of the persons referred to, he must be impressed with the idea that such statements could not possibly be made of unpardoned and unreconciled sinners. Whoever those persons were, the writer of the Epistle classes himself among them, for the exhortation begins with the words "let *us* go on to full growth." The language of this passage would apply to such as were children (infants) in the *true faith*, and that such they were is distinctly asserted in the passage immediately preceding (Hebrews 5:12-14). They had become dull of hearing; they had need to be taught again the first principles of the oracles of God; and having ceased to "go on" in the ways of God, there was a danger lest they should go *back* to the old doings from which they had been called out. We do not see how it could possibly be said that those who were on "the FOUNDATION of repentance from dead works and faith toward God" were unbelievers. And it is calculated to give one something of a shock to hear that men in their sins and in the corruption of the flesh were "partakers of the Holy Ghost." The Lord Jesus, speaking of the Holy Spirit, said "Whom the world cannot receive" (John 14:17); from which it follows that an unconverted person could not possibly be a partaker of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, the statements of Hebrews 6 could not have been made to define a class of unbelievers. We think it will be quite clear, when viewed apart from all theological bias, that those statements were made to set before our minds the great privileges to which even the youngest believers have been brought through the grace of God, and in order that all might understand how serious a matter it is to "fall away" from what is set before the redeemed people of God as a goal. For instance, even the "babe" in Christ has "TASTED the good Word of God," for he has been fed upon the milk of the Word. Beyond all doubt the whole purpose of the passage is to exhort spiritual infants to "go on" to the full attainment of "the promise," and to stimulate them to do this by showing them the peril and loss they incur if they turn back therefrom.

But, it will be asked, if the meaning be so clear, how is it that some of the ablest expositors of Scripture have entertained the view set forth in the above-quoted article? That fact certainly calls for an explanation; and we think it can be supplied. The view referred to is that of theologians of the Calvinistic School, who hold (and we believe rightly) that a person who has received the Son of God as his Savior, thereby becoming a child of God, can never forfeit his relationship with God, and can "never perish." On the other hand, the passage in Hebrews 6 is the principal Scripture upon which theologians of the Armenian School rely in support of the contention that a child of God may forfeit his relationship with God, and be lost. Both parties to this theological dispute have taken it for granted that the words "fall away," meant to fall away from God, that is, to cease to be a Christian, or to depart wholly from the faith and be lost; and that "impossible to renew them again unto repentance," meant impossible to restore them again to a standing in grace, thus putting them in a position impossible of salvation, as if they had committed the unpardonable sin. But immediately it is seen that the entire passage has to do solely with the attainment of a *reward*, promised to those children of God who go on to full-growth and show diligence to the full assurance of the hope unto the end, and who thus, through persistent faith and patience, inherit the promises, the difficulty disappears. Obviously, a son and heir may forfeit part, or all, of his inheritance, without ceasing to be the son of his parents; and there may be conditions imposed as to certain portions of the estate such that, if he once violates them (as by contracting marriage contrary to his father's expressed wishes) he can never undo his act, and be "renewed," *i.e.*, reinstated in the place he was, with reference to the estate, before the condition was violated. There can be no doubt (in our opinion) that such is the true significance of the passage under consideration. It is clearly a case illustrated by the "provocation in the wilderness," and by Esau's sale of his birthright. There was no "renewing unto repentance" in either case. But the Israelites did not lose their status as God's people, nor Esau his as the son of Isaac. Esau subsequently received *a* blessing, but not *the* blessing. We might refer also to Moses as a conspicuous instance of one who, though a servant who "was

faithful in all God's house," yet because of disobedience forfeited the privilege of entering the Land of Promise, and who found in the Lord no place of repentance as to that matter, though he sought if carefully (Deuteronomy 3:23–27).

4. Referring more particularly to the expressions "crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh," and "enemies of the Cross of Christ," we call special attention to our comments on those "who were once enlightened," "tasted the heavenly gift," "and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost," "and tasted the good Word of God," and "and the works of power of the age to come", which will, we think satisfy the unbiased reader that those expressions are applicable to Christians, and are inapplicable to any others. If further proof as to this be desired, it may be found in 1 Corinthians 11, where the Lord's Supper is spoken of. No one, we suppose, will question the application of *that* passage to believers; yet it contains expressions every whit as strong as those in Philippians 3 and Hebrews 6 and 10. There we read the solemn statement that "Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily shall be GUILTY of the BODY and BLOOD of the Lord"; and further that, "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation (judgment) to himself." The expression "guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord" is, if anything, a stronger expression than "enemies of the Cross of Christ."

An "enemy" is one who opposes, or acts in a hostile manner. The Cross of Christ separates the Christian from the appetites of the flesh (the "belly") and from "earthly things." Hence the Christian who acts with reference to those things in a manner contrary to the intended effect of the Cross is in opposition or enmity to that Cross. Other Scriptures fully confirm this explanation. According to Romans 8:5–7 (a passage which unquestionably applies to believers) the mind of the flesh is ENMITY against God. Hence believers who walk after the flesh, and who mind the things of the flesh, are at enmity with God. The danger is that the mind of the flesh in us may by "death" to us. For "the mind of the flesh is death," and it is written "if ye (believers) live after the flesh ye shall die." Again, friendship with the world is spiritual adultery and is ENMITY with God (James 4:4). Manifestly these offenses, referred to in Romans 8 and James 4, are, from their very nature, such as only a Christian can commit. Those who are of the world cannot commit adultery with the world, for they have no covenant relations with God. In like manner the Christian who shares in the enjoyment of the things from which he has been separated, in God's contemplation and purpose, by the Cross of Christ, is at enmity with that Cross. Only a Christian can commit that offense. Therefore, the telling of it brought tears to the Apostle's eyes. That unbelievers should so "walk" is inevitable. But that saints should so walk is cause for weeping.

The word "destroy" is applied to believer in several instances, the sense of the word being to *inflict grievous injury*. *Destruction* is radically different from *perdition* or *damnation*. Thus in Romans 14:15 we read, "Destroy not him (thy brother) with thy meat, for whom Christ died." The word "destroy" in that passage is the same as in Philippians 3:19, "whose end is destruction," and in Hebrews 10:38, "them that draw back unto destruction." The fact that the word "destruction" is used in these texts, instead of "perdition" or "damnation" or "everlasting destruction" (as in 2 Thessalonians 1:9), is an additional reason for taking them as applying to believers.

5. In the article quoted above, the word "saved" is used as if it meant pardoned, or justified; whereas in the Scriptures discussed in this book the "salvation" spoken of is something yet future; and this (as we have shown) is almost invariably the Scriptural sense of the words "saved" and "salvation." This distinction is of the very essence of the doctrine under discussion. We are well aware that justification and the receiving of eternal life do not depend upon "what we do." Far from it. This volume very distinctly asserts the contrary. But on the other hand, we *do* say, and upon the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles, that the salvation spoken of by them as the *salvation of the soul*, does depend upon the believer's walk and upon the heed paid by him to His Lord's commands. This teaching does not lead to "self-occupation and introspection," nor does it lead "simple Christians into confusion." Since it is the teaching of the Lord Himself, it would be presumptuous on our part to defend or justify it; but we may properly point out that its obvious purpose is to admonish the slothful, disobedient, and worldly Christian to consider and amend his ways. Since the publication of the first edition of this book, we have had abundant and gratifying evidence that it has served to stimulate and encourage some of God's saints, and to arouse others. We do not in the least fear that it will lead any simple Christian into confusion.

On the other hand, we do greatly fear that the effect of such articles as that quoted above is to lull into false security, and to confirm in their self-pleasing ways, those saints for whose benefit chiefly the warnings of the Lord and of His apostles have been recorded. The desire for the preaching of "smooth things" is by no means confined to the unconverted. It is not a kindness to the slothful, world-conformed Christian to tell him that all is well with his soul, and that "the heart knowledge of salvation by grace produces a holy walk in the believer." That statement is contradicted both by Scripture and common experience; for there are many

believers who, notwithstanding their knowledge of salvation by grace, are walking after the flesh, making a god of their appetites, and minding earthly things. These are “enemies of the Cross of Christ.”

Again, we are told in the above-quoted article that to teach that salvation depends upon what we do is “a dangerous thing.” Of course, it is according to the sense in which the word “salvation” is used, whether it depends upon what *we* may do, or solely on what Christ has done for us. The Lord Jesus Christ is our Authority for the teaching that the saving of our *soul* does depend very much upon what we do. It is He Who said, “Whosoever shall lose his soul for My sake and the Gospel’s shall SAVE it.” Those words are simple and clear, and their meaning is confirmed by *every Scripture* that speaks of the salvation of the soul. Pardon of past sins and eternal life are indeed secured to every believer, and do not depend in the least upon his doings; but we are admonished to “work out our own SALVATION with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). Dare any one, after weighing the words of the Lord and His apostles, assert that every believer will save his soul regardless of his conduct? It seems to us that whosoever discredits this wholesome doctrine as a “dangerous thing,” and seeks to turn the saints against it, is assuming a very grave responsibility.

There is a man-pleasing doctrine abroad which finds ready acceptance with the unpardoned and unreconciled *sinner*, namely, that God is all goodness and mercy, and there is no wrath to come for the unbeliever. But there is a counterpart to this doctrine which is well pleasing to the disobedient, world-conformed *Christian*, namely, that God is all grace, and there is no chastening to come for the believer. Against this latter doctrine we have sought to raise a warning. Surely it will not disturb those saints who are walking in holy separation from the world, awaiting the coming again of the Son of God “unto salvation.” That it may serve to disturb those who are not so walking is much to be desired.

6. Several correspondents have questioned the application of Matthew 24:42–51 and Luke 12:35–48 to the saints of this dispensation. This objection comes mainly from those who exclude the earth-life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ from the present, or Church dispensation. Without discussing the dispensational question, we would enter a strong protest against limiting the application of these words of the Lord to any special era. Another has well said, “Dispensational knowledge should drive the application home to us with tenfold power, instead of leading us to say, ‘it does not apply to us.’” The Lord, in the Scriptures cited above, was addressing His own disciples, whom He designates in this connection by the endearing term, “little flock” (Luke 12:32); and He was telling them what He requires of His “servants.” What conceivable reason can there be for supposing that His requirements of His servants in this dispensation are any less rigid than in some other? If there be any difference, it should be the other way, since the greater privileges always carry with them increased responsibilities. In this very passage we read, “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required” (Luke 12:48). Those servants who are charged with the custody of the Gospel of the grace of God, or with ministry to the members of the Body of Christ, are entrusted with the greatest responsibility ever committed to human hands. It is *required* of stewards that they be *faithful* (1 Corinthians 4:2); and this was said by the Apostle Paul concerning himself, and to a Gentile Church. In another place he said, “WOE is unto me if I preach not the Gospel.” We deem it a perilous thing to dismiss the warnings that came from the Lips of the Lord Jesus, as applying only to “the Jewish remnant.” And surely it is an extreme instance of misdirected ingenuity in the handling of the Scriptures to apply the words “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom,” to the saints of *this* dispensation, and then to apply the words that immediately follow, and which were addressed to that very same “little flock,” to the “Jewish remnant.” That order of ingenuity has been very much exercised in dealing with the Epistle to the Hebrews. We believe it to be a real service to the people of God to warn them against it.
7. **SAVING THE SOUL.** We are not aware that anyone has heretofore attempted to lead the Lord’s people to inquire precisely what is meant by “saving the *soul*.” So far as we have information, it is a new subject; and it is very probable that most of our readers have never sought to trace, by the aid of the Scriptures, the distinction between soul and spirit. It is not surprising, therefore, that some have found difficulty in laying hold of that distinction. Desiring to aid further to that end, we offer here some additional suggestions.

The point of chief importance to be grasped is that “saving the soul” does not mean escaping eternal perdition. The saving of the soul is not what is preached as the Gospel of God’s grace to sinners. What the Gospel offers to every believing sinner is the *forgiveness of sins* and the bestowal of *eternal life* as the free gift of God. Hence the saving of the soul is *never* spoken of in connection with the Gospel. It is not in the Lord’s commission to the apostles (Luke 24:47). It is not in Peter’s addresses to Jews in Acts 2 and 3, and to Gentiles in Acts 10. It is not in Paul’s model Gospel address in Acts 13, nor in his Epistles which treat of the Gospel (Romans, Corinthians, Galatians). The saving of the soul is something radically different from the justification and life which God bestows upon every sinner who believes on the Crucified and Risen Savior. The saving of the soul is *not preached to sinners at all*. It is spoken of by the Lord only to His disciples, and by the

apostles only to believers. Moreover it is invariably spoken of as something in regard to which the saints themselves have responsibility.

Losing one's soul does not mean being eternally lost, *i.e.*, damned. It does not mean incurring the wrath of God. Conclusive proof of this is furnished by the Lord's words to His disciples in which He urged them, for their own advantage, to lose their own souls, and to hate their own souls in this world. We need hardly say the Lord did not exhort His disciples to be damned in this world. If losing the soul in this world does not mean damnation, then losing it in the world to come does not mean damnation. On the other hand, we may learn what *is* meant by saving the soul in the world to come, by ascertaining what it means for a man to "find his soul" in this present world; and this we may do by attentively considering the Scriptures cited in Chapter 16 of this book. Whatever be meant by finding one's soul in *this* age, the same thing is meant by finding it in the age to come.

By reference to those Scriptures it will be seen that the subject of saving and losing the soul is always found in connection with a reference to experiences in this world that are directly contrary to the natural feelings and desires of a human being, and which involve present loss, suffering, trial, or denial of self in some form. The first occurrence of the subject is in connection with the sufferings which the Lord foretold as awaiting the twelve (Matthew 10:16–39). The next is in connection with the Lord's disclosure to His disciples of the suffering that awaited Himself at Jerusalem (Matthew 16:21–27). He was speaking there of laying down His own Soul, and His call to His disciples is to "follow" Him in losing *their* souls in this world, though not necessarily in the same manner in which He parted with His. Likewise in John 12:23–27 the Lord speaks of saving and losing the soul in direct connection with His own Sufferings on the Cross. And here it is recorded that He used the expression "Now is My SOUL troubled." In Luke 21:19 the Lord's exhortation "By your patience (endurance) gain ye your souls" is found in connection with the sufferings which He foresaw for His disciples. By enduring those sufferings as the present portion of their souls, in lieu of the pleasures which the soul naturally craves, they were to "gain" their souls, though apparently losing them. In Hebrews 10 and 1 Peter 1, where the same subject is referred to, the immediate context speaks of sufferings experienced through the natural human feelings. These Scriptures afford much light as to the significance of the expression we are considering.

Thus, from the teaching of the Lord and His Apostles, we learn that to every Christian is presented a choice between two paths in this world. One is the path of *self-pleasing*. Those who take it are in pursuit of pleasures, honors, indulgences, and whatever else is gratifying to the natural feelings of a man, which feelings have their seat in his *soul*. There may be nothing inherently wrong in the things sought.

They may be quite proper and respectable, so that the Christian may "see no harm in them." In that path, then, one may perhaps succeed in finding gratification for his soul, so far as it is possible for this present world to supply them. This is what we understand by "finding one's soul in this world."

The other path is that of *denial of one's self*. To walk in it involves submitting to present loss, to the daily cutting off of the soul from the things which exist in the world for its enjoyment. It involves the endurance of reproach, ridicule, and it may be of persecution, for Christ's sake and the Gospel's. They who enter upon that path have deliberately *willed* (for it is an action of the heart) to part with their souls, as it were, during this present time for the sake of Christ. They "will" to lose their souls in this world; for the loss of the things that satisfy the soul of man is virtually the loss of the soul itself. To choose that path is an act of *faith*; for the choice is influenced solely by the Word of God. Such a choice is, from the natural standpoint, and act of folly—throwing one's life away—for that path leads away from all that makes life in this world agreeable. They who walk in that path of separation and loss "walk by faith"; for they are influenced in so doing by "things not seen." In fact, they must go directly against all the powerful attractions of the things that are seen. To follow the Word of God in a direction *contrary to nature*, and *because of what God has spoken*, is the walk of FAITH. This is that particular kind of faith spoken of in Hebrews. Abraham displayed it when, at the bidding of God's Word, he came out of his native country, and when he sojourned as a stranger in the land promised to him for an inheritance (Hebrews 11). This following of God's Word in a direction contrary to the natural inclinations, is the distinguishing trait of those who are "of faith to saving the soul"; for thereby they are distinguished from those who "draw back" to the resources of the world, seemingly to their immediate gain, but really to their great and irreparable loss (Hebrews 10:39).

The Lord's words found in Matthew 11:29 are sufficiently clear to settle the meaning of the expression "saving the soul"; and surely no one who believes His words would dare, in the face of that saying, to maintain that a man can find rest unto his soul in any other way than by taking voluntarily the yoke of Christ upon Him, and by learning of Him meekness and lowliness of heart.

Finally, let us keep in view the main thing, which is, not to settle the meaning of a disputed passage of Scripture, but to secure the benefit of the doctrine of the Lord. Beyond all doubt, consequences of the most serious character depend upon our walk here below. Whether we describe those consequences by the

words "saving the soul," or by some other words, does not affect their serious character. Whatever explanation of those disputed passages may seem right to us, we cannot afford to neglect that salvation so great, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him.