

24 Lessons
from the
Book of Hebrews

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Ellet J. Waggoner

The Voice of God

“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.”

Under this heading it is proposed to call the attention of the readers of the PRESENT TRUTH week by week to a portion of the Epistle to the Hebrews and to other portions of Scripture that are naturally suggested by it. The study will be somewhat similar to that which appeared on the Book of Romans two or three years ago, although we do not propose, at present at least, to make a study of the entire Epistle, but only of the first four or five chapters. The design is to fix the words of the text as firmly as possible not simply in the memory but in the mind of the reader, that the Holy Spirit may open them to the understanding. When this is done, the treasures of the Word will be seen, and the possessor will have within him a constant source of joy and strength.

The object of Bible study is to find out what God says; for it is not alone those who never read the Scriptures, who are ignorant in this respect. Many read the Bible regularly, and still have very little idea of what God actually says to them. All the meaning of the words of the Lord does not lie on the surface; the business of the Bible teacher is to make this deeper meaning appear; for the true Bible teacher simply follows the leading of the Spirit of God, “for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” There is all the difference in the world between this kind of Bible study and that (miscalled) study that consists in putting a meaning into the text, and saying dogmatically, “This means so and so.” In this case the individual follows his own mind or fancy, and not the mind of the Spirit. The difference between the two methods of teaching may be seen in this, that where the teacher puts a construction on the text, giving his opinions and ideas, arbitrarily saying that it means thus and so, the student who accepts his guidance must always keep his words in mind; for since the interpreted meaning is not actually in the text, but is put upon it, it is very evident that the reader cannot see it in the words of the text, but must look through the words of the teacher; in the other case, if the teacher is indeed only an instrument of the Holy Spirit, the student sees in the very words of the Bible a meaning that he did not see before, but which he can clearly see is actually there; and he sees it now so plainly that he wonders why he did not see it before. The Spirit of faith may thus be likened to a magnifying glass, or a telescope, that enables us to see realities that are hidden from the unaided sight.

Knowing that this epistle is the Word of the Lord, we shall spend no time trying to prove that it was written by Paul, or speculating over the question whether it might not have been written by Apollos, or some one else. “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? 1 Corinthians 3.5. With prayer to God for the blessing and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, let us devote ourselves to meditation upon the very words of this epistle so wondrously rich in doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.

The Voice of God

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds.” Hebrews 1.1, 2

Let us question the text for a few minutes, to be sure that we know just what it says. We will let it answer in its own words.

- To whom are we introduced in the very beginning of this epistle?
 - “God.”
- “What has God done?”
 - God *spoke*.
- When did God speak?
 - “God spoke *in time past*.”
- To whom did God speak in time past?
 - “God spoke in time past *unto the fathers*.”
- Through whom did God speak in time past?
 - “God spoke in time past unto the fathers *by the prophets*.”
- Did God speak more than once?
 - “God spoke *at sundry times*.”
- How did He speak?
 - “In divers manners.”
- Has God spoken in later times?
 - “God hath *in these last days* spoken.”
- To whom has God spoken in these last days?
 - “God hath in these last days spoken *unto us*.”
- Through whom does He speak to us?
 - “By His Son.”
- Nevertheless who is it that speaks first and last, by whatever agent and in whatever manner?
 - “God.”
- What has God done for His Son, by whom He speaks to us?
 - “God *hath appointed (Him) heir* of all things.”
- Of how much is the Son heir?

- “Of all things.”
- What force is there to the words, which God has spoken to us by His Son?
 - “God has spoken unto us by His Son, by whom also *He made the worlds.*”
- What two things are said of God in these two verses?
 - “God spoke,” and “He made the worlds.”

“In the beginning, God.”—Here we may pause. When that has been said, everything has been said and done; “for of Him, and through him, and to Him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” Romans 11.36. It is a striking and significant fact that the first word in this epistle brings us face to face with God, and that the text could not possibly be put into good English without having “God” as the first word. And, moreover, when we read the text, we are forced by the very nature of the construction, to pause after the utterance of that title. It is as though designed to make us see that God is, and that that simple, grand fact comprises everything. We are compelled to stop and think that His name is “I AM.” Exodus 3.14. “I am the Lord (Jehovah); that is My name.” Isaiah 42.8. “Before Me there was no god formed, neither shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside Me there is no Saviour.” Isaiah 43.10, 11

“God is.”—To believe that God is, sums up all that is necessary to salvation. Enoch pleased God and was translated to heaven, because he believed. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” Hebrews 11.6. There are fewer people who believe that God is, than is generally supposed. He is—what?—Life, love, strength, righteousness. He is good. Now many persons believe that God has strength, and life, and love, and goodness; but that is not believing that *He is*. For to believe that *He is*, means to believe that He is just what He is. “I AM that I AM.” God is goodness itself, and life, and strength. There is no goodness, no life, no strength that does not come directly from Him. Do you believe this? Do you believe that He is—all that is worth being? If so, then you acknowledge your complete dependence on Him, and allow Him to use His strength in you after His own will, to His own glory. And that is salvation. God is—where?—There is “one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.” Ephesians 4.6. R.V. “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.” Psalm 139.7-10. Truly, *God is*. If this one fact were ever before us, the object of our contemplation, it would completely transform our whole lives. We should then appreciate what power there is in the name. As we proceed in our study, let us not forget that we stand in the presence of God, and that *He is*.

Silence!—“The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him.” Habakkuk 2.20. Why keep silent?—Because *He seeks*, and we need to hear. “Hear,

O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken." Isaiah 1.2. "Be still, and know that I am God." Psalm 46.10. There is a good reason why people as a general thing find it so difficult to understand the Word of the Lord, and that is, that they do not keep still long enough to hear what He says. If when a teacher began to speak, all his hearers should at once fall to disputing with one another, and to questioning and contradicting him, no one would wonder at their not understanding him; and none would be warranted in saying that he spoke so indistinctly or in so obscure a manner that he could not be understood. If they should make this complaint, they would merit the retort, "If you would but keep still, and listen, you would have no difficulty in understanding."

This is exactly the way it is when the Lord speaks. No sooner is a word uttered, than people begin to clamor; without giving quiet consideration to His Word, or even waiting to hear what He has to say, they begin, "I don't see how that can be; "yes, but then how about this?" "That doesn't harmonize with the other statement;" "what do you think of that?" "What's your opinion about this matter?" "It can't mean that;" "this is what it means;" and so on without limit. No wonder they don't understand. If a learned professor should begin to speak upon his special subject, all sensible persons would respectfully and attentively listen, because they would consider that the only wise thing to do is to listen when one wiser than they speaks; and they would strain their ears not to miss a word, so that they might understand. Should we not much more silently listen when the Lord of the universe, "the only wise God," speaks?

God's Voice.—God has many ways of speaking. He spoke in old time "in divers manners." "God thundereth marvelously with His voice; great things doeth He, which we cannot comprehend." Job 37.5. There is power when He speaks, "For He saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth; likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of His strength;" and so it is. "When He uttereth His voice there is a multitude of waters in the heavens." Jeremiah 10.13. "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thundereth; the Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon." "The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness." Psalm 29.3-5, 7, 8. Yet the Lord also speaks with "a still, small voice" (1 Kings 19.9), and that voice is just as powerful as when He thunders. It is in this tone that He most commonly speaks to men, because our ears could not endure constant thunder; and therefore it is the more necessary that we keep silent before Him, in order that we may hear.

God Still Speaks.—"The word of God is living and active." Hebrews 4.12. The word of God "lives and abides forever." 1 Peter 1.23. The word that was spoken by the Lord six thousand years ago is just as fresh and active and as full of life today as it was then. Therefore every word that God has ever spoken, He still speaks. We have the statement that in these last days God has spoken to us by His Son, which brings the word direct to us; but that is not all, for "whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning" (Romans 15.4), and as the word is living, ever fresh and new, we have it all directly addressed to us. What a wonderful

thought! *God speaks!* Who speaks? —*God* speaks. What does God do? —He SPEAKS. What does He say? —Listen and you will know. “Incline your ear, and come unto Me; *hear*, and your soul shall live.” Isaiah 55.3. Truly, if men only believed the fact that God speaks, —is still speaking, —they would involuntarily listen; and when they did that, they would see His word and hear His voice in everything that He has made. The mighty power that there is in the thought that God speaks to us must be experienced, for it cannot be described.

Recognizing the Voice.—Once when Jesus was giving instruction, He uttered a prayer to the Father, which was immediately and audibly answered from heaven. “The people, therefore, that stood by, and heard, said that it thundered; others said, An angel spoke to Him. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes.” John 12.29, 30. To Jesus, the voice from heaven conveyed a distinct message,—there were articulate words,—but to the others it was only meaningless thunder. Why?—Because Jesus was acquainted with the voice of the Lord, and the others were not. If they had accustomed themselves to the Lord’s voice, they would have found comfort in the message from heaven. In the eighty-ninth Psalm, where we have the glorious throne of God set before us (verses 1-15),—that throne from which proceed “lightnings and thunderings and voices” (Revelation 4.5),—we are told, “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance. In Thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted.” If we get acquainted with God we shall rejoice to hear His voice, even though He thunders. When God thundered from Sinai, the people “removed, and stood afar off,” but “Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.” Exodus 20.18-22. The people had no reason to fear, and if they had but believed, they might also have drawn near, and found in those thundered commandments infinite promises. God commands His servants in the last days to proclaim the message of comfort from a high mountain, with a loud voice (Isaiah 40.9); and He Himself set the example.

The greater the thunder tones of God’s voice, the greater assurance of the power of the promise. The voice that sounded from Sinai was the same that still says, “Come unto Me, all Me that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” Matthew 11.28. When God says, “Thou shalt,” knowing as He does that we are utterly powerless, His command is an assurance that He Himself will work in us “both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” Therefore when we learn that God’s voice is “a joyful sound” no less when it thunders than when it whispers, we shall find rest and delight and peace in His commandments.

How Do We Know?—It is a question that is often asked, “How do you know that God speaks? How do you know that the Bible is the Word of God?”—In the most natural way possible: by listening. If my friend speaks to me, I shall be unconscious of it if I am so occupied with my own thoughts that I pay no heed; but when I listen, and hear his voice, and distinguish the words, then I need nobody else to tell me that he is speaking to me. We know that the Bible is the Word of God, because we hear Him speaking to us personally. Nobody in the world can prove to another that the Bible is the Word of God, but everybody in the world has the means of knowing for

himself. Stop and listen; get apart from men, and even from your own thoughts, alone with the One who speaks, and you will know that it is God who speaks.

In the Prophets; In the Son.—From the Revised Version we see that God spoke to the fathers “in the prophets,” and hath now spoken unto us “in His Son.” “God was in Christ.” 2 Corinthians 5.19. His name is Emanuel, God with us. “Believe Me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me.” John 14.11. Wherever the Son is, there is the Father also. Therefore we see that it was God speaking in the prophets, when we read that “the Spirit of Christ which was in them” (1 Peter 1.11) was testifying. “For no prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.” 2 Peter 1.21. Therefore when we read the Bible we may drop every thought of man from our minds, and listen to God alone. It is when we thus listen that we find blessing. “We also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God.” 1 Thessalonians 2.13, R.V.

The Spoken Word.—Do not lose sight of the fact that God *speaks*. The word is living, and does not consist of mere printed letters arranged in the form of words. This is not said to disparage the Bible, but that we may appreciate it the more, and find the more power in it. The words that we see printed are but the form, the picture of the real words. A word is a living thing, formed of the very breath of life. A man may read the Bible, and read very critically, and derive no real good from it, because he sees only cold, dead print. He sees thoughts, ideas, it is true, but they are crystallized, inanimate. At the best he gets only the empty honeycomb, but none of the honey. The living word is that which the eyes cannot see nor the ears hear, but which is revealed to the heart by the Spirit of God. There cannot be in this any opposition between the letter and the Spirit, although the letter kills and the Spirit gives life; for while the letter alone kills, since it is itself dead, the Spirit that makes alive does not contradict the letter, since it is but the reality of that which the letter presents in form.

“These Last Days.”—In Hebrews 1.2 the Revised Version has, “at the end of these days,” instead of “in these last days.” But a comparison of all the other places in which the same Greek words occur which are found here, shows that we may very well read it as in the common version, “in these last days.” It is thus rendered in many other translations. But that there may be no doubt that it was *in the last days* when Jesus spoke in Judea and Galilee, we read in both the old and the revised versions in Acts 2.17, that it is “in the last days” that the Spirit is poured out on all flesh, which was fulfilled at Pentecost. No apology is needed, therefore, and no explanation, further than a reference to the Scriptures, for saying most emphatically that we are living “in the last days.”

“Heir of All Things.”—God has appointed the Son heir of all things. But “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,” “and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.” Romans 8.14, 17. “He that overcomes shall inherit all things.” Revelation 21.7. Glorious inheritance! But we must not forget that

suffering is a part of this inheritance, for those who suffer with Him are glorified with Him. That, however, need not discourage us: for God does not say that the suffering precedes the glory, but that it precedes *the revelation of the glory*. Jesus when on earth had “the glory as of the only begotten of the, Father” (John 1.14), but men did not perceive it because it was in the form of “grace and truth,” which they rejected. He says that he has given His disciples the same glory that the Father gave Him. John 17.2. All things are even now in Christ, for “He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.” Colossians 1.17, R.V. Therefore even though we may seem to have all reproach and suffering, we have all the power and glory of heaven given us to enable us to bear it; for “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not *with Him* also freely give us all things?” Romans 8.32. Here is the assurance: “All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; *all are yours*; and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” 1 Corinthians 3.21-23. What blessed things God speaks.

Guilty Ignorance.—“ If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that ponders the heart consider it? And he that keeps thy soul, doth not he know it? And shall not he render to every man according to his works?” Proverbs 24.11, 12

The Power that Purifies

Since we did not come so far last week as the close of the second verse, and the third and fourth verses form one sentence with the first two verse, we will for the sake of the connection read the entire four together:--

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers, by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds: who, being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” Hebrews 1.1-4

“He Spoke and It Was.”—The story of creation runs thus: “God said, Let there be—; and it was so.” Wherever His Word came, there was the thing that it named. But Christ is the Word. John 1.1. It is in Him that every thought of God is expressed. Therefore “in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible. Whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him and unto Him.” Colossians 1.16, R.V. By Him—in Him—God made the worlds, because in Christ He speaks, and when He speaks, the thing spoken is. There is a world, yea, a universe, of significance in the statement that God speaks to us in the One in whom all things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, were created. The word, which God speaks to us in Christ, is the word that creates.

He speaks peace (Psalm 85.8), even “preaching peace by Jesus Christ” (Acts 10.36), and so there is peace; for, as the Word is the thing that it names, “He is our peace.” Ephesians 2.14. He speaks righteousness (Psalm 40.9), and therefore the name whereby He shall be called is “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” Jeremiah 23.6. “of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness.” 1 Corinthians 1.30. He is the commandment of God, as we learn by a comparison of Deuteronomy 30.11-14 with Romans 10.6-9. This is seen also from the fact that the commandment of God is life everlasting (John 12.50) and to know Him is life everlasting. John 17.3. Therefore the commandments of God, all of which are spoken through Christ alone, carry with them the power of performing the things that they require. So there is rest and peace for us in the greatest and seemingly most irksome of His commandments, when we remember that nothing is spoken to us except in Christ, and that He is the Word by which the worlds were made. Thus it is that “His commandments are not grievous.” 1 John 5.3

The Light of the World.—“Who, being the brightness of His glory.” Christ is the very essence of the glory of God. As the Revision has it, “the effulgence of His glory,” or as in other translations, “the shining of His glory.” God is “the God of glory.” Acts 7.2. “God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” 1 John 1.5. “The darkness hides not from Thee; but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee.” Psalm 139.12. God’s Word is light (Psalm 119.105,130), so that when God sent His

Word into the darkness, saying "Let there be light," immediately the light shone out of darkness. 2 Corinthians 4.6

"The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19.1), because He has set His glory above the heavens. Psalm 8.1. God's glory is infinitely greater than that of the heavens, since He is the Creator, and they are infinitely less than He. In the New Jerusalem, when it comes down upon this earth, "the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine upon it," for the glory of God lightens it and "the Lamb is the light thereof." Revelation 21.23. All the light that shines upon this earth is but a portion of the glory of God. Christ is the shining of that glory; therefore He is most literally "the Light of the world." In every sunbeam Christ comes to us, making known His love and power. If therefore we recognize Him in the light, thanking Him for every ray of light that we receive, walking in the light as He is in the light, we shall realize that He is "the Sun of Righteousness" (Malachi 4.2), and will rejoice in the righteousness that His word speaks. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance. In Thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted." Psalm 89.15, 16

"The Impress of His Substance."—This is what we find in the margin of the Revised Version, for "the express image of His person," and it is more true to the original. In a vastly inferior degree we see this illustrated among men. The son is to a degree the impress of his father's being, but only to a degree, since nothing on this earth is perfect. The son inherits not only the goods of his father, but also the disposition and characteristics; and this is by far the most important inheritance. A poor man, without a foot of land, or a shilling above his daily bread, may give his son an inheritance that cannot be valued in money, while a millionaire may bequeath to his son so wretched an inheritance that it would be almost better if he had never been born. But God is perfect, and Christ is His heir. He is the living image of the Father, the very personality of God; for "in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Colossians 2.9

Joint Heirs with Christ.—"And ye are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power." Colossians 2.10. If by faith we receive the Spirit of God, then we are children of God; "and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Romans 8.17. "Heirs of God;" not merely of His possessions, but of Himself. "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance." Psalm 16.5. "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." Romans 5.19. We were made sinners by birth; we are made righteous by the new birth. Just as by our natural birth we inherit evil dispositions, and all the tendencies to evil that dwell in the flesh, even so by the new birth we inherit the graces of the Spirit. To doubt this, would be to say that God is less powerful as Father than man is.

But we must not forget that the new birth is accomplished by faith, and is therefore continuous, and is not the work of one instant for all time. God hears us continually, as we believe. It is by the obedience of Christ,—the present, personal obedience of Christ in us,—that we are made righteous. It is this inheritance of the character of God in Christ, that makes us heirs of all His possessions; for if we were not sons, we could not be heirs, and it is the bearing of His image that marks us as sons. "We all, with unveiled

face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." 2 Corinthians 3.18. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." 1 Corinthians 15.49. But all this is only because Christ is "the effulgence of His glory and the very impress of His substance."

"Bearing All Things."—Christ is revealed to us "upholding all things by the Word of His power." Just as we read in Colossians 1.17, "He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." R.V. The word that creates is the word that maintains; in Christ were all things created, and in Him they are kept. But Christ Himself is the Word, the words that He speaks are Spirit and life (John 6.63), because they are the utterance of His own life. He speaks just what He Himself is; therefore in that He bears all things by the word of His power, He bears all things by Himself.

Think closely upon the word "upholding," remembering that Christ is the One who upholds. Upholding,—holding up,—holding all things up by Himself. That is, all things rest upon Him. And thus we come to see that the text really says that Christ bears all things by the Word of His power, that is, by Himself. This is the regular meaning of the Greek word, phero, which we have in the word Christopher (Christbearer) and which is the same as the Latin fero, which appears in so many compounds, as for example, coniferous (cone bearing). Other translations give us simply and plainly in Hebrews 1.3, "bearing all things by the Word of His power," Here is something for us to think about for a long time.

What Christ Bears.—He bears all things. How many things?—All things. Are there any exceptions?—Impossible; "for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, visible and invisible;" and in Him all things consist." Colossians 1.16, 17. All that can be seen, and all that cannot be seen, rests upon Him. This includes the whole universe; but we will confine our thoughts to this earth. He bears the earth, and all that is upon it. The "all things" must necessarily include us, all men. Yes, He bears us, for "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." Acts 17.28. His life is the light of men, and it "lights every man that cometh into the world." John 1.4, 9. But as He bears us, He must necessarily bear all that pertains to us,—all that we bear,—our sins, our sorrows, and our sufferings. As He is our life, it cannot be otherwise than that He bears all that tends to make life a burden. "Surely He hath borne our grief's and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53.4-6

Purification of Sins.—We shall have this thought that Christ bears all things constantly before us as we pass along, for it is involved in what follows. The text says that He "by Himself purged our sins." The word "our" is not found in the best texts. He purged sins by Himself; not simply our sins, but all sins; for "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." 1 John 2.2. How could He purge the sins of the whole world by Himself?—Because He bears the sins of the world. John the

Baptist pointed to Jesus, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." John 1.29. Here the margin gives the word "bears," which is more literal. When He hung upon the cross, when He walked by the Jordan, when He was with the Father before His revelation in the flesh, and now that He is at the right-hand of the Majesty on high," He bears the sins of the world.

Let us come a little nearer to this thought, for it has in it all strength, all righteousness. There is no life but from the Lord. "In Him we live." With Him is "the fountain of life." Psalm 36.9. A fountain continually flows, and so our life continually comes from God. Our life is not in reality our own life, but His, and therefore it is that all men owe to the Lord righteousness. The sin of the world is that men have taken the life and strength which God has loaned them, and have used them in a way utterly contrary to His will and character. The strength with which man smites and kills his fellow, is not inherent in the man, but is God's. The breath with which man blasphemes His Maker, is the breath of life from God. The very words with which man denies the existence of God, are a proof of God's long-suffering and love, in that He continues His life to rebellious men. Sin is most repugnant to God, yet He bears it in wayward men, in hope that His love and patience will draw them to an acknowledgment of Him. So He exclaims in words that should move the hearts of all who hear: "You have burdened Me with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities." Isaiah 43.24b. All the sins of the world have come upon the life of God, and so God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. 2 Corinthians 5.19. Man has committed sin of his own free will; but since it was the life of God that was used in the commission of it, God takes the responsibility of it upon Himself, although He was not responsible for it. Sin is most distasteful and abhorrent to God, yet it is upon Him; therefore He says: "I, even I, am He that blots out thy transgressions for Mine own sake." Isaiah 43.26

In the participle "being," in Hebrews 1.3, we have the idea of cause, thus, Christ, being the brightness of glory, etc., did so and so, that is, having that nature, He was able to do what is said of Him. In a translation before me, which follows the original very closely in this verse, we have the following, "Who, because He is the shining of His glory, and the impressed image of His being, and bears all things by the Word of His power, by Himself made purification of sins, and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens." He purged sins, because He is the shining of God's glory and the expression of His personality, and because He bears all things. Since He is all that, He is able to make reconciliation for sins. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him."

Take now a brief glance over the whole, that we may begin to realize what a wonderful salvation we have in Christ. All power and glory belong to God, but Christ is the power of God and the shining of His glory. God has spoken in Him, and still speaks, the word that creates. All things are upon Him. Everything that affects one of God's creatures affects God Himself, for their life is His life. The sin and the pain that afflict us, make God weary. Everything that man has done was done with God's life, and therefore committed upon God; and God has shown and still shows His willingness that it should come upon Him, by patiently continuing His life to sinful men, and not cutting them off from the face of the earth. But Christ, who bears all things, upon whose life are all sins,

has given His life, and thereby made an atonement for all sin. "Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Hebrews 9.26. Now His life is clear; no one can charge God with complicity with sin, although it was committed with His life. He hates sin, and so He destroys it in giving up His own life. Thus He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, for He bears the sins of the world. For His own sake He blots out sin, and since His life is our life, we necessarily get the benefit of the transaction.

Will all be saved, then?—No; because they will not acknowledge sin nor the life of God in them. It is true that He bears all sin; but if we persist in bearing it as well, either by refusing to acknowledge that it is sin, or by refusing to believe that He bears it, then it necessarily follows that in the final extinction of all sin we must go out of existence also. The sacrifice has been made, and it is ample because it is the life that bears all things; therefore all men might as well be saved as not.

He bears all things, even our sins; but it makes all the difference in the world whether we acknowledge it or not. He bears our sins, and us whether we believe it or not; and if we do not believe, then we continue to bear them -- a most useless proceeding. Since the sin comes upon His life, it is no more burden for Him to relieve us of it, than for Him to bear us with the burden on our shoulders. More than this, it is a joy for Him to relieve us of the burden, because then our lives are saved; for sin must be destroyed by His life; "He will swallow up death in victory;" and if we persist in bearing the sin ourselves, we shall be destroyed with it, and He has no pleasure in the death of any.

What joy and strength there is for all who really believe that Christ bears all things. He is come in the flesh, so that we have not to go and search for Him in order that we may cast our burdens on Him. They are there; the question is, "Will we persist in bearing them also, or will we allow Him to relieve us of them?" When a strong temptation presses upon you; He feels it, for He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; believe that with all your heart, and hold to it -- and you are free, for since He bears it, you do not need to. He can bear it so easily. He has demonstrated His power to resist evil in the flesh; therefore we may safely trust Him with all that we have. You have a task, perhaps a daily round of toil that worries you, and tries your patience beyond endurance; why not accept the fact that Jesus bears the burden, and that He can do it without losing patience? It is a common saying that "misery loves company," which means that people in trouble like to have a companion who can sympathize with them. It seems to divide the suffering. Well, Jesus is a companion in tribulation, who not merely divides it, but who takes it all, so that we may have fullness of joy. John 5.11; 16.33. Believe it, and you will find that it is no fancy, but actual fact. In time of pain and sickness there is ease and healing in the knowledge of the fact that Jesus feels every pang. As with the heart man believes unto righteousness, so with the heart may man believe unto health. Let Him then bear the burden in His own loving way; whatever it may be, let this truth be indelibly printed in your mind, and be upon your lips, "He bears it," and you will have so much to thank the Lord for that you will forget how to doubt, murmur, or be afraid.

Yes, He bears all things by the Word of His power, and the Word is very near us, even in our mouth and in our heart (Romans 10.10); therefore “unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Christ's Superiority to the Angels

Let us take a brief glance at what we have passed over. God has spoken, and still speaks. He speaks to us in His Son, that only begotten Son—the Lord—who was in the beginning with God, and who was God. This Son through whom God speaks to us is the heir of all things, because in Him were all things created. Moreover He is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1.15), the very impress of His substance, and the shining of His glory; and because He is all this, and because He bears in His own life all creation with the sins and the curse of the whole world, He has by Himself, and for His own sake, made a reconciliation, a cleansing, of sin, and is seated “on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” Hebrews 1.4

“Being made so much better than the angels.” How much better?—So much better as to have a seat on the right hand of the Majesty on high, a place that is infinitely higher than that occupied by the highest angel; and this place He has by right, because “He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”

The “More Excellent Name.”—What is the “more excellent” name? It is a name that He has “by inheritance,” and must therefore be the Father’s name. God the Father Himself addresses the Son as God, saying, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” He is as much more excellent than the angels, as the Creator is above the thing created. In Christ were the angels in heaven created (Colossians 1.16), so that it is impossible that any angel should ever equal the Son in rank and power. The place, which He occupies, He has by right of inheritance, as the only begotten Son of God.

“For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and he shall be to Me a Son?”

To this question there can be but one answer—to none of them. But God has said it to the Son. He has said it to the Son, because it is true of the Son. Angels are sons of God (Job 38.7), but not in the sense that Christ is. He stands in a relation to the Father that the highest angel cannot attain to, because not born to it as was Christ.

We also are Sons.—But “behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God!” “Before the foundation of the world,” He “predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” Ephesians 1.4, 5. To us God says what He has not said to any angel, but what He has said to Christ, the only begotten Son: “I will receive you, and will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to Me sons and daughters.” 2 Corinthians 6.17, 18, R.V.

There is nothing in this to cause any soul to feel proud and exalted, although the position promised is the highest that is in God's power to bestow. On the contrary, it produces true humility, in that it exalts the infinite love of God, and the infinite power that can take creatures of dust, and fallen creatures at that, and make them “meet to be

partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” It is the inheritance only of the meek. Because Christ possessed, even while yet in heaven, the mind of humility that led Him to take the form of a servant, as He already had the character of a servant; therefore “God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name that is above every name.” Philipians 2.5-9. It is only in the gentleness and humility of God, that we can be made great. But with all who humbly accept Him, Christ shares all that He inherits,—His character, His possessions, His glory, His name. See Romans 8.17; Revelation 21.7; John 17.22; Revelation 3.12

The Son of Man Exalted.—Jesus sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high—but in what capacity?—As the Son of man; for “now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.” Ephesians 4.9, 10. All this happened to “the Son of man.” Matthew 20.17-19. It would be no more than men would expect that God would give to His only begotten Son the place which He had by right from eternity; but here we see the Son of man exalted to that same position,—that Son of man whose “visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men” (Isaiah 52.13, 14), so that He scarcely had the appearance of a man, and who in His utter abasement said, “I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.” Psalm 22.6. “This Jesus hath God raised up,” and by the resurrection from the dead it is demonstrated that He is the Son of God as well as the Son of man. Romans 1.4. He was by the resurrection declared to be the Son of God with power “according to the Spirit of holiness,” because it was on account of His holiness through the Spirit, that it was impossible for the grave to hold Him. Acts 2.24. Because Christ was marred and bruised and degraded more than any man, and yet by the Spirit of holiness shown to be the Son of God, and exalted to the throne of the Majesty on high, there is no room left to doubt that the very lowest man may through Him attain to the same position. “He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.” 1 Samuel 2.8

“And again, when He brings in the first begotten into the world, He says, and let all the angels of God worship Him.”

God does nothing arbitrarily. Whatever He does stands fast forever and ever, because it has in it the very substance of eternity, namely, truth. He does not, as men do, place persons in a position that is purely artificial, and demand that they shall receive homage because of their position and surroundings; but with God the character makes the position. He did not demand that all the angels should worship Christ because He had arbitrarily placed Him over them, but because Christ was worthy of worship; and the angels saw in Him that which commanded their adoration. In Christ's deepest humiliation, when haggard and worn with the burden of sin and the conflict with Satan, when battered and bruised, His face covered with shame and spitting,—even then He carried with Him kingly authority and dignity, that was felt even by those who mocked Him because of His appearance, but who would have done homage to Him if He had come with the outward pomp and trappings of a king. He was king by force of character, and therefore to Him was accorded the homage due to a king, even while

arrayed as a degraded criminal. In His most humiliating position He had royal honor, to show us that in the most truly exalted position there must be humility. The truly noble does not exalt himself—he has no need to. Only in the absence of greatness is there the vaunting of names and titles, and the arrogation to one's self of position and homage. Jesus demonstrated His right to be highest over all, and to receive the adoration and homage of the universe, by the possession in the deepest poverty and abasement of a character that compelled the adoration of the highest angels of God.

“And of the angels He saith, Who makes His angels spirits [winds, R.V.], and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thy hands. They shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they shall all wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou told them up, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.” Hebrews 1.10-13

God has not exalted the Son at the expense of the angels. Human pride and ambition overreaches itself, by seeking to exalt self at the expense of others. It is a common failing with men, to depreciate others, in order that self may stand highest. When we do that, we do not think that the very fact that we must depreciate the worth of others in order that our worth may be seen is evidence that ours is very small, smaller than that of those whom we seek to depreciate. Only true worth can recognize worth. The chapter before us shows Christ's infinite superiority to the angels, but it does not in the least give the angels a low position. Of their greatness and work, however, we will speak in the next article. Let us now note what is said of the Son.

Christ is God.—“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” Who says this? -God, the Father. To whom does He say it?—“Unto the Son.” The Father, therefore, addresses the Son as God, thus showing that He is worthy of all worship. This is to give Him the very highest position in the universe, or, rather, to recognize His right to it, the position which He has at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

The Word of God.—It is worthwhile in passing to learn a lesson as to how we should read the Scriptures. The words, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,” are quoted from Psalm 45.6. One who reads that Psalm would naturally say that they are the words in which David addresses God. That is all true, but it is not all the truth. The truth, as we see from the first of Hebrews, is that the words are God's own words, showing us that when we read the Scriptures, we should read them, not as the words of men, but as they are in truth, the words of God. This is an illustration of the statement in the first verse: God spoke in the prophets.

A Kingdom of Righteousness.—“A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom.” What is a scepter?—It is a symbol of power. It is the emblem of kingly power and authority. The fact that the scepter of Christ's kingdom is a scepter of righteousness shows that the kingdom is a kingdom of righteousness. Christ rules in righteousness.

He wins, “not by might or by power,” as men understand those terms, but by the inherent righteousness of His cause. “Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of Thy throne.” Psalm 89.14, The margin of the common version has “establishment” or “foundation.” God’s throne--Christ’s throne—is forever and ever, because it is founded on righteousness,—it is righteousness. Whatever is right must stand forever. In this we have a lesson to learn: We need not concern ourselves about defending ourselves and our cases; all we have to do is to leave ourselves in God’s hands that He may work His righteous will in us, and our case must stand, no matter what is said and done to overthrow it. “The world passes away, and the lust thereof; but he that does the will of God abides for ever.” 1 John 2.17

Loving Righteousness—Hating Iniquity.—“Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity.” Men are wont to transpose the terms, to put hating iniquity first. And then too often they forget the second term. Loving righteousness must precede hating iniquity. When that is the case, there is no danger that hating iniquity will be omitted; for the first includes the second. If one really loves righteousness, that is of itself hatred of iniquity; “for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?” 2 Corinthians 6.14. Righteousness is light; unrighteousness is darkness. Light has no communion with darkness, not because it arbitrarily decides to exclude darkness from its fellowship, but because darkness cannot possibly come where light is. Where light is, there darkness cannot be. There is a way common among men, of declaiming against iniquity, in order to show one's hatred of it. It is as though a candle should continually cry out against darkness in order to show that it has no fellowship with darkness, but the fact that it must be always talking against darkness, in order to show its abhorrence of it, is proof that it itself is nothing but darkness. The man, who has no way of showing his own goodness except by talking against the evil deeds of others, has not righteousness enough to be seen. Light has nothing to do but to shine; by so doing it drives darkness away, and that is far better than declamations against it.

We are not sent into the world to chase after sin,—to hunt it out, trace it to its den, investigate it, attack it, and expose it to view to be hated—and then loved. What are we then to do with sin?—Let it alone; simply love righteousness; be a positive force instead of merely negative. If one goes toward the north, he necessarily goes away from the south. So one cannot love and seek righteousness without fleeing from iniquity.

A Kingdom of Joy.—“God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.” What does anointing signify?—Separation to a special office. Priests, prophets, and kings are thus inducted into office. Christ is Prophet, Priest, and King, but above all, King, His power as Prophet and Priest is derived from His authority as King. But what is the nature of His kingdom? We have already seen that it is a kingdom of righteousness; now we see that it is a kingdom of joy, for the anointing oil shows the character of the kingdom. Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit. Acts 10.38. So the kingdom of God is “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Romans 14.17

The subjects of Christ’s kingdom must therefore be glad and joyful. Not, they ought to be, but they must be. Not to be joyful in God is evidence that Christ is not acknowledged

as King. He who accepts Christ, and the righteousness of God which necessarily comes in Christ, cannot be otherwise than glad in the Lord. "Thou hast loved righteousness;"—therefore God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness. Gladness accompanies righteousness just as surely as light accompanies the rising sun.

But mark; we are not to make ourselves glad. We have not to force gladness; nor to simulate it. If joy is not spontaneous, it is not joy. In the world gladness is often fictitious; it is either the result of passing events, and so but momentary, or it is put on to cover up real unhappiness. That is the way the world gives peace and joy. But Christ gives not as the world gives. He gives joy that cannot be affected by surroundings. Jesus Christ was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and He says that His disciples shall have tribulation in the world: yet He was a man of joy, for He said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." John 15.11. And even when saying that tribulation must come, He says, "Be of good cheer." John 16.33. Joy that is unaffected by tribulation and affliction is worth having. Among the many libels published against Christ, is the statement that He never smiled. As if a man of long visage and doleful countenance could ever attract children to him! No; "the joy that was set before Him" enabled Him to endure the cross. Hebrews 12.2. He had the Lord always before His face, in whose presence there is "fullness of joy;" and because He was "full of joy" from the countenance of the Father, our joy can be full in Him. God's countenance is full of joy. Compare Psalm 16; Acts 2.25-28; John 15.11. Because of His anointing by the Spirit, He gives us "the oil of joy for mourning" (Isaiah 61.1-3), so that although we may be "in heaviness through manifold temptations," yet, believing in Him, we are able to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1 Peter 1.5-8

New Heavens and New Earth.—Read Hebrews 1.10-12 again carefully. They tell, what we have already learned, that Christ is Creator. The Father Himself bears witness to the fact that Christ laid the foundation of the earth, and that the heavens are the work of His hands. When He made them they were as a matter of course new; and they would always have remained new, if sin had not come into the world; for righteousness is eternal and the characteristic of eternity is perpetual youth. But because of sin they have become old and threadbare, like a long used garment. So, like a garment, they shall be folded up and changed. When a garment is worn out, and therefore is changed, what follows?—A new garment. If the old garment were not to be replaced by a new one, there would be no reason for changing it. Therefore in the words, "They all shall wax old like a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed," we have the promise of the "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." The same word that in the beginning caused them to stand forth from nothingness, still abides to "create all things new."

Jesus Christ For Ever the Same.—"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." Hebrews 13.8. "They shall perish; but You remain; and they shall all wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail." Glorious assurance! Everything else about us may change; we ourselves change; but He is unchangeable. Often in our changing moods we imagine that Christ has changed. Not so; we have

been looking at ourselves, instead of at Christ. All the sin and misery in this world comes from putting self in the place of Christ. We rejoice for a season in the pardoning love of God; but, looking away from Christ, we fall into sin, and then we imagine that His feelings have changed towards us. Impossible! "If we believe not, yet He abides faithful; He cannot deny Himself." 2 Timothy 2.13. We wander away in sin, but we need not despair, for we cannot go so far away that we cannot find Him if we wish to. He "is not far from every one of us," and He is always the same. He loves "with an everlasting love." Jeremiah 31.3. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness." Lamentations 3.22. And "this God is our God for ever." From everlasting to everlasting He is God, and in all generations He is our dwelling place. Psalm 90.1, 2. The heavens may vanish away like smoke, and the earth may be removed, yet we may abide secure, for the eternal God is our refuge, and "underneath are the everlasting arms." Deuteronomy 33.27. "Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail." He changes not, therefore "they that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount, Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever." Psalm 125.1, 2

**"Change and decay in all around I see;
O, Thou who changes not, abide with me."**

Angels: Their Nature, Power and Work

Our last lesson from the first chapter of Hebrews was upon the power and greatness of Christ. He is infinitely superior to the angels,—seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high,—“being made so much better than the angels as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” The study of the greatness of Christ is not for intellectual amusement, but for spiritual upbuilding; for since He has given Himself for us,—for our sins,—we know that all His power and glory are put forth for our salvation. Therefore the Apostle Paul prayed,

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church.” Ephesians 1.17-22

All Christ’s greatness and power therefore are for the benefit of the church. This is why we rejoice in His exaltation. He is far above all principality and power, so that when God brought the first begotten into the world, He said, “Let all the angels of God worship Him.” Yet of these beings, so infinitely inferior to Christ, we read that God “makes His angels winds, and His ministers a flame of fire.” Hebrews 1.7

It is astonishing what a misconception people in general have of the angels of God. There are not a few who think that they are the spirits of departed men, forgetting that angels existed before man was created. Man was made a little lower, or, for a little while lower, than the angels (Hebrews 2.7), which is sufficient evidence that angels are not dead men, and that men never become angels. When God laid the foundation of the earth, “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” Job 38.7

A knowledge of this simple fact would save people from much danger; for there are “angels which kept not their first estate, but left their first habitation” (Jude 6), and these busy themselves with men, so that we must needs “try the spirits (1 John 4.1) to discern whether they are of God; for if “even Satan fashions himself into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11.14, R.V.), “it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed into ministers of righteousness.” And since they have such power, it is no wonder that they fashion themselves into the form of the departed friends of those whom they would deceive. God’s angels are angels of light - flames of fire; but whoever speaks not according to His Word has no light. Isaiah 8.19, 20. Now God’s Word says that “the dead know not anything” (Ecclesiastes 9.5), and that when a man’s breath goes forth,

“he returns to his earth,” and “in that very day his thoughts perish” (Psalm 146.4); therefore the very fact that spirits come professing to be departed friends or illustrious men, is in itself sufficient evidence that they are not angels of light, but are of the evil one.

But we will now consider only the angels who are God’s ministers. He makes them “winds.” Think what wonderful power that implies. We cannot see the wind, but we can feel it, and can see the results of its working. How the wind lashes the sea into fury, so that nothing can resist it except the barriers that God Himself has set for it, saying, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.” Job 38.11. How in its course the wind fells whole forests, uprooting giant trees as easily as a man would pluck up a blade of corn. Before the might of the wind, cities tumble into ruins, and the proudest structures erected by the art of man are as though they were made of straw.

“But do you mean to say that this is the work of God’s angels?”—Not by any means. The power of the winds simply shows us something of the power of those beings. Destruction and death are the work of Satan, who is “the prince of the power of the air.” Ephesians 2.2. Whenever God permits him (for he cannot go beyond God’s limit) he brings whirlwinds, and destruction. See Job 1.9, 19. In the destructive power of the wind, we see the power which angels possess even though fallen, and thus get an idea, although not perfect, of the power of the “angels that excel in strength” (Psalm 103.20), and “are greater in power and might.” 2 Peter 2.11

“His ministers a flame of fire.” The angel that came in answer to Daniel’s prayer “was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass.” Daniel 10.6

At the resurrection of Christ, “there was a great earthquake; and the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.” Matthew 28.2-4

Peter was in prison in an inner cell, “sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison” (Acts 12.6, 7) and Peter was instantly freed from his chains and led forth in safety, an evidence of the fact that “the angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them.” Psalm 34.7

John in vision saw a “mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud; and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.” Revelation 10.1. And, more wonderful still, he saw “another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.” Revelation 18.1. So mighty and glorious are the angels of God, who are nevertheless far inferior to Christ, the Saviour.

These wondrous beings, are “all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Hebrews 1.14), or, as in the Revision, “sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation.” An instance of their ministering we have already seen in the case of Peter. There was a time when the king of Syria sent a whole army to capture one man—Elisha the servant of God. “Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” 2 Kings 6.14-17

The result was that the one man captured the army, because he had an invisible host with him. We are not told whether Elisha saw the angels before the young man did or not. He may have seen them, and he may not; but whether he saw them or not, he knew that they were there; and we may have the same confidence, for the Word of God assures us that these messengers of fire camp round about us, being sent to do service for us. Therefore we may say with David, “Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear.” Psalm 27.3

On another occasion Jerusalem was threatened by the Assyrian host, whose officers, sure of their prey, mocked King Hezekiah, and ridiculed his confidence in God. See Isaiah 36 and 37. But Hezekiah prayed to the Lord, whom Sennacherib and his servants had blasphemed and derided; and He promised deliverance.” Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand; and when men arose in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib, king of Assyria, departed.” Isaiah 37.36, 37. A wonderful example of the power of the angel of the Lord who encamps round about His people.

Jesus was here on the earth as a man. He was “in all things” “made like unto His brethren.” Hebrews 2.17. He “was in all points tempted like as we are” (Hebrews 4.15), and since it was only for our sakes that He thus suffered temptation, we may be sure that we shall have the same help in temptation that He had. He Himself gives us the assurance that the Father loves us even as He has loved Him. John 17.23. The fact that Christ was given for us, is proof that God loves us even as He loves His only begotten Son, and that therefore He will do as much for us as for Him. When Jesus was tempted, and by the power of the Spirit resisted the devil so that he departed from Him, “behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.” Matthew 4.11

On that last night, when Jesus was betrayed, when He was tempted as never before, “there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him.” Luke 22.43. Later on, when the mob had surrounded Him, and Peter zealously but vainly began to defend Him, Jesus said unto him:—

“Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?” Matthew 26.52, 53

Everything that the Father would do for Jesus, He is willing to do for us, for we are sons with Him, and He loves us with the same love. Therefore in any time of need we have “more than twelve legions of angels” ready to go forth to do service for us. Jesus would not call for them to deliver Him from the hands of the mob, for He came for the express purpose of suffering what was now before Him; but we have the assurance that when we put our trust in the Lord, more than twelve legions of angels stand ready, if necessary, to preserve us from anything that is contrary to His will. Let us try to get a little idea of what this means.

A legion was composed of six thousand men. Twelve legions would therefore be seventy-two thousand. There are therefore more than seventy-two thousand angels ready to do service for every oppressed child of God. How many more we have no means of knowing; we only know that “round about the throne” of God there are “ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands” of angels (Revelation 5.11), “that do His pleasure,” “hearkening unto the voice of His word” (Psalm 103.20, 21), ready to go like the lightning to the succor of those who are in need.

Think now what a host they could withstand, even at the lowest human calculation. A single angel destroyed one hundred and eighty-five thousand men of war. At the least, then, an angel is equal to so many armed men. Of course an angel has inconceivably greater power than that, but we will take that as the standard. Seventy-two thousand angels would be therefore more than a match for over thirteen thousand million armed men; and we have “more than twelve legions of angels” waiting to do service for us. Therefore when the Lord says to us, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee” (Psalm 50.15), we know that at the very lowest calculation we have at our disposal a force more than ten times greater than all the inhabitants of this earth! Surely, “it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.” Psalm 118.8, 9

But there is yet another lesson for us to learn from the angels, besides that of confidence. Think of these glorious beings going forth to be servants of those who shall be heirs of salvation. Angels of God acting as servants, helpers, to puny men, and fallen men at that! And not only are they content to do this service, but glad to do it, because it is the will of God. There is no complaining, no proud objection that such work is beneath their dignity. No; they’re very power and dignity, like that of their Master, comes from their humility, and their love of service. These mighty angels see the work of the Gospel committed to men, and instead of sulking because the high honor is entrusted to such inferior beings, they gladly act as servants to men, and rejoice with unaffected joy at the honors that God bestows on them. Who that contemplates this can have any other feeling than that of humility? Who can stand on his dignity and refuse to do certain kinds of work because it is “menial”? Who can refuse to do the work of a servant, even though somebody lower in position and wealth (after the world’s standard) is in the place of

honor? We may be unspeakably glad in the Lord for all the help He has provided for us, but when we truly appreciate it, we can never let pride hold us back from saying, "Here am I, send me," because the work is menial, and the place of service so obscure that no eye but God can see it.

The Word of Salvation

Let every one, before beginning this study, read again the first chapter of Hebrews, giving careful thought to each statement. Think of the infinite contrast between Christ and the angels, a contrast that is infinite, not because the angels are insignificant beings, but because, excellent in strength as they are, Christ is infinitely greater. Then with the last words of the chapter still in mind, namely, that all the angels are ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them who shall be heirs of salvation, let us begin the second chapter, which stands as closely related to the first as any of the verses of the first do to each other.

The Exhortation

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For it 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, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs, and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will? For unto the angels hath He not put in subject the world to come, whereof we speak.” Hebrews 2.1-5

“**Therefore.**”—Those who read the Bible simply chapter by chapter, always stopping in their reading by course at the end of a chapter, whether the subject ends or not, and who begin the next time with the next chapter, without thought of what has gone before, miss a great deal. Much that they read is to them utterly devoid of meaning. In this case the word “Therefore” is the connecting link between what follows and what precedes. Since the angels, although far inferior to Christ, are mighty in power, even as the winds and the flaming fire, and yet are but servants of God, waiting upon and ministering to men, we ought to give the more earnest heed to things which are spoken, not by angels, but by Christ.

“**The Word Spoken by Angels.**”—“The word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.” The expressions here used indicate that “the word spoken by angels” was in the nature of a command. Every transgression of it received its just recompense. In Acts 7.53 we have Stephen’s charge against his judges, that they had “received the law by the disposition of angels,” and had not kept it. In Galatians 3.19, also, we read of the law that “it was ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator,” or, as the Revision has it, “ordained through angels by the hand of a Mediator.” These texts show us that the angels had an important part to act in the giving of the law, but just what they did; we have no means of knowing. Since the Lord has not told us, it is not necessary, for us to know; and it is sinful for us to speculate. It is enough for us, so far at least as our present study is concerned, to know that the word spoken by angels, whatever it was and whenever it was spoken, was steadfast as God’s own word, so that every transgression of it was visited with sure punishment. “God confirms the word of His servant, and performs the

counsel of His messengers.” Isaiah 44.26

Condemnation and Salvation.—“The word spoken by angels” condemned. If now such a word was fixed, and could not be altered, so that every transgression invariably received punishment, what hope can there be for those who neglect the *word of salvation* that began to be spoken by the Lord Himself? The word, which Christ speaks, is the word of salvation. His name is salvation, His life is salvation, and the word that He speaks is life (John 6.63),—His own life. Here is the situation: Men have transgressed the commandment, and have forfeited their lives. They are lost. But here comes the message of salvation—salvation not only from the consequences of the transgression, but from the transgression itself, so that there remains no sin to be punished. That is complete salvation. Now suppose some of these lost men refuse to hear this word of salvation, and reject all the offers of help, what hope of escape is there for them?—Manifestly none. They were lost before; a sure promise of salvation is given them, but they reject it; if they were lost before, then they must most surely be lost now.

Begun by the Lord.—This “great salvation” “at the first began to be spoken by the Lord.” Note the words “*began to be spoken.*” Christ finished the work that was given Him to do, and the word that He spoke was perfect, but nevertheless He only began it, leaving it to those who heard it to carry it further. Inasmuch as the word only began to be spoken by the Lord, it is evident that those to whom He committed it must proclaim the same word, with the same power. This is evident from the text, even if we read it as in the Revised Version, “having at the first been spoken through the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard.” The word spoken by them that heard is the selfsame word of salvation that Christ proclaimed.

Who Can Proclaim the Message?—The text simply tells the fact, that those who heard the word spoken by Christ, proclaimed it to others. But who have the right to proclaim the Gospel message? Nay, upon whom does the obligation rest to proclaim it? Here is the answer: “And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And *let him that hears say, Come.*” Revelation 22.17. The word was confirmed to us by them that heard it, and as we hear it we are to confirm it to others. All have not the same talents, nor the same circle of influence; but all who hear are to say, “Come,” each in his place according to his ability. There is in the church of Christ no priestly class between God and the people; but “the Man Christ Jesus,” the High Priest, “the One Mediator between God and men” (1 Timothy 2.5), and every believer is a priest. The whole body of true believers forms a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2.9), with Christ as Chief. In the church of Christ there are no ranks and classes,—none who are higher in position than others,—none who are specially privileged to make known the Gospel of God’s grace, and to dispense to others its gifts. “To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” Ephesians 4.7. “The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all.*” 1 Corinthians 12.7. There are many diverse gifts, “but one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” Verse 11. “Let him that hears say, Come.” The case is very simple: each one who knows the Lord is to tell what He has seen and heard with the Lord.

“Ambassadors for Christ.”—“If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new. But all things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation. We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us.” 2 Corinthians 5.17-19, R.V.

Note the fact that the apostle is talking of *any man* who is in Christ, and not of a special class among Christians. God has reconciled us, that is, all believers in Christ, to Himself; and in all who are thus reconciled to God, has He placed the word of reconciliation, so that all true believers are “ambassadors on behalf of Christ,” through whom God entreats sinners just the same as He did through Christ when He was on earth. The same work that was committed to Christ is committed to Christ’s followers, and the same God that “was in Christ” to do the work, is in His followers. What a wonderful and solemn, and at the same time inspiring, thought that poor, feeble men are sent out to the world “in Christ’s stead.” Why do not Christians fill the place that God has assigned them?—Partly because they do not realize “the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,” and partly because they are unwilling that God should fill them even as He filled Christ.

“God Bearing Witness.”—Those who heard, said, “Come;” but it was God who testified. The common version has, “God bearing them witness, but the “them” is inserted, so that we have it in the Revision, “God bearing witness with them.” This is what God did with the holy prophets and apostles, as we read in Acts 1.26 of that which “the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spoke before concerning Judas;” and in Acts 3.18 of the things which “God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets.” God said to Ezekiel, “Get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with My words unto them.” Ezekiel 3.4. So with those who proclaimed the message that they heard from the Lord; they spoke, but only the words of the Lord. God testified through their mouth. Even so must it be with all who hear, and who obey the injunction, “Let him that hears say, Come.” It is the same message that the Spirit and the Bride utter. God says to His servants, “I have put My words in thy mouth.” Isaiah 51.16. “For He whom God hath sent, speaks the words of God.” John 3.34. “If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God.” 1 Peter 4.11. If we have indeed heard, and if we are new creatures in Christ, and so ambassadors representing Christ, it is “as though God were entreating by us.” 2 Corinthians 5.20

Witnessing with Signs and Wonders.—Those who are in Christ, are sent in Christ’s stead. To us the same words are uttered as to the twelve; for Jesus Said not merely of the twelve, but of all who should believe on Him through their word, “As Thou hast sent Me into the world even so have I also sent them into the world.” John 17.18, 20. Now of Jesus it is said that He was “a man approved of God” “by many miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did through Him.” Act 2.22. Having been anointed by the Holy Spirit and with power, He “went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him.” Acts 10.38. When God dwells in His people, the same power must accompany them.

But let no one long for the power to work miracles, for he will long in vain He who has such desires thereby shows that he is desirous of vainglory. Selfishness and love of applause is at the bottom of his desire; and from the case of Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8.18-23) we learn that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not bestowed on such. The power is of God, and He uses it only through such as in humility of heart realize that they are nothing. Besides, God has never promised that all His people should have the gift of working miracles. 1 Corinthians 12.8-11. Christ Himself bore witness that there had never risen greater prophet than John the Baptist (Matthew 11.11), yet "John did no miracle." John 10.41. Of this thing, however, we may be assured, namely, that those in whom the word of God dwells will have the power of the word, or of the Spirit. When they speak as the oracles of God, even though they be laborers at their daily task, the word will have the same power as that by which miracles are performed. "Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given Me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel from Lord of hosts, which dwells in Mount Zion." Isaiah 8.18

"Gifts of the Holy Spirit."—To all believers is the Holy Spirit given. Ephesians 1.13. But "there are diversities of operations" while "it is the same God which worketh all in all." 1 Corinthians 12.6. God distributes the gifts of the Holy Spirit "according to His own will." "But the manifestation of the Spirit is to every man to profit all." 2 Corinthians 12.7. To profit whom? Himself?—No, but to profit others; "for none of us lives to himself." Romans 14.7. God blesses people, in order to make them a blessing. Genesis 12.3. Therefore, "as every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." 1 Peter 4.10. Wonderful calling to minister the Spirit of God to men! Yet this is what is promised, for Christ said, "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spoke He of the Spirit." John 7.38, 39

Not the Work of Angels.—"For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." What has this to do with the subject? Very much, as we shall see if we note the little word "for," which shows that what follows depends on what goes before. To men has God committed the work of preaching the Gospel. God Himself bears witness and beseeches through them. The word of salvation, which began to be preached by the Lord, is continued by men, not by angels. And why not by angels?—because "unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come." Thus we see that "the world to come" has a very close connection with the preaching of the Word, and this is what all naturally expect; but the noteworthy thing is that the preaching of the Gospel is committed to none but to those to whom the world to come has been placed in subjection, and angels are their attendants and ministers as they do their work. What the world to come is, to whom it is placed in subjection, and how and when, together with its connection with the preaching of the Gospel, must be left for later consideration.

Subjection to the World to Come

In our last study, beginning the second chapter of Hebrews, we learned that the word of salvation, “which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord,” has been committed to men. Whosoever hears the message is commissioned to give it to others, telling what he has seen and heard with the Lord. This work, although committed to man, is God’s work, “for he whom God hath sent, speaks the words of God;” and therefore God bears them witness, or, rather, God bears witness with them, “both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will.”

But why is this work committed to men, instead of to the angels, those messengers of God, whom He sends with the speed of the lightnings and the strength of the mighty winds? —The scripture before us in our present lesson gives us the answer:

“For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visits him? Thou made him a little lower (or, “for a little while lower”) than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of Thy hands; Thou best hut all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him.” Hebrews 2.5-8

“**The World to Come.**”—What is “the world to come, whereof we speak?” and where has the writer of this Epistle spoken of it? —The answer to the first question is found in 2 Peter 3.13: “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and anew earth, wherein dwells righteousness.” And again: “I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.” “And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.” “He that over cometh shall inherit all things.” Revelation 21.1, 5, 7. The world to come is the new earth, and we have already found a reference to it in Hebrews 1.10-12, where we read that the heavens and the earth shall wax old as doth a garment, and like a vesture shall be folded up and *changed*, that is, replaced by new. Thus we see that “the world to come, whereof we speak,” is the new heaven and the new earth, wherein the righteous shall dwell.

To Whom Made Subject?—“Unto the angels hath He *not* put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.” But has God put the world to come in subjection to anyone? —If not, there would be no significance in specifying the angels, as those to whom it has not been made subject. Notice, however, the connection: The apostle is talking about the preaching of the Gospel, the word of salvation; it at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and is committed to those who heard Him, that is to men, because unto the angels He hath not put in subjection the world to come. Thus we see it clearly indicated that the reason why the preaching of the Gospel is committed to men is that unto men the world to come has been put in subjection.

But we are not left to draw conclusions about this matter, for we are told, even in the text before us, just when it was done.

When It Was Done.—“One in a certain place [namely in the eighth Psalm] testified, saying, What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visits him? Thou made him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him.” Hebrews 2.6-8. In the beginning, when God made the heavens and the earth, when they were wholly new, He said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” Genesis 1.26. And God did just as He said, as we read in verse 23, and also in Psalm 8, from which the Apostle quotes: “Thou made 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 passes through the paths of the sea.” What was it that was thus so completely put in subjection to man? —It was “the world to come, whereof we speak,” that is, the new heavens and the new earth, wherein only righteousness dwells.

Perfect Dominion, Perfect Subjection.—It is not for curiosity’s sake, but in order that we may know more of the power of the Gospel, and the power with which God wishes all to proclaim it, that we dwell upon the dominion which God in the beginning gave to man. Dominion was given to him; that is, he was made king, and his kingdom was the heavens and the earth that God had just made. Moreover, he was crowned with glory and honor. A crown signifies kingship, and the nature of the crown indicates the nature of the kingdom; therefore man was crowned king of glory. He was made glorious, and was set over a glorious kingdom.

The birds, the beasts, and the fishes, yea, the very earth itself was made subject to man. It is not so now, but traces of it are seen from time to time, and especially do we see it in Christ. He was alone in the desert with the wild beasts (Mark 1.13), yet they did Him no harm. The winds and the waters obeyed Him. Matthew 8.27. The fig tree was also obedient. Mark 11.13, 14, 20. The unbroken colt bore Him through the crowd that shouted and waved palm-branches, as steadily as the oldest and best-trained beast could have done. Mark 11.1-9. Elijah commanded, and the heavens withheld rain and dew, and again at his word the heavens gave abundance of rain. 1 Kings 17.1; James 5.17, 18. God gave the ravens commandment concerning Elijah, that they should feed him, and twice a day for many days they brought the man of God food, obeying their orders as faithfully as any man could have done. 1 Kings 17.1-6. God spoke to a great fish, and it came and swallowed the truant Jonah, and again at the word of the Lord it set him on the dry land. Jonah 1.17; 2.10. Daniel in the den of lions was as safe as in his own house. Daniel 6.16. In these things we see traces of the perfect dominion that man had in the beginning.

Man, God's Representative on Earth.—Some one may say that these cases that we have cited are instances of the power and dominion of the Lord. Exactly, but that does not mean that they have no application to our subject. "God has spoken once, twice I have heard this: that power belongs to God." Psalm 62.11. "There is no power but of God." Romans 13.1. Although dominion over the works of God's hands was given to him, he could rule only by the power of God. God is king over all; He is "King of kings." "The kingdom *is* the Lord's" (Psalm 22.28), and our daily confession is to be, "Thine is the kingdom." He did not withdraw from this portion of the universe when He gave dominion to Adam. Far from it. It was His purpose to rule the world through man. "Verily Thou art a God that hides Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." Isaiah 45.15. He is "meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11.29), and delights more in the welfare of others than in His own. How wonderful! Think of the Maker of the universe, "in honor preferring another," and therein finding His highest glory. And yet that is true of God" for He is everything that He expects of us. So God was pleased that in this part of His kingdom men should represent him. Not that man was by any means to take God's place, for that is impossible, but that God in man would rule.

The Word Made Flesh.—Christ came to "restore all things." It is impossible for us to realize the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus" unless we consider "the first man Adam, to whose condition, and even better, we are to be restored in Christ, who came to "seek and to save that which was lost." All things were made by the word of God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "All things were made by Him." John 1.1-3. "In Him were all things created;" "He is before all things and in Him all things consist." Colossians 1.16, 17, R.V. All things come from Him and are upheld by His life, so that even the mountains are said to have been "brought forth" (Psalm 90.2), that is *born*, as is given in other, more literal translations. The word is life; so when God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass," it "was so;" the word became grass. And when by the same word man was made, "the word became flesh." Thus Adam was "the son of God" (Luke 3.38), although only dust of the earth. God filled him with His spirit, and set him over the works of His hands, so that to him was all power given in heaven and earth; that is to say, all power in heaven that pertains especially to this earth. This we see in the fact that he was to rule over the fowls of the heaven. But the power was not inherent in man, for he was only dust; the power was the power of the word of God, and a glimpse of it is given us in Elijah's control over rain. It is to this power and dominion that Christ will bring those who believe in Him; for "the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High. Daniel 7.27. Unto Christ as "the Son of man is all power in heaven and earth given, in order that He may give it to us; but this does not come within the scope of our present lesson.

"What Is Man?"—This is a question, which we must not forget to answer, and the answer must be kept in mind. "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." Genesis 2.7. Literally, He "formed man, dust of the ground." So that God could say to him, "Dust thou art." God took dust, and set it over the works of His hands. In all his glory and honor, man was but dust. The power was God's and so was the glory. How wonderful is God's power! With a handful of dust He can rule a

world! No wonder that He will not despise “a broken and a contrite heart” (Psalm 51.17), that is, a heart that is but dust, —contrite: ground together, pulverized, —and which continually acknowledges that it is nothing. God will not despise it, because nothing is small or insignificant with Him, and He can do wonders with it. His glory is in doing the greatest things with the weakest instrument. The fact that God created man dust of the earth, and crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the work of His hands, is the joy and strength of the converted soul. In the facts of the creation of man, we learn what God can do with the contrite soul that is “a new creature” in Christ. Man is nothing, but God is everything. Whoever has learned this truth, has the key to the wisdom of the universe.

The Gospel the Power of God.—The Gospel is the power of God to salvation to everyone that believeth. Romans 1.16. But the eternal power of God is seen in the things that He has made. Romans 1.20. In creation is the power of God seen, and therefore the Gospel, which is the power of God to salvation, makes new creatures, or “a new creation.” But “the Gospel of your salvation” is “the word of truth.” Ephesians 1.13. The power of the Gospel is therefore the power of the word, but it is the power of the word that created the heavens and the earth, and gave man dominion over them. Unto men, and not to angels, is the Gospel committed. That is, the word that is given to men to proclaim, is the word that creates. “The world to come” is the world over which God gave man dominion in the beginning. That dominion is to be completely restored by the Gospel. But the second glory will exceed the first, because when Satan attempts to thwart God’s plan, it only gives God opportunity to show His power in a more wonderful manner. In the beginning God ruled the world through the man who, although dust, was majestic in form, and perfect in every particular. Satan thought to show that God could not do it, and now God will show that He can do it with men who have fallen so low that they are tainted and marred and deformed so that they can scarcely be called men. “Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever.” Ecclesiastes 3.14. Therefore since God gave man dominion over the earth, He has not taken back the gift, but in pursuance of His eternal purpose, has committed to man the work of the Gospel, through which all things are to be created new. This is why the Gospel is not committed to angels: Because unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come. Men talk of the power of the Gospel to convert souls, but while they talk of it they often forget that the power that it has over souls is the measure of the power, which God has given to men to proclaim it. To man is the work committed, but the power is of God. Thus He says: “I have put My words in Thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of Mine hand, that I may plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art My people.” Isaiah 51.16. Unto man was the dominion over the new earth given in the beginning; the Gospel is the power by which all things are to be made new; therefore to man is given the work of preaching the Gospel, and in giving it to him, God has given him” the power of the world to come.

'We See Jesus'

Our last lesson was upon "the world to come," and its relation to the preaching of the Gospel. The Gospel is not committed to angels, because unto them God has not put in subjection the world to come. The Gospel is the power of God to salvation, to every one who believes; the power of God is seen in the things that He has made, for creation is the measure of God's power; the object of the Gospel is to restore what has been lost;—to create anew;—therefore its power is the same as that which created the world in the beginning. The earth was given to man in the beginning, and therefore to man is committed the work that will restore it; but as the power that restores it is the same power that was given man over it in the beginning, it follows that its power is the power of the world to come; for the world to come is the world that was in the beginning.

We considered the extent of the dominion that God gave men when He created him. All the power of God, so far as it concerned this earth, was to be exhibited through man. The birds, the beasts, the fishes, the very earth itself, all were subject to man. The dominion was complete.

"For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." Hebrews 2.8, 9

When certain Greeks ones came to Philip, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus," and Philip brought them to Him, Jesus said, "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say unto you, unless a grain of wheat fall into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain." John 12.23, 24. This is the subject that we have before us in our present lesson, for in few words it shows us Jesus giving all and gaining all.

Our attention has been directed to man in his original glory and honor, with all things under him. But as we look at his estate we suddenly see the dominion lost.

The Dominion Lost.—For "now we see not yet all things put under him." As we look, we see him fall, and instead of having the world under him, he has it all upon him. Instead of ruling the world, the world rules him. From the highest place, he sinks to the lowest place. We are now talking of *man*; whatever low place any person has been known to be in, and whatever baseness an individual descended to, is only an exhibition of how low man has fallen. It is only lack of opportunity, or better circumstances that, aside from the grace of God, hold any individuals in the world back from exhibiting the same disgusting vileness that is seen in the lowest specimens. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3.23. The dominion was one of glory and honor, because man was "crowned with glory and honor." Therefore it is plain to see that the loss of the glory, on account of sin, was in

itself the loss of the dominion. From being above all, man has fallen lower than all, for men have fallen lower than the beasts.

Not Now Under Him.—The common idea is that man began with no dominion, and that he has gradually been acquiring dominion, until he has now nearly come to the fulfillment of the promise, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." But this is directly contrary to the plain teaching of the Bible. The perfect dominion was in the beginning, but has been lost, and there was never a time in the history of the world when men had so little of the original dominion as now. "See how vast territories have been opened up by explorers, and how the wild beasts have been exterminated so that the people can dwell there in safety, says one, as proof that man is gaining dominion. Ah, but the fact that the beasts are wild, and that man must arm himself against them, and destroy them before he can live in a land, shows that he has not dominion. The king who is obliged to be always on the defense against those whom he calls his subjects, and who can rule them only by killing them off, has not much to boast of in the matter of authority. Even the domestic animals must be tied, or held in with bit and bridle. They are not obedient to the word of man, as they are to God's rule as was the case in the beginning. The few wonderful instances of the obedience of animals to the word of man only serve to indicate how far man is from the first dominion.

Where We See Jesus.—Our attention has been directed to man in his first dominion, crowned with glory and honor. As we look, we see him fall, and as we continue to gaze, with our eyes fixed on the place where he fell, "we see Jesus." Where do we see Him? —Just where man fell. Jesus came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19.10), and the only way to find a thing that is lost, is to go where it is; the only way to pick up one who he has fallen, and who cannot help himself, is to go to the very place where he fell. This is what the text tells us. If we would see Jesus, we must go where there are fallen men. In this there is an exhortation, an indication of how we should labor; but there is also comfort, and the comfort comes first. Wherever there are fallen men, there we may see Jesus; but we are fallen men; therefore we may see Jesus in us. "The Word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is, the Word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Romans 10.8, 9. The knowledge that Christ dwells in us, sinful men, is the only thing that can enable us to carry the blessed assurance of the Gospel to others.

The Curse and the Cross.—Because of sin came the curse, and the curse is death. But inasmuch as man has not life in himself, it is impossible that of himself he could endure the curse, for once having received it, that is, having died, he would have no more existence. It is not possible for man to endure death. But Christ has life in Himself (John 5.26), and can lay His life down and take it again; therefore He hath redeemed us from the curse, being made a curse for us; as it is written, cursed is every one that hangs on a tree. Galatians 3.13. On the cross Christ bears the curse; not only man's curse, but the curse of the earth as well; for He bore our sins in His own body on the tree (1 Peter 2.24), and He also bore the thorns, with which the

earth was cursed. Compare John 19.2; Genesis 3.17, 18. But man lives, and the earth yields fruit, notwithstanding the curse; nothing is perfect, yet there is existence. Why? —Because Christ bears the curse, and has borne it from the beginning. If the curse had come upon man, apart from Christ, he would have died instantly, and there would have been no second generation. But the Word, which was made flesh in the beginning, continued man when he fell. When man went down to the lowest depths, the Lord went with him. The fact that men live, proves the presence of the life of Christ. Nothing in nature is perfect; yet the fact that there is growth in spite of the curse, shows the presence of Him who alone is able to bear the curse. Wherever there is any curse, any sin, or any of the effects of sin, there is the Lord Jesus, for He hears the sins of the world. But it is Christ crucified that bears the curse; therefore we find the cross of Christ just where man fell. “We see Jesus”—where?—where man fell. How do we see Him?—Crucified, enduring fallen man’s suffering. We see Him suffering death for every man. And wherever we see sin and the curse, there, if we have our eyes open, we see Jesus Christ crucified. The curse is upon all creation; Christ bears all of the curse upon the cross; therefore it is true that “the cross of Christ is stamped upon every leaf of the forest.” Everything proclaims the Gospel of Christ. Even ungodly men, who use their God-given strength to fight against God, and who even deny His existence, are in spite of themselves witnesses to His mercy and longsuffering.

Casting the Burden on the Lord.—In this thought there is blessed hope and courage. “How can I lay my sin, on the Lord?” Ah, that is already done; for “the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Isaiah 53.6. Because Christ “*is come* in the flesh” (1 John 4.3), He bears the sins of all flesh. Not that He will take them, but He *has* them. They are on Him as soon as they are committed. Our part is simply to *confess* Him,—to confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus,—that is, confess that He is come in the flesh—in *our* flesh. Thus He bears our sins. But He bears the curse on the cross; therefore when we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus, we confess Him crucified in the flesh,—in our flesh,—and so that we are crucified with Him. And then we have only to believe in our heart—and to continue believing—that God hath raised Him from the dead, to know that He dwells in us with the resurrection power. What a blessed Gospel to believe unto salvation, and how blessed to be permitted to proclaim it to fallen men!

“A Little Lower than the Angels.”—It is true that the text says that we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor, but we must not forget that it was “because of the suffering of death” (R.V.) that He was crowned with glory and honor. So that before we see Him crowned with glory and honor we must see Him “a little lower than the angels,” that is, as a man, for man was made a little lower than the angels. It is as “the Son of man” that we are to see Jesus. That is the name by which He always designated Himself. Christ has identified Himself with humanity, never to be separated. It was as the Son of man that He was crucified and buried; it was the Son of man who arose from the grave and ascended to heaven and the Son of man, now at the right hand of the Father is He whom we expect to see coming in the clouds of heaven.

“For Every Man.”—By the grace of God Jesus tasted death for every man. It was not necessary that He should come to earth for His own sake. He died, not for His own sins,—for He “knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5.21),—but for the sins of others. Whatever He suffered was for every man, and whatever He has gained is for every man, or, more strictly, for every *one*. Christ’s sacrifice has to do with the individual, even as Christianity is an individual matter. “God so loved *the world*,” it is true, but He loved them as individuals, because He gave His Son that *whosoever* believeth in Him should be saved.

“Crowned with Glory and Honor.”—Note the suggestion. When God made man, He crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of His hands. As already seen, the glory and the dominion were inseparable. Remember that it was *man*—mankind—that was thus crowned king over what God had made. But he lost the glory and the dominion. Is everything therefore eternally lost? —Not by any means. Now we see Jesus, not standing afar off, not standing where man was, and not looking down at the place where he fell, and not giving him counsel as to how to get up, —but we see Jesus right down where man fell, bearing him and his sin. And it is as the Son of man that we see Him crowned with glory and honor. Satan thought to overthrow God’s work. He thought he would demonstrate that God could not rule His dominion through man, even when the man was free from all taint of sin and the curse; but Satan’s onslaught simply gave God all opportunity to show His power in still greater measure, in that now He takes man in the lowest possible position, and exalts him to glory and honor.

How Highly Exalted.—Because Jesus “emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant,” and became obedient unto death, even “the death of the cross;” therefore “God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name.” Philippians 2.7-9, R.V. Yea, when God raised Him from the dead, He “seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in *that which is to come*.” Ephesians 1.20, 21. Think of the highest power, not merely in this world, but also in that which is to come, and Jesus as the Son of man is far above them all. Notice that God “hath put all things under His feet.” Ephesians 1.22. So as the Son of man He has all that Adam had. The second Adam has all the dominion that the first Adam had. But as where sin abounds God’s grace superabounds, and Satan’s attack called out a greater manifestation of God’s love and power, so the second Adam, in that He began the struggle from a lower plane than that on which the first Adam stood, has won a much higher place. Christ, the Son of man, has the highest place in the universe, next to God the Father. See 1 Corinthians 15.27, 28

And We Also.—When Christ was raised from the dead, He was raised to the right hand of God in the heavenly places, “far above all principality and power and might and dominion,” “not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.” “And you hath He quickened” made alive. Ephesians 2.1. For if we are “buried with Him in baptism,” we are also “risen with Him through faith in the operation of God who hath raised Him from the dead.” Colossians 2.13. “So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death.” Romans 6.3. So being raised with Him, is

to share the power and glory of His resurrection. So we read that God has quickened us (made us alive) together with Christ, "and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Ephesians 2.5, 6. That is, as we see Christ in the flesh, suffering our curse, so we see Him crowned with glory, and ourselves with Him, provided we really see Him. For Christ said of His disciples, "The glory which You gave Me I have given them." John 17.22. So as Christ is set over the world to come, we in Him also have in subjection to us the world to come. How much more, then, this present world. To be a Christian, although the poorest and most insignificant person in the world, is to occupy a position higher than any earthly king. The true Christian, no matter how humble and despised, is raised in Christ "far above all principality and power and might and dominion." Earthly rulers can add nothing to him, they cannot confer any favors on him, for they have nothing that he needs, and therefore he has no requests to make of them. On the contrary he is sent with a message to them, and can offer them riches of which the world has no knowledge, even "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

Jesus and His Brethren

Let us take a little review of what we have already passed over. In the first chapter we learn that God still speaks to us by His Son, who is Heir of all things, by whom all things were created, and who, because He is the shining of the Father's glory and the very image of His substance, and bears all things upon His own life, has made reconciliation for sins, and is seated at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, having "a name that is above every name." He is better than the angels, because He is the uncreated, begotten Son, the Creator. To Him, and not to the angels, has it been said, "Sit on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." Nevertheless the angels are not insignificant beings, since they have the speed and strength of the winds, and the brightness and swiftness of the lightning. These glorious beings are content to be servants to mortals who are heirs of salvation, since it is the will of the Master.

But though the angels are so excellent in strength, to them has not been committed the work of preaching the word of salvation. That at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and by Him, is committed to them that hear. The reason why the Gospel is not committed to angels, is that "unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak," is the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwells righteousness, and is identical with the world that was in the beginning, when man was made king over it and all that it contained. "Whatsoever God does, it shall be for ever" (Ecclesiastes 3.14), and therefore the earth once given to man must forever remain his. Therefore it is that to man is given the work of preaching the Gospel, by the power of which "the first dominion" is to be restored. The heavens are the heavens of the Lord; but the earth hath He given to the children of men." Psalm 115.16

But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see, Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. It was not this "present evil world," blighted by the curse that God gave to man." No; from this we are to be delivered by Christ, who gave Himself for that purpose. Galatians 1.4. This world passes away, but "the world to come" is man's everlasting possession, and the right to it has been earned by Christ's life and death and resurrection. Since the world was in the beginning given to man, to Christ has been given authority to execute judgment, "because He is the Son of man." John 5.27. Who has the right to judge, if not the King? And this right Christ has obtained for all men, since He "by the grace of God tasted death "for every man." All who accept Christ are raised to sit with Him, and made kings and priests. "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." 1 Samuel 2.8

"For Every Man"—This right Christ has purchased for every man. In order to prove that the poor are not excluded, but that the most miserable and despised have dominion over the world to come given them, if they will but accept it, Christ the representative Man, who is at the right hand of the Majesty on high as our Forerunner, was the poorest

man that ever lived on earth. His birth was most humble, and His death most disgraceful, and all His life long His only possessions were the clothes that He wore. He had not where to lay His head, and unless some kind friend gave Him shelter, the bare mountain was His bed. In taking this low position, Christ indicated that what He won is for every man. "Every man" - every soul - has in Christ the right to call God "my Father."

"For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory,—to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifies and they that are sanctified are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto My brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I sing Thy praise." Hebrews 2.10-12

Bringing Sons to Glory.—In the beginning Adam "was the son of God." Luke 3.38. As such he was "crowned with glory and honor." But "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3.23. That is the reason why we see not now "all things put under man." The kingdom of glory is such because it is a kingdom of righteousness. But God in Christ is "bringing many sons unto glory," that is, to the dominion over the world to come. The fact that He is bringing them to glory, shows that they lack it. But glory and righteousness are inseparable, are really one and the same thing, as we saw from Romans 3.23, where the loss of righteousness is the loss of glory. God is bringing many sons to righteousness." Just think! He is bringing sons to glory, to righteousness! Then He acknowledges the poor, sinful, disgraced outcasts as His sons, whom He so lovingly longs to set over all His goods. Yes; never for one moment did the anxious father of the prodigal son cease to think of him as his son.

"Perfect through Sufferings"—What means this expression? What did Christ lack that He should need to be made perfect?—Nothing; for His character was perfection from the beginning. He not only is, but was, "holy, harmless, undefiled." "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." The simple citation of a few texts will be sufficient to show us what being made perfect is. When some one told Jesus that Herod sought to slay Him, He replied, "Go ye, and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today, and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected'." Luke 13.32. "Though He was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all that obey Him." Hebrews 5.5-9. Compare Acts 2.32, 33. The Apostle Paul said that his one desire was to be made conformable unto Christ's death; "if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." Philippians 3.10-12. And of the faithful patriarchs and prophets, who died in faith, without having received the promised inheritance, but who wait the resurrection, when it shall be brought to them (1 Peter 1.3-5), he says that God has provided a better thing for us, "that they without us should not be made perfect." Hebrews 11.39, 40. They died in faith, with characters as perfect as they ever can be, for they were complete in Christ; but in a Gospel that includes "the redemption of the body," it is evident that perfection is to be found only in the resurrection, and in the change from corruptible to incorruptible. It was fitting that God should make the Man Christ Jesus, who is the Author of salvation, perfect through sufferings, because man was already in a suffering

condition, and could be brought to glory in no other way than through the sufferings into which he was cast.

“All of One”—“For both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one.” These are wonderful words, in which we are assured of Christ’s oneness with the human family. In this we have the assurance of His sympathy. He is one with us, bound to us by ties that never can be broken. He is the Son of man, and as such He knows every weakness, every tendency to sin, every temptation, every pain, and every sorrow that oppresses human beings. What a world of comfort in that statement that we are “all of one;” that we have exactly the same right to call God our Father that Christ has.

“His Brethren”—Because all are of one, Jesus is not ashamed to call them brethren. Who is it that He is not ashamed to call brethren?—is it the rich, the learned, the righteous?—Ah, there would be no force in the expression if it were only that. What merit would there be in not being ashamed of people in whom there was nothing to be ashamed of? Who are they whom Jesus is not ashamed to call His brethren?—They are those to whom He declares the name of the Lord; for the proof that He is not ashamed to call them brethren, is the fact that He says, “I will declare Thy name unto My brethren.” Now the only ones, who need to have the name of God declared to them, are those who do not know it - which includes every person in every land, who does not know the Lord as his Saviour. It means all mankind before the word of salvation comes to them. Jesus, in heaven, looked down on fallen, sinful men, wandering out of the way like lost sheep, “having no hope, and without God in the world,” and said to the Father, “I will declare Thy name unto My brethren.” As Adam was the son of God, so, though fallen, are all his descendants. They have lost their birthright, and their right to the name, so that in Christ they must be born anew in order to be sons indeed; but He is nevertheless not ashamed to call them brethren. Here is hope for all mankind. And there is a lesson for us. If Christ is not ashamed to call the poor, the sinful, and the outcast, His brethren, why should we be? Who are we, that we should hold ourselves aloof from them? Nay, since He is not ashamed to call us brethren, how dare we be ashamed to acknowledge our kinship with all fallen humanity, and to recognize their claims on us? Perhaps when we learn the full meaning of those words, “He is not ashamed to call them brethren,” we shall experience the full power of the Gospel in our efforts to save men. Nay, there is no “perhaps;” there is certainty. For notice the connection, He is not ashamed to call them brethren; He shows His oneness with them in their utter helplessness, by saying, “I will put My trust in Him;” and then follows the words: “Behold, I and the children whom Thou hast given me.” The success of Christ’s own work must attend the labors of those who with Christ recognize degraded sinners as their brethren, and who labor for them with the same love that fills His heart.

The World and the World to Come

In our study of the Book of Hebrews we have learned much about “the world to come.” “Unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come,” but He has put it in subjection to man; for the world to come is the new heavens and the new earth which God put in subjection to man in the beginning, when everything was very good.

All this we have had repeated several times in our studies, but we can never exhaust the truth that it contains. The earth was new and unsullied by sin, when God gave it to man. By man’s disobedience he lost the dominion. Thus “the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.” “But the heavens and the earth, which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.” 2 Peter 3.6, 7, 13. This is the “better country, that is, an heavenly,” for which the patriarchs looked. Hebrews 11.16. Because they looked for that better country, confessing that they were “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Hebrews 11.13), God was not ashamed to be called their God. All therefore who are “children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3.26) and so children of Abraham, and heirs with him (Galatians 3.7, 29), have their citizenship in heaven (Philippians 3.20. R.V.), where God has prepared for them a city.

“If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Galatians 3.29. Those who are Christ’s are Christians. All real Christians are therefore Abraham’s seed, and with him are strangers and pilgrims on this earth, having their citizenship in heaven. What have they then to do with “this present evil world;” what is their relation to it?—they are strangers and foreigners in it, and are to be delivered from it. Galatians 1.4. Their sole business here is to keep themselves “unspotted from the world” (James 1.27), and to save as many people from it as they possibly can.

What about the prevailing idea that Christians ought to busy themselves with the government of this earth, and that they, above all others, are the ones to whom the government of this world belongs? What do we learn as to the growing idea that the church should interest itself in politics and have a controlling influence in the affairs of State? The utter fallacy of all such ideas is apparent from the fact that it is the world to come, and not this world, that God has given to His people. Instead of being the ones to rule this world, Christians are the ones above all others who should keep their hands off. They are strangers and foreigners in this world, and have no more right to meddle in its affairs, or to seek to control it, than a Frenchman would have in Germany, or a German in England.

This world pertains to worldly men. “The world passes away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abides for ever.” 1 John 2.17. He who does the will of God

abides forever, because he is not of this world, even as Christ is not of this world; but they who link their lives to this world must necessarily pass away with it.

Satan is the God of this world, and they who possess it and rule over it, must do homage to him. He offered the kingdoms of this world to Christ on that condition, but the Saviour spurned the offer. Matthew 4.5-10. So must every one do who will follow Christ.

When professed Christians are full of zeal for the things of this world, and seek to occupy a prominent place in its affairs, they show that they do not know what is the hope of their calling, nor the riches of the glory of the inheritance. Ephesians 1.18, 19. How can they expect to convince the world that there is anything better for mankind, when they seek for nothing but what the rest of mankind seek? If they are all absorbed in this world, how can they expect people to believe them when they talk about the surpassing riches of the world to come? Will a man who has diamonds before him, at his disposal, load his pockets with mud? Will a man who is a prince, and who has a kingdom and a palace, and riches that cannot be counted, dispute with a beggar for the possession of a crust of bread, or quarrel with the scavenger for the rags in the gutter?

This world is but a waiting place. We are expecting the Lord to come with the everlasting inheritance, and we do not know at what hour He may come. Confidently we have no time to take up a residence here, much less to seek office; and the question as to who shall occupy the offices has not the slightest interest for us, since we are to stay but for a night, and "the morning cometh." A man traveling by a night train through France, on the way from London to Geneva, would not think that he had time to engage in French politics. Even so with Christians in this world.

To Christians pertains the world to come. The word of salvation, which God puts in the mouth of His children, is the word that is to renew the heavens and the earth, as well as all people who receive it. The power of the Gospel is the power of the world to come. But if the interest of Christians is divided between this world and the world to come, their power is diminished to the extent that this world takes the place of the world to come; and thus they give the trumpet a faint and uncertain sound. Let us leave the affairs of this world to those who shut their eyes and ears to anything better, while we labor with the power of the world to come to save as many as possible from the ruin.

I will Declare Thy Name

“I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee.” Hebrews 2.12

Who is it that uses these words? —It is Christ—“He that sanctifies.” And the place where we find them is Psalm 22.22, which we must carefully study, if we would learn all that it is intended we should learn from them. In our study thus far we have seen that the Lord’s statement, “I will declare Thy name unto My brethren,” shows us His wonderful love and condescension; He is not ashamed to call us poor sinners brethren; now we are to learn a lesson of even greater comfort and encouragement—a lesson of how to conquer by faith, the faith of Jesus Christ. He who reads the words, “I will declare Thy name unto My brethren,” without considering the circumstances under which they are uttered, loses the most wonderful and precious lesson in the whole Bible. Let us therefore study the picture that is presented to us in the twenty-second Psalm.

The Psalms as a whole are the words of Christ. “David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His Word was in my tongue.” 2 Samuel 23.1, 2. Indeed, in the whole Bible we have the Spirit of Christ, in the prophets, testifying (1 Peter 1.10, 11), although often, as in so many of the Psalms, the writers described their own personal experiences. Thus in Inspiration we have the mystery of the Incarnation. Christ in the flesh, as Man, has all the experiences of mankind, so that no one can have suffered anything or passed through any sort of trial that Christ has not endured; nay, more, that Christ does not at that very moment share. When we read the Bible, but especially the Psalms, with this in mind, we find in them unsearchable riches of comfort.

Psalm 22

But this applies most especially to the twenty-second Psalm, for in that we have the most unmistakable evidence that it is a description of Christ’s experience, and yet it is most intensely human. In it every soul can read his own struggles and temptations, and discouragements,—and, if he has faith, his own victories.

Before we take up the Psalm in regular order, let us note a few verses, which show us that it comes as a whole right from the heart of Christ.

Verse 1: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me.” Compare Matthew 27.46, and the connection.

Verse 6: “But I am a worm and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.” Compare Isaiah 52.14; 53.3

Verses 7, 8: "All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him; let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him." Compare Matthew 27.39, 43

Verse 16: "They pierced My hands and My feet." Verse 18: "They part My garments among them, and cast lots for My vesture." Compare John 19.23, 24

These verses show us that the Psalm is the outpouring of Christ's soul in His most trying earthly experiences. Nevertheless it is "a Psalm of David."

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" "O My God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent."

These words show to us that the experience covers more than the few hours during which Christ hung on the cross; for here we read about crying day and night. It was not only the time that He hung upon the tree, that He felt forsaken, but there were many other times in His life when darkness and despair seemed about to overwhelm Him. This explains the nights spent in prayer.

Not Forsaken – God is Faithful

How many persons often think that God has really forsaken them? What a blessed comfort to know that they share that feeling with Jesus; nay, more, that it is His own experience in us.

"Oh, yes," says one, "but the case is different with me, for I am a great sinner, and it is my sins that have hid His face from me."

Yes; there is nothing but sin that can make a separation between God and any soul, and it was just this that made Christ feel that God had forsaken Him; for the Lord "hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." Isaiah 53.5, 6. It was our sins upon Him, which He bore as if they were His own, that caused His "strong crying and tears." Our sins, the very same sins that cause these feelings of despondency with which we are so well acquainted. Good! Then when these feelings come to us, we will remember that they came to Jesus, and we will let Him dispose of them, just as He did when on earth.

Now comes a ray of hope piercing through the gloom: "But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabits the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in Thee; they trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. They cried unto Thee, and were delivered; they trusted in Thee, and were not confounded." Verses 3-5.

If the soul in trouble will only hold fast to the everlasting truth that God is holy and good, and that His mercy endures forever, he has a sure anchor. This is that which "enters into that within the veil." But when I know that God is good, then I know that He has not forsaken me. And then comes the thought of God's goodness to men in past ages, how He delivered Noah and Lot and Joseph, and Jeremiah, and Daniel,

and so many others, and that He is the same God still. Yes, truly God is good to the children of men.

A Desperate Case

“But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.” Verse 6.

Thus the tempter seeks to deprive us of the comfort we began to receive from the thought of God's goodness to men of old. “Yes; but they were better men than I am; God could well deliver them, for He had some material to work with; but I am but a worm, unworthy of notice.” Who has not had just such thoughts? All the wealth of God's love, as manifested to the men of old is lost on us, because we feel ourselves so unworthy, because of our sins. What a comfort to know that our sins caused Jesus the same feelings of worthlessness and unworthiness; for just as surely as He gained the victory over them, so shall we in Him.

But the case is desperate. “All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him; let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him.” Verse 7, 8. “Many there be which say of My soul, There is no help for Him in God.” Psalm 3.2. Despised of men, and taunted by Satan because of our sins, we are tempted to think that there is no help for us in God. But let us never forget that Jesus had the same experience.

He was esteemed as “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” “But He had no sin to trouble His conscience,” says the one who is unwilling to take the comfort of Christ. Indeed He had our sins, and they rested upon Him just as if He Himself had committed them; for Him “who knew no sin” hath God “made to be sin on our behalf.” 2 Corinthians 5.21, R.V. “He was tempted in all points like as we are.” Hebrews 4.15. It is impossible that any man can be more oppressed and cast down because of sin than Christ was, and when we remember that it was our sins that caused it, we will allow Him, since He still lives to make intercession for us, to carry out His own experience in us to the full.

Trouble may come from every quarter, yet the Lord holds fast to the goodness of God. “But Thou art He that took Me out of the womb; Thou didst make me to hope when I was upon My mother's breasts. I was cast upon Thee from the womb; Thou art My God from My mother's belly.” Verses 9, 10. Sinners are we, and unworthy to live? Yes; but nevertheless we do live, as it is by the power and grace of God that we have lived to this moment. “It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness.” Lamentations 3.22, 23. Why has the Lord allowed us to live all these years, and not simply *allowed* us to live, but kept us alive? —Because He desired our salvation, for “the longsuffering of our God is salvation.” 2 Peter 3.15. He who has “no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Ezekiel 33.11), has no pleasure in trouble and suffering. If He wished us to perish He would not have kept us alive till this day. He, who has kept us thus far, will

continue to keep us, and much more, as we recognize His presence and power. The world has a saying, "While there's life, there's hope," but few realize how much it means. Christ is *the life*; where there is life there is evidence of His presence; and where there is His presence there is eternal hope. All things are possible to him who desires salvation, and who trusts. "Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in Thee." Psalm 33.22

The Cry for Help

Now comes a cry for help in the sorest need: "Be not far from Me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed Me; strong bulls of Bashan have beset all round. They gaped upon Me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and My tongue cleaves to My jaws; and Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed Me; the assembly of the wicked have enclosed Me; they pierced My hands and My feet. I may tell all My bones; they look and stare upon Me. They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture. Be not far from Me, O Lord; O My strength, haste Thee to help Me. Deliver My soul from the sword; My darling from the power of the dog. Save Me from the lion's mouth; for Thou hast heard Me from the horns of the unicorns," or wild oxen. Psalm 22.11-21

In these verses we have the condition of Christ, not only when He hung on the cross, but in His life before that time, and especially when He was in the desert "with the wild beasts" (Mark 1.13), tempted by the devil. He prays to be saved from the lion's mouth, and so may we, for our "adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5.8. It is because of sin that beasts are wild and ferocious; and Satan is the originator of sin; all fighting and devouring, whether by man or beast, is the working of Satan. So that the fierce wild beasts that surrounded Christ in the wilderness, threatening to devour Him, were a vivid representation of the devil, who was seeking His soul's ruin.

In the desert of temptation Christ was made to suffer as no other being has ever suffered. He was weak in body, threatened by the wild beasts, and surrounded by Satan and his hosts; for "the assembly of the wicked" enclosed Him. The last clause of verse 21 shows that He was brought to the last extremity. "From the horns of the wild oxen Thou hast heard Me." Nothing could more graphically express the sorest need; one could not be exposed to greater danger; on the point of the wild oxen's horns, one would think that there was no hope for life, that he was indeed wholly forsaken; but from just such a perilous position the Lord cried for help, and was heard.

Victory and Praise amidst Trouble

While in the miserable condition described in this chapter, seemingly utterly forsaken by the Father, surrounded by wild beasts and demons, with every ray of hope seemingly excluded, He says:—

“I will declare Thy name unto My brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee.”

There is where victory lies. “The name of the Lord is a strong tower.” The Lord’s name is, “Merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.” Exodus 34.6, 7. If when one is in trouble, and in trouble because of sin, let him declare that name, and he will find help. Jesus said: “In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” John 16.33. How did He overcome?—By holding fast to the fact that God is everlasting love and a mighty Deliverer.

Read now the remainder of the Psalm, and you will see that from this point there is no more darkness or mention of trouble. All thought of trouble is lost in a song of praise. But remember that all these words of praise are uttered while in the condition described in the preceding verses. That is the secret of victory.

How wonderful these words of Christ, “I will declare Thy name unto My brethren” appear, when we consider the circumstances under which they are uttered. Out of the depths of distress they come, with a force and confidence that forces the enemy to flee. And how precious are the words, when we remember that they are spoken on our behalf. It is Christ in the flesh who utters these words, and therefore they are for us to utter when in trouble.

Do you seem to be overwhelmed with trouble and temptation, and does everything look dark and forbidding, so that it seems as if hope itself were dead?—There is a sure cure: declare the name, that is, the mercy and goodness of the Lord, to others who are in need. Instead of talking about your darkness and discouragements, begin to tell how good the Lord is, and to praise Him. You can do it, for it is true, whether you feel it or not. Don’t be afraid; there is no danger of overstating the facts in the case, when you sing of the mercies of the Lord. Never mind feeling; stick to facts. The sun shines even though clouds come between. Christ fails not, and is not discouraged. By faith, His courage becomes yours, and then by encouraging others your courage is always fresh.

Declaring God's Name

We have not yet finished the consideration of the words of Christ; "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren." We can, indeed, never come to the end, but the present article will finish our study of the text. Let us read the connection again.

"For both He that sanctities and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto My brethren; in the midst of the church will I praise Thee. And again, I will put My trust in Him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given Me." Hebrews 2.11-13

Already have we seen the circumstances under which these words are uttered, and that they are uttered by Christ as a man, for men. He spoke them in the deepest distress and temptation, that we also, or rather that He in us, might be able to make the same declaration. For we must always remember that it was *our sins* that He bore, and that the fact that He conquered is proof that we may also. To believe that Christ conquered in the flesh 1800 years ago, is to believe that He can conquer in us now in spite of our sins and weaknesses, since the sins that we have to contend with are the very same that He bears. But in spite of them, He declared the name of the Lord.

What is the Name of the Lord?

In the Bible we see that names have significance. Among us, names are merely a matter of convenience, but not so with God. Whenever He gives a person a name, that name describes the person's character. The name "Jesus" was given to the Saviour, because the word signifies Saviour, and that is just what Jesus is. He is Saviour in His very being. He is a complete Saviour, and nothing but Saviour. He saves by His life, His very existence. Romans 5.10. His name, therefore, signifies just what He is, so that we are saved by His name. Acts 4.12

Jacob received his name because the word signified "supplanter," that is, one who catches another by the heels, or by the soles of the feet, and trips him up, and Jacob took his brother by the heel in birth. The name fitted him exactly, for he well understood how to take advantage of his fellow men, and that he did; but when he gained a complete victory over his evil disposition, God gave him the name "Israel," which signifies a warrior, a prince.

So the name of God indicates just what He is—His character. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower" (Proverbs 18.10), because the Lord Himself is a "fortress" and a "high tower." Psalm 18.2. With God words are things, as is indicated by the fact that in the Hebrew Bible we have but one word for the two English words "word" and "thing." The name of God is not a mere empty sound, but is God's own personality. Therefore when Christ says, "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren" it is the same as if He had said, "I will reveal to them Your

character.” The reason why people do not trust the Lord is that they do not know Him. Some will never consent to become acquainted with Him, but those who do will trust Him, for the Word says: “The Lord also will be a high tower for the oppressed, a high tower in times of trouble; and they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee; for Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee.” Psalm 9.9, 10, R.V.

Christ, the Father’s Representative

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” John 1.18. This is the same thing that is told in our text, “I will declare Thy name.” By declaring the name of God, Christ declares God Himself. And He does because He is “the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance.” Hebrews 1.3, R.V. Therefore it is that God said of Him, “My Name is in Him.” Exodus 23.21

Before He was born into this world, Jesus received the name “Emmanuel,” which being interpreted is, “God with us.” Matthew 1.23. That is what He is; His presence is God with us. So that when Philip said to Him; “Lord show us the Father, and it suffices us,” Jesus could say, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believe Me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me.” John 14.5-11. “For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell,” even “all the fullness of the Godhead.” Colossians 1.19; 2.9

Because Christ came, not in His own name, but in the Father’s name, — because “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself” (2 Corinthians 5.19), —His words and works—His very life—were the Father’s, and not His own. “When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am (He), and that I do nothing of Myself; but as the Father hath taught Me, I speak these things.” John 8.28. “The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself; but the Father that dwells in Me, He doeth the works.” John 14.10. He lived by the Father, (John 6.57), His life was but God’s life in Him in its fullness, so that it could be said that God purchased the church “with His own blood.” Acts 20.28

We in Christ’s Stead

Jesus said, “Now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world.” John 17.11. He also said, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” Verse 14. He who recorded these words said, “As He is, so are we in this world.” 1 John 4.17. And Christ said in the same prayer just referred to, “As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.” John 17.18

We are therefore in the world for the same purpose that Jesus was, namely, to declare the name of God, to represent God’s own character to the world. Note the similarity of John 1.18 and 1 John 4.12, 13. The first says, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of

the Father, He hath declared Him." The second is, "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." No one hath seen God at any time, but Christ came into the world to reveal Him. But now for "a little while" (John 16.16) Christ is invisible, and therefore the world must learn God's character through Christ's followers. As they abide in love, they also are "in the bosom of the Father," so that they also can declare Him.

Christ was filled with all the fullness of God, but it was as "the Son of man." It was "God with us," that is, God with man. The same thing is for us, for the Apostle Paul by direction of the Spirit, prayed for us, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that ye *might ye filled with all the fullness of God.*" Ephesians 3.16-19. Although Christ was here to represent God to men, He was also here as the representative Man, to show what men should be, and what by God's grace they may be.

Therefore God has given us the same word to speak that He gave to Christ. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath *put in us* the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech (you) by us; we *pray (you) in Christ's stead*, be ye reconciled to God." 2 Corinthians 5.19, 20. The exhortation is, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." 1 Peter 4.11

Not only has God given us the same word to speak that He gave to Christ, but He has given us the same work. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do he shall do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father." John 14.12

Christ was, and is, the brightness of God's glory, and the very image of His substance. Hebrews 1.3. But He says, "The glory which You gave Me I have given them." John 17.22. He is crowned with glory and honor, in order that He might bring "many sons to glory." In Him we "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created Him." Colossians 3.10. In Christ therefore we also are to be the very image or impress of the Father's substance. In 2 Corinthians 3.17, 18, we have the image and the glory united, thus: "Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit."

All this, however, is by virtue of Christ, and not of us, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to

give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." 2 Corinthians 4.6, 7

This it is to declare the name of God to represent His character to the world through the Spirit's indwelling. As He put His name in Christ, so He puts His name in us, for those who are saved have the Father's name written in their foreheads. Revelation 14.1. And this is true not merely of a few, but of all; for the promise is without limitation: "He who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God; which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God; and I will write upon him My new name." Revelation 3.12. This is not something that is done merely at the last, but takes place now, for here and now must we overcome. Now it is that we are "built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit," growing "unto an holy temple in the Lord," (Ephesians 2.21, 22), and Jerusalem which is above is even now our mother (Galatians 4.26), so that even now we have her name.

What more could God do, that He has not already done? Well may the apostle pray that we may have the eyes of our understanding enlightened by the Spirit, so that we may know the hope of His calling. It is no small thing that God has called us to.

God is revealed in His works, and has been ever since the creation of the world. Romans 1.19, 20. Even the "eternal power and Godhead" of God are seen in the things that He has made, in which man must be included. But man has rebelled and does his utmost to deface the image so as not to represent God. Other things, however, are obedient to God's will, so that in the changing seasons and the fruitful earth God has witnesses. Acts 14.17. This is not enough, however. Not only by a portion of His creation, but by the whole, must God be represented; and the witness to God's love and power and Divinity will not be complete until man, the chief of God's works, represents Him in His fullness. That this may be accomplished is the object for which Christ has a church in the world.

Because the church has not known and appreciated its calling, many sincere souls are in doubt as to God's character, and even His very existence. But note again the verses with which we began to see what is the result of this declaration of God's name in the lives of Christ's people. God's name is declared through their putting their trust in Him, and the result is thus stated, "Behold I and the children which God hath given Me." Hebrews 2.13. That is, when God's professed people declare His name even as Christ did, and as He now waits to do through them by the Holy Spirit, then will the world soon be lightened with the glory of the Lord, (Revelation 18.1) and they can see the result of their testimony in the souls that are prepared to meet their God.

Give God your moments, and He will make your day a success.

As He Is, So Are We

The preceding studies in the first two chapters of Hebrews have shown us Jesus in His infinite power and glory, but nevertheless as Man, so that we might know that “the power of God and the wisdom of God” are given to men. In Hebrews 2.13-18 we have the same truth set forth for our comfort. After the statement that Christ is not ashamed to call us brethren, there are three quotations in proof of the fact, with the second of which we begin:—

“And again, I will put My trust in Him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given Me. Forasmuch then as the children are 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 them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. 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 reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.” Hebrews 2.13-18

- What statement of Christ has already been cited, to show that He is not ashamed to call sinful men His brethren?
 - “I will declare Thy name unto My brethren?”
- What still further shows Him to be one with us in experience?
 - “I will put My trust in Him.”
- How does He still further identify Himself with us?
 - “Behold I and the children whom Thou hast given He.”
- Of what are “the children” partakers?
 - “Of flesh and blood.”
- Of what did He therefore take part?
 - “Of the same.”
- Why?
 - “That He might destroy him that had the power of death.”
- Who is he that had the power of death?
 - “The devil.”
- And how is it that He destroy him?
 - “Through death.”
- And what does He thereby do?

- “Deliver them, who . . . were a their lifetime subject to bondage.”
- What held them in this bondage?
 - “The fear of death.”
- What did Christ not take on Himself?
 - “The nature of angels.”
- What did He take on Himself?
 - “He took on him the seed of Abraham.”
- What was therefore fitting and necessary for Him?
 - “Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren.”
- Why?
 - “That He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God.”
- To do what?
 - “To make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”
- How has He Himself suffered?
 - “He Himself hath suffered being tempted.”
- What is He therefore able to do?
 - “He is able to succour them that are tempted.”

“Flesh and Blood.”—What is the significance of the statement that the children are partakers of flesh and blood? The connection shows clearly, but we have also a hint in 1 Corinthians 15:50: “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.” Flesh and blood is corruptible; it has to do with death. The children are partakers of flesh and blood, that is, they are subject to death; therefore Christ took part of the same, and tasted death “for every man,” in order that He might deliver the children from death.

“Him that had the power of death.”—Who is it? —The devil. What then is the grave?—It is Satan’s stronghold, his prison house. How say some, then, that death is a friend? —That I know not, for the Scripture declares that it is an enemy. “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” 1 Corinthians 15:26. The fact that death is the last enemy that is slain shows that it is the greatest and strongest of all enemies. It is a hard and cruel enemy, so much so that the Bible knows no darkened room, the black funeral train, or even if these be not present, the involuntary tears, the heaving sob, the aching heart, and the void that is left where the loved one was so rudely torn away, all testify that death is an enemy, no matter what people, misled by heathen, stoic philosophy, say of it. It is a cruel, bitter enemy, with not a single redeeming attractive feature.

Death Conquered.—On one occasion, when Jesus had cast a devil out of a man, He said: “How can one enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his house, except he first bind the strong man? And then he will spoil his house.” Matthew 12.29. The “strong man” is Satan, but Christ is the “stronger than he.” Luke 11.21-23. He came to deprive Satan of his power, yea, and to destroy the devil himself. The object of Christ’s coming is “to seek and to save that which was lost, those whom Satan had enticed away and bound. But first he must bind the strong man. This He did, as was demonstrated in His whole life. Wherever He went, the devils had no power; but this power over Satan was the power of His righteousness. Because there was no unrighteousness in Christ, because Satan could not influence Him in the slightest degree, “it was not possible that He should be held” by death, when He voluntarily suffered it. Acts 2.24. He went into the grave as a conqueror and therefore He came out a conqueror. He “spoiled principalities and powers,” and “made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it” - in His cross. Colossians 2.15. Thus is Satan’s armor, in which he trusted, turned against himself, and when death has swallowed him up then shall death itself be destroyed.

Deliverance.—But for all practical purposes, death is already destroyed for God’s people; for if the grave had no power over Christ, so it has no power to retain those who are in Christ. Satan is the adversary, and the grave is his prison, but Christ holds the keys. “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen. And I have the keys of hell and of death.” Revelation 1.18. Who would fear the gloomiest dungeon, when his dearest friend, who is Almighty, holds the keys? Christ bore the curse that we might receive the blessing. Galatians 3.13, 14. So Christ received the sting of death in Himself that we might be delivered from its poison. Even over death “we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” Romans 8.35-37

Sin and Death.—“The sting of death is sin.” 1 Corinthians 15.56. Christ received the sting, because “Him who knew no sin” hath God made to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5.21. So the de-liverance, which Christ has won for “them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage,” is deliverance from sin. Sin is the only thing that can cause fear of death; the deliverance from sin frees from the fear of death. Christ’s power over death, and over him that had the power of death, is but the measure of His power to free the soul from sin. And this deliverance is proclaimed to all. Jesus came with the anointing of the Holy Spirit proclaiming to the captives, Liberty. Isaiah 61.1. To every captive soul, He cries, “You are free! The prison doors are open.” To all the prisoners He says, “Go forth.” Isaiah 49.9. Whoever therefore now remains in bondage is there because He loves bondage more than liberty, or else because he does not believe the message. But the glorious truth, which Christ commissions His servants to proclaim, is that Satan’s cruel power is broken, and that all have their liberty. This is true religious liberty, and the only thing that has a right to the name; and this liberty is found nowhere else but in Christ.

“The Seed of Abraham.”—Christ did not take on Himself the nature of angels. Why not? Because unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come. Christ’s manifestation to this earth has nothing to do with angels, because they never had any

claim on it. "But He took on Him the seed of Abraham." "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but a of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Galatians 3.16. Thus we see that the expression, "He took on Him the seed of Abraham" means literally that He became the seed of Abraham; that is, He became man in the fullest sense, as much man in every particular as was Isaac; for "in Isaac shall thy seed be called." In this lies the comfort of the Gospel.

The Necessary Consequence.—"Therefore, in all things He had to be made like unto His brethren." Otherwise He would not be the seed of Abraham "In *all things*," without exception, He is associated with His brethren. He is one with them. The Lord says, "I have exalted One chosen out of the people." Psalm 89.19. And again, speaking to Moses, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee." Deuteronomy 18.18. The Romish Church, following the tendency of human nature, has made a great gulf between Christ and man. Instead of presenting Him as He is, one of the people, it separates Him so far from them that people are made to think that some one is needed to present their petitions to Him, and to make Him willing to save them. But the Bible presents Him as the loving Companion, who is burdened with all our weaknesses and temptations, and who thus has sympathy with us, but who at the same time has all might, so that He can show us how to overcome; nay, more, who is our Salvation.

How He Suffered.—"He suffered, being tempted." It was no play with Him. He did not come to earth merely to act out a part. Temptations did not come to Him as to one who was insensible to their attractions and power, so that they were not in reality temptations. No; He suffered. He was made to be sin for us. He took the nature of Abraham, with all its weaknesses, so that the temptation to sin was a real experience. But "He did no sin," and therefore He suffered the more. He verily "resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Sin was as much a reality in His flesh as in that of His brethren, for He was "born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem them which were under the law." Galatians 4.4, 5. In Christ as Man there is everything that is common to "man that is born of woman." But He conquered. The sinful human nature, which He took upon Himself, which He became, never was allowed to get the ascendancy. He was always a conqueror, and a conqueror for our sakes, so that we might say, "Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ." 2 Corinthians 2.14

He Can Succour.—Why can He succour us?—Because "He Himself hath *suffered* being tempted." Not simply because He was not overcome, but because He had a struggle. If there had been no struggle; if He had, so to speak, been insured beforehand against sin, so that its assaults on Him and His resistance were only a show,—a sham battle,—then He could not aid us, for our conflicts are real. But the fact that in every encounter He conquered completely, together with the fact that His temptations were as real as ours, because in all things He was made like unto His brethren, is everlasting comfort. Because He overcame, our victory is assured, nay, is already gained; for our faith is the victory "that hath overcome the world." 1 John 5.4; John 16.33. He suffered *in our flesh*. He took on Him the seed of Abraham, and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Galatians 3.29. He suffered *in the flesh* (1 Peter 4.1), in our flesh; therefore when we suffer temptation we suffer with Him, and if we but realize that we are really suffering with Him, and only with Him, then we are as sure of victory as we are that He has overcome. Romans 8.17

The Source of His Strength.—It was this: “I will put My trust in Him.” “He trusted in the Lord that He would deliver Him.” Christ said: “Thou didst make Me trust when I was upon My mother’s breasts.” Psalm 22.9. Again: “For the Lord God will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded.” Isaiah 50.7. “I can of Mine own self do nothing.” John 5.30. No man can be any more helpless than that. But He trusted in God, and was not put to shame. For what did He trust the Lord? —For everything; for wisdom and strength for every emergency; for He is “the wisdom of God and the power of God.” 1 Corinthians 1.24. “As He is, so are we in this world.” 1 John 4.17. The only trouble with us is that we are not as willing as He to confess that we are nothing—“without strength.” Although as the only begotten Son who was in glory with the Father before the world was, even “from the days of eternity,” He possessed all power in Himself as Creator, He “emptied Himself” (Philippians 2.7, R.V.), so that He was on this earth nothing except what He allowed the Father to put in Him. And it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell (Colossians 1.19), because He put His trust in Him. And “you hath He quickened with Christ, giving us the same Spirit in equal measure with the gift of Christ (Ephesians 4.7) that being strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, Christ might dwell in the heart by faith, so that we also “might be filled with all the fullness of God.” Ephesians 3.16-19. This is the comfort of the Gospel; therefore “Now unto Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, *according to the power that works in us*, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” Ephesians 3.20, 21

Christ's Faithfulness in God's House

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who verily was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all His house. For this Man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he that hath built the house hath more honor than the house. For every house is built by some one; but He that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a Son over His house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Hebrews 3.1-6

In this quotation we have in two instances departed from the common version and have used the rendering of the Revised Version instead, since it is more literal, and hence clearer. In verse 4, instead of "some man," we have in the Revision "some one," which is manifestly the correct rendering. God is not a man, yet He has built a house. Also in verse 6 have we, as in the Revision, omitted the word "own" in the first line, since it is not found in the original. As we shall see, the statement is not that Christ was faithful as a Son over His own house, but that just as Moses was faithful in God's house as a servant, so was Christ faithful in God's house as a Son.

"Wherefore"—Note that there is no break between chapters two and three, any more than between one and two. Indeed, there is no break anywhere, since the entire book is a single letter, written for a special purpose, and having one single grand purpose. To begin reading the second chapter without any thought of the first would be almost as unsatisfactory as to begin a history lesson with the question, "What happened next?" "Wherefore, consider Christ Jesus," is the sum of the first verse. Why, and in what capacity, should we consider Him? Because He has been tempted as a man, we are to consider Him as one of the brethren in all things like all the other brethren, only that He was in all respects faithful. No matter how highly Christ is exalted, or how great His power and glory, if we consider Him in any degree separated from us, and not as "the Man Christ Jesus," we, to that degree, deprive ourselves of the comfort of the Gospel.

Christ Compared to Moses.—Christ was faithful to Him that appointed Him as also Moses was. That is to say, Christ was as faithful as Moses. At first glance one would think that it would be more fitting to compare Moses with Christ, and say that Moses was as faithful as Christ; but that would not be true, for Moses made at least one mistake after he left Egypt, while Christ never made any. But it is perfectly true of Christ that He was as faithful as Moses; and at the same time it is the highest commendation to Moses that any man could have. People are inclined to belittle Moses, and to speak slightly of him and his writings; but just to the extent that they do that, they show then selves unacquainted with the Lord. When God foretold the work of Christ, He said to Moses, "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, *like unto thee.*" Deuteronomy 18.18. And

Christ said, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me; for he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?" John 5.46, 47. Therefore whoever rejects or speaks slightly of Moses treats Christ in the same manner.

Whose House?—Christ was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all His house? In who house? —Evidently in the house of Him who appointed Christ, and we do not need to take time to show that that was God. But we have the word of the Lord, Numbers 12.5-8: "And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both came forth. And He said. Hear now My words; there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known unto him a vision, and will speak unto Him in dream. My servant Moses, is not so, who is faithful in all Mine house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold; wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" When God thus appears to those who in these days speak slightly of Moses, and calls them to account, they will say, as did Aaron, "We have done foolishly." But this text makes it clear that it was *in God's house* that Moses was faithful.

What is God's House?—That question is easily answered. The Apostle Paul said to Timothy that he had written to him, "that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in *the house of God, which is the church of the living God.*" 1 Timothy 3.15. Moses therefore was faithful in the church of God, that church which He "purchased with His own blood." Stephen also, filled with the Holy Spirit, said that Moses was "in the church in the wilderness with the Angel which spoke to him in the mount Sinai." Acts 7.38

How Many Churches?—We have already seen that the house of God is the church of God. But the church is the body of Christ, as we are told in Ephesians 1.22, 23 and Colossians 1.18. There are therefore just as many houses or churches as there are bodies. In Ephesians 4.1-6 we read, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all." Since there is but one body, and the body is the church, it follows that there is but one church, which is the house of God. And so it still further follows that Moses and Christ were both workers in the same house, or in the same church. They both belonged to the same church.

The Builder.—"He that built all things is God." But by whom did He build? He "created all things by Jesus Christ." Ephesians 3.9. Christ is "the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1.24), and in Proverbs 8.29, 30, Christ, in the capacity of the wisdom of God says that when God marked out the foundations of the earth, "then I was by Him as a Master Workman." Thus it is that "this man"—Christ—"was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who hath built the house hath more honor than the house." Christ built the house, and Moses was a part of the house, as we shall see later on.

The Christian Church.—It is quite common to date the beginning of the Christian Church at Pentecost, which is about as nearly correct as if one should date the creation of the world at Pentecost. We have already seen that there was a “church in the wilderness” in the days of Moses, and that the church is the house of God, in which Moses was faithful; else that there is but one church;—one house of God;—so that both Moses and Christ were faithful in the same house, or the same church, the one as a servant, the other as a Son. But the church in which Christ is a Son is of course the Christian Church; and as there is but one church, it is plain that “the church in the wilderness” was the Christian Church. Moses, who esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt (Hebrews 11.26), was such a Christian as anybody in those days might well be glad to be. The man who has a good Christian record as Moses had will in no wise miss the kingdom of heaven.

What is the Church?—The word rendered “church,” is from the Greek compound word *ekklesia*, which occurs in the English word ecclesiastical, meaning to pertain to the church. The word means “called out.” The church, therefore, consists of those who are called out, and who come out. Ancient Israel was called out of Egypt, from which all God’s people must come, for the word concerning Christ is, “Out of Egypt have I called My Son.” Matthew 2.15. In the Old Testament we have the word “congregation,” and it would be much better if it were used in the New, instead of “church;” for those who come out in response to the call, naturally come to the One who calls them, thus con-grega-ting, flocking, or gathering together. “Congregation” is derived from two words that signify an assemblage or herd of cattle; and this idea is retained in the Church of Christ, which is His flock, over which He is Shepherd. 1 Peter 5.4; Acts 20.28. All therefore who hear the Shepherd’s voice, and follow Him, are His flock, His church. He was called out of Egypt, and those who really came out of Egypt, formed His church of old. If we hear His voice, then we are His house. But as there is but one house, it follows that all Christians must be in full fellowship with those who served God in the days of Moses.

We are His House.—Moses was faithful in God’s house as a servant, but Christ as a Son; both however in the same house. “Whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” Christ is the Living Stone, and when we come to Him we also as living stones are built up a spiritual house. 1 Peter 2.4, 5. But the same Stone, the spiritual Rock, was in the desert of Sinai,—the Rock on which Christ’s church is built. The same house in which Moses served, and over which Christ is Son, is the house of which we become a part, if we accept and retain the anointing of the oil of gladness.

God does not change. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. Therefore God’s requirements do not change; His plans are always the same. Men despise the name of Jew, and scorn to have any connection with the people whom God brought out of Egypt. So it was in ancient times. It was a reproach to be connected with the children of Israel; but it was the reproach of Christ, and Moses found more delight in it than in all the treasures of Egypt; “for salvation is of the

Jews" (John 4.22), since Christ is King of the Jews, and as such was "despised and rejected of men."

He is Faithful.—"If we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself." 2 Timothy 2.13. He is faithful to Him that appointed Him. He was faithful as a Son over God's house. But we are that house, and sons, too, if we are Christ's. "The Spirit itself bears witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Romans 8.16, 17. Christ, refers to the same thing when He says that if we continue in His Word we are truly His disciples, and we shall know the truth, and the truth shall make us free. John 8.31, 32. This being made free is being adopted as sons; for the bondservant abides not in the house forever; but the Son abides ever. As sons in God's house we are to exercise the same faithfulness that Christ did, and this we can do because He gives us His own faith. "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." Galatians 2.20. Christ dwelling in the heart by faith exercises His own faith, by which He kept the Father's commandments, and abode in His love; so that it can be said: "Here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Revelation 14.12. This faith alone overcomes the world. "Wherefore, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him that appointed Him," "as a Son over His house."

We need not fear the hardness of others' hearts; our own heart is the one to fear. When fully saved ourselves, we can go to any Pharaoh.

You Are God's Building

In the third chapter of Hebrews we have noted Christ's faithfulness in God's house, "*whose house are we*, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Hebrews 3.6. Let us devote a little further study to the nature of God's house.

The house of God is a wonderful building: it grows. Of an ordinary building of brick or stone, we say that it grows from day to day under the hands of the workmen; but God's house grows differently; it grows as a tree or a man grows, because it is alive. See: Christ is the foundation, for "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 3.11. But He is a living foundation, "a living Stone," with power to give life to all that come in contact with Him, so that although we are dead, when we come to Him we also "you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 2.5. Christ is the foundation, the chief factor in the house, "in whom the whole building, being fitted together grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." Ephesians 2.12, 22

The Apostle Paul speaks of those who receive the Lord Jesus Christ as "rooted and built up in Him." Colossians 2.7. Thus we see that the house partakes of the nature of the foundation, the dead material becomes living, and takes root and grows like a tree.

What is the object of God's house? It is for "a habitation of God." God builds a house in order that He may dwell in it. But when will He dwell in it? Will He wait until the house is completed before He takes possession?—Not by any means; for it is His presence "through the Spirit," that gives life to the dead material, and makes it grow, and in Him it is complete and perfect all the time (Colossians 2.10), while all the time growing. Throughout eternity the house will be growing, for where there is life there must be growth. Now is the time when God dwells in His house. "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?" 1 Corinthians 3.16. "For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: *I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*" 2 Corinthians 6.16

The Living Throne

We have now only to consider: "What are the characteristics of God's own, real house?" There is one portion of Scripture that furnishes all that we need in this line. It is the first chapter of Ezekiel, a chapter which we may meditate on with profit for many a long day. That chapter gives a description, as well as human language can do such a thing, of the throne of God; and as is the nature of the throne of God, such must be the nature of the temple in which the throne is. Let us then read Ezekiel chapter 1: —

“Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth *month*, on the fifth *day* of the month, as I was among the captives by the River Chebar, *that* the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. On the fifth *day* of the month, which was in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin’s captivity, the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the River Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was upon him there.

Then I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness was all around it and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Also from within it *came* the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man. Each one had four faces, and each one had four wings. Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the soles of calves’ feet. They sparkled like the color of burnished bronze. The hands of a man were under their wings on their four sides; and each of the four had faces and wings. Their wings touched one another. *The creatures* did not turn when they went, but each one went straightforward.

As for the likeness of their faces, *each* had the face of a man; each of the four had the face of a lion on the right side, each of the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and each of the four had the face of an eagle. Thus were their faces. Their wings stretched upward; two *wings* of each one touched one another, and two covered their bodies. And each one went straightforward; they went wherever the spirit wanted to go, and they did not turn when they went.

As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches going back and forth among the living creatures. The fire was bright, and out of the fire went lightning. And the living creatures ran back and forth, in appearance like a flash of lightning.

Now as I looked at the living creatures, behold, a wheel was on the earth beside each living creature with its four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their workings was like the color of beryl, and all four had the same likeness. The appearance of their workings was, as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel. When they moved, they went toward any one of four directions; they did not turn aside when they went. As for their rims, they were so high they were awesome; and their rims were full of eyes, all around the four of them. When the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. Wherever the spirit wanted to go, they went, *because* there the spirit went; and the wheels were lifted together with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. When those went, *these* went; when those stood, *these* stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the

wheels were lifted up together with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

The likeness of the firmament above the heads of the living creatures^[a] was like the color of an awesome crystal, stretched out over their heads. And under the firmament their wings *spread out* straight, one toward another. Each one had two, which covered one side, and each one had two which covered the other side of the body. When they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of many waters, like the voice of the Almighty, a tumult like the noise of an army; and when they stood still, they let down their wings. A voice came from above the firmament that *was over* their heads; whenever they stood, they let down their wings.

And above the firmament over their heads *was* the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne *was* a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so *was* the appearance of the brightness all around it. This *was* the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD." Ezekiel 1

"The Lord is the true God, He is the *living God*, and an everlasting King." Jeremiah 10.10. Nothing can be in His presence, and not live. His throne is a living throne; from the midst of it flows the river of water of life, and by it grows the tree of life. We have already seen that the temple of God is a living house, composed of living stones, and this description of the throne of God, who dwells in the house, is sufficient to show us the nature of the direction and control of the house.

Read what is said in the twentieth verse of the living creatures that compose the throne of God: "Whithersoever the Spirit was to go, they went;" "for the Spirit of life was in the wheels." (Marginal reading). God is not confined to one place; He moves. He "has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet." Nahum 1.3. And wherever He goes, His throne goes with Him. It moves by the influence of His Spirit that pervades it. God thinks, and the thought at once results in action on the part of the living creatures about Him.

Notice that the creatures composing God's throne are all different, as different one from the other as can be imagined; yet there is no disagreement. One does not start off in one direction, and another in another direction, so that there must be a little time lost in settling which way they shall go. That would necessarily be the way, even with the best of instructions, if they each had their own mind; but the mind of God and that alone, pervades each one, so that all move in unison. It is the perfection of organization.

The nearest earthly approach to that perfection of united action, is a well-disciplined army. See it in motion; the different divisions move like clockwork, and all the members of any division move as if they were but one man. What causes it? —The word of the commanding officer. He thinks what he wants them to do, and puts that thought into words. At once that thought is transferred to the minds of the men under him, and is transformed into action. Long drill has trained them to hold their minds vacant, so far as their own thoughts are concerned, and to be simply machines moved by the will of the commander. He thinks for them.

The Perfection of Unity to be seen in Christ's Church

That is the nearest approach to God's perfect organization that man can produce, and men have made the mistake of trying to model the church after the same pattern, and a very good machine they have often succeeded in producing; but it was after all only a human affair, and not the church of God. In the army, and also in the church when it is at the highest point of perfection that human government and regulation can produce we have *uniformity*; but in the church of God, the house of God, we have *unity*. All the members are different, with different capacities and different work to do, but all are united as the various members of the body. The Lord is the Head of the body,—His Spirit fills the house,—so that as He thinks, the members of the body, the parts of the house, act. His life is their life.

The most common mistake among professed Christians is that of reasoning from their own experience, or from that of others. They look to "church history" to see what the church ought to be and do, forgetting that the history of the true church has never been recorded on earth. All nature, even though marred by the curse of man's sin, bears witness to God, because everything that God has made is completely subject to Him. Man alone is rebellious. But the witness must be just as complete through man as it is through the lower creation. "When human agents choose the will of God, and are conformed to the character of Christ, Jesus acts through their organs and faculties." (Healthful Living 11) What a wonderful condition of things! How desirable, and how blessed the assurance that it is a possibility!

What power the church will have when each individual member is the habitation of God through the Spirit. It will be nothing less than infinite power. Then will speedily be fulfilled the petition, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." That time will come as soon as God's Word, that living and powerful Word, is regarded as the supreme and final authority and is given free course. Then the house on earth, like the household in heaven, will "do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word."

Believe Today, and Rest

We have now studied as far as the sixth verse of the third chapter of Hebrews. The next verse begins with “Wherefore,” the reference being to the statement in verse 6 that we are the house of God “if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” Faithfulness is the one, essential thing, “wherefore” the exhortation is,

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; while it is said, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke; howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was He grieved forty years? was it not with them that sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” Hebrews 3.12-19

These verses give, the direct connection from the sixth verse, but verses 7-11 contain an explanation in parenthesis, and these we must also have before us for our present study: —

“As the Holy Spirit saith, “Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted Me, proved He, and saw My works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known My ways. So I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest.”” Hebrews 3.7-11

A Few Questions on the Text directing the attention sharply to just what is said, will help us to understand it better than pages of comments. We begin, for the sake of the connection, with the sixth verse, taking the text in the order that we have quoted it.

- On what conditions are we the house of God?
 - “If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”
- What exhortation is therefore pertinent?
 - “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in stay of you an evil heart of unbelief.”
- What would an unbelieving heart cause?
 - “Departing from the living God.”
- What is necessary in order to be really partakers of Christ?

- That “we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.”
- What in the meantime is said?
 - “Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation.”
- When was “the provocation,” to which the Holy Spirit refers?
 - “The day of temptation in the wilderness.” Verse 8
- Who when they heard did provoke?
 - “All that came out of Egypt by Moses.”
- How long did they grieve Him?
 - “Forty years.”
- What does God say they did?
 - “Your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years.”
- What did He say of their way?
 - “They do always err in their hearts.”
- Although they saw God’s works, what did they not learn?
 - “They have not known My ways.”
- What did He therefore swear?
 - “They shall not enter into My rest.”
- To whom did God swear that they should not enter into His rest?
 - “To them that believed not.”
- Why could they not enter into rest?
 - “Because of unbelief.”

Faithfulness the Essential Thing.—“God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” 1 Corinthians 1.9. Faithfulness is the rule of His house, for even men’s lack of faith cannot make of none effect the faithfulness of God. Romans 3.3, R.V. He is true, although every man be a liar. Moses, the servant of God, was faithful in all His house, and Christ, the Son, was likewise faithful, His faithfulness is identical with that of the Father, for “if we believe not, yet He abides faithful; He cannot deny Himself.” 2 Timothy 2.13. Therefore if we would be a part of the house of God, members of His family, we must “hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” “The faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14.12), and nothing less, distinguishes the household of God. It is a “household of faith.” Galatians 6.10

“Wherefore Take Heed”?—“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.” 2 Corinthians 13.5. Faith is that which joins us to the Lord. “An evil heart of unbelief”

means, “departing from the living God, who is the sole source of the life of the house. The house is built on the living Stone; God’s presence gives life to the throne on which He sits, and to the soul in which He dwells. Departure from Him means certain death. Wherefore take heed, and keep the faith.

“An Evil Heart of Unbelief.”—It is the evil heart that disbelieves. It is the dark fog that rises from the low marshy ground of sin that obscures the sight, and makes it difficult to see the truth. It is true that unbelief is the primary cause of sin, but sin in its turn breeds unbelief. The unbelieving heart is always evil, no matter how fair the exterior may be. As long as a man loves sin, so long will unbelief cloud his mind; but as soon as the heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away, and the soul rejoices in the glory of God’s sunlight. 2 Corinthians 3.16-18; 4.2-4

When Shall We Believe?—There is only one time, and that is, Today. “Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” “Exhort one another daily, while it is called Today.” Yesterday is gone; it is not in existence. Neither is there any such time as tomorrow; it is not yet in existence, and when that which men call tomorrow comes, behold, it is today. Every man has all the time there is, and that is today; no other time has God ever given to men. He saith, “I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee; behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” 2 Corinthians 6.2. What is the name of the day of salvation? — *Today*; “it is called Today.” He who rejects salvation today, rejects it forever. “Today” may seem to be a very long day, but be sure that the night is coming.

The Cause of Deafness.—“Today, if ye, will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” Here we see the effect that the heart has on the ears. The heart is deceitful above all things, because it is sinful, “desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17.9; Mark 7.21-23), and sin is deceitful. “The deceitfulness of sin” hardens the heart (Hebrews 3.13), and a hard heart makes the ears deaf to the voice of the Holy Spirit. It is not an unnecessary exhortation that is so often repeated in the book of Revelation: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

God’s Works and His Ways.—God says of the children of Israel in the wilderness, they “saw My works forty years,” but “they have not known My ways.” “He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.” Psalm 103.7. Note that while all the children of Israel saw the acts or works of the Lord, Moses only is mentioned as knowing His ways. Why? —Because Moses had his eyes as well as his ears open. His heart turned to the Lord, and therefore he saw Him with unveiled face. A hard heart, “an evil heart of unbelief,” makes one blind, as well as deaf. The only reason why God did not make known His ways unto the children of Israel, was that they would not see; for God did all on His part. He showed them His works, and that is the only way any person can make himself truly known. If we know all of a man’s doings, then we know the man himself. Although Israel saw God’s “wonderful works,” “they soon forgot His works,” “and His wonders that He had showed them” (Psalm 78.4-11; 106.13); therefore they did not know His ways.

The Same Things Revealed to Us.—We have no grounds on which to accuse the Israelites, for we are equally guilty with them. We have all seen the wonderful works of the Lord, and yet have remained in ignorance of God's ways. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork." Psalm 19.1. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honorable and glorious; and His righteousness endures forever. He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered," or, more literally, "He hath made a memorial for His wonderful works." Psalm 111.4. What this memorial is will appear in our next study. But the fact is, that God's works are all about us, and they reveal Him to us. "For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made." Romans 1.20. Every day of our lives we have been beholding the works of God, which clearly reveal "the invisible things of Him," even "His everlasting power and divinity and yet we have not known His ways. Every day God is doing just as wonderful miracles as the dividing of the Red Sea, yet people will stand and look at these, and gravely discuss whether the age of miracles has not passed! Truly there is need for the exhortation, "Take heed."

Knowledge and Life.—What is it to know God?—It is eternal life. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." John 17.3. He who knows God, enters upon the life eternal, having passed out of death into life. Compare 1 John 3.14 and 4.7. We must not make the mistake of confounding eternal life with immortality. Both life and immortality are brought to light through the Gospel (2 Timothy 1.10), but immortality is not bestowed until the "coming of the Lord and the resurrection, at the last trump." 1 Corinthians 15.51-54. Eternal life, however, is to be enjoyed now, if ever, for we are saved only by the life of Christ "made manifest in our mortal flesh." 2 Corinthians 4.11. Compare Romans 5.10. Only life, eternal life, can conquer death; therefore he who would have the victory over death and the grave, must have eternal life, which is laid hold of only by faith. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things," that is, the wonderful works of the Lord, "even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." Psalm 107.43. So will they rejoice in the hope, which the possession of life eternal gives.

Eternal Life and Rest.—The true God, the knowledge of whom is eternal life, is "the living God and an everlasting King." Jeremiah 10.10. But "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faintest not, neither is weary." Isaiah 40.28. That is because He is the living God. The characteristic of eternity is freshness. Eternal life is everlasting youth, so that "they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint." Isaiah 40.31. Eternal life is rest, ever rest, —rest that remains no matter what disturbances arise. It was to this rest that God called ancient Israel, but into which they could not enter because of unbelief. God swore that they should not enter into His rest, not because He would not permit it, but because it was impossible. They rejected faith, the only thing that brings rest. "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." If they had believed, they would have entered in. We may also enter into the same rest that was offered them, and enter in *today*, if we "take heed" to the voice that calls, "Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not our hearts. "Hear, and your soul shall live," and rest in the Lord."

Resting in God

Before we begin the fourth chapter of Hebrews, let us briefly review the third chapter; for, although we have a chapter heading thrown in, there is not the slightest break in the subject. It is impossible to understand the fourth chapter unless the third stands clearly in mind.

In the beginning of the third chapter we are told about the house of God, the rule of which is faithfulness. "God is faithful," and Christ the Son was faithful over His house, even as Moses was faithful as a servant. We are God's house, provided we hold fast our confidence, that is, provided we are faithful to the end.

If we are thus faithful, we shall find rest in God's house, for it is a place of rest. When Naomi told her two daughters-in-law to return to their own people, because she herself was about to go back to Judea, she said, "The Lord grant that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband." Ruth 1.9. God sustains many relations to His people; indeed He is the fullness of every relation, so that He is Father, Brother, King, and Husband, for He represents Himself as married to the house of Israel. So He gives us the blessing of rest in His house. We become members of God's household by faith (for it is a "household of faith" (Galatians 6.10), and faith brings rest, as we learn from the statement that "they could not enter in because of unbelief." Hebrews 3.19

Ancient Israel, like the people of these days, saw the works of the Lord, but did not become acquainted with His ways, and therefore they did not enter into His rest. It needs no argument to prove that it is impossible to enter into the Lord's rest while ignorant of His ways; that is self-evident. To know God is eternal life, and there is no eternal life except in the knowledge of Him; but eternal life is eternal rest, because it is everlasting youth. It is unconquerable. Life is light and the light shines in the darkness, and darkness does not quench it. The darker it is, the more brightly does the true light appear. Rest, therefore, God's rest, the only real and enduring rest, is found only in God's life, in an experimental knowledge of His ways.

The Characteristic of Rest

Rest must follow labor. Indeed, rest presupposes labor. But more than this: rest means labor completed. No one can rest from a work that is unfinished. It is true that we can cease our physical exertions for a time, but we do not rest from the labor until we are done with it. We may say that we are resting; but if we must again take up our round of work that shows that we do not rest from our labor. Still more: one does not rest from a task that is unfinished, even though for a time he remits his exertions, for his mind is not at rest. If the night comes on, and we see that there is a task that we ought to have completed, but which is still unfinished, our rest is unsatisfactory. We have regret for the past and anxiety for the future, and though we lay our bodies down to sleep, our rest is broken. Now it is an undeniable truth that,

**“Labor with what zeal we will,
Something still remains undone,
Something uncompleted still
Waits the rising of the sun.**

**“By the bedside, on the stair,
At the threshold, near the gates,
With its menace or its prayer,
Like a mendicant it waits;**

**“Waits, and will not go away;
Waits, and will not be gainsayed;
By the cares of yesterday
Each today is heavier made;**

**“Till at length the burden seems
Greater than our strength can bear,
Heavy as the weight of dreams,
Pressing on us everywhere.**

**And we stand from day today,
Like the dwarfs of times gone by,
Who, as Northern legends say,
On their shoulders held the sky.”**

Perfect Work.—But in order that there shall be real, perfect rest, something more is necessary than that a piece of work shall merely be done, in the ordinary use of the word; it must be *well done*. This is really comprehended in the expression, “work finished,” for nothing is done until it is done right. Perfect rest must follow perfect work—work all done, and work well done. When work is thus done, then rest must follow; one cannot in such a case do anything else than rest, and Oh, how sweet such rest is! How inexpressibly enjoyable! What would not one give for such rest? And then to think of rest not merely for a day or an hour, but for ever! That alone would make heaven, even on this old earth.

Unknown to this World.—Such rest as that this world cannot give, because it knows it not. No man can find it in his own work, for no man can, as already seen, do perfect work. “Every man at his best state is altogether vanity.” Psalm 39.5. “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” Isaiah 64.6. Of the whole world it is said, “They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Romans 3.12. “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Romans 8.7. Every man finds in himself the proof of this. No man ever yet did a thing that could not be improved, and of which he himself could not see the possibility of improvement. If a man invents a machine, he spends the rest of his life making improvements on it. If he writes

a book, it is no sooner finished than he would like to get out a new edition. Who has not at some time said, "If I had that to do over again"—or "If I had my life to live over again." How then can a mind find rest by his own works? Impossible; because since his work is always incomplete, imperfect, and there is something always before him to be done. And so the man toils and struggles in the vain attempt to reach perfection and thus find rest for his soul. Vain attempt indeed it is, for the more he toils and struggles, the more worn out he becomes. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Isaiah 57.20. If he persists in seeking rest by his own efforts, he will work himself into the grave, literally tired to death.

Perfect Rest with God.—"As for God, His way is perfect." Psalm 18.30. He does everything right, and does it right the first time. "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, not anything taken from it; and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him." Ecclesiastes 3.14. God never has to say, "If I had that to do over again, I should make this improvement." His goodness is unsearchable, and His righteousness endures forever. And He has given Himself to us, that we might be partakers of His perfection. "Oh, how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!" Psalm 31.19. Therefore Christ, who is the fullness of God, and whose name is "God with us," says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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." Matthew 11.28-30

Rest in Confidence.—In God's house is rest, and we are His house "if we hold fast the confidence." Hebrews 3.6. Rest, therefore, comes by faith. This is self-evident from the fact that a man cannot find rest in himself. Rest is found only in meekness and lowliness. A man must acknowledge the truth, namely, that in him dwells no good thing, before he will accept the perfection that God alone gives. "For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, in returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not." Isaiah 30.15. No; men in these days, just as Israel of old, "being ignorant of God's righteousness; and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Romans 10.3. Men who will acknowledge they cannot do their own work as well as they would like to, and that they cannot accomplish as much of it as they would like to, feel themselves perfectly capable of doing God's work. As if any being less than God could do the work of God! As though the creature could do the work of the Creator!

When the Jews asked, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" Jesus replied, "This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." John 6.28, 29. A child cannot do a man's work; but, compared with God, the greatest man is less than the puniest babe; therefore it is folly for any man to think of doing God's work. "His work is honorable and glorious." Psalm

111.3. God's work is nothing less than creation. Now all God's works are in Christ; for "in Him were all things created, in the heavens, and upon the earth, things visible, and things invisible, . . . and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." Colossians 1.16, 17. Therefore whoever receives Christ, receives the perfect works of God. But we receive Christ by believing on Him. John 1.12. Christ dwells in the heart by faith. Ephesians 3.17. So it is that the work of God is to believe on Him whom God hath sent. The Jews in the days of Moses, like the Jews in the days of Christ's earthly ministry, would not accept Christ and the rest that He alone can give. "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Hebrews 3.19

An Exhortation to Us.—"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Hebrews 4.1. You stand by faith. Be not high minded, but fear." Romans 11.20. It is the same exhortation that is given in Hebrews 3.12: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." These exhortations, following as they do immediately after the statement that "they could not enter in because of unbelief," show us that the same rest that was held out to them is offered to us. We are to take heed lest we lose it even as they did. This is shown even more plainly still in the next verse.

The Same Gospel.—"For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Hebrews 4.2. There are some professed believers of the Bible, who deny that the Gospel is more than nineteen hundred years old, claiming that it was not preached before the appearance of Christ on earth. Such ones virtually deny any salvation for all those who lived before Christ's first advent; for salvation is by Jesus Christ alone (Acts 4.10-12), and the preaching of Christ is the Gospel (Romans 1.1-3); if, then, there was no Gospel for four thousand years, then of course Christ was not preached in all that time, and so there was no salvation. But the Psalms, to say nothing of the rest of the Bible, are full of Christ. How often do we find references to the Lord's Anointed, namely, Christ, for "Christ" means "anointed." Jesus says that Moses wrote of Him (John 5.45-47), and Paul writes: "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached the Gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed." Galatians 3.8. Ancient Israel "drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ." 1 Corinthians 10.4. But as they did not drink by faith, the Word—Christ—did not profit them. They murmured, and in their murmuring they tempted Christ. 1 Corinthians 10.9. There is only one Gospel (Galatians 1.8, 9), so that the Gospel, which they had, is identical with that which is now preached to us. See 1 Peter 1.10-12. Most men would think that it would be putting it strongly to say that the Gospel was preached unto them as well as unto us; but the apostle tells us that the Gospel is preached to us, as well as it was to them; so that we have no more excuse than they had. They had the first opportunity; we are simply called to take what they refused. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

Entering into Rest.—“For we who have believed do enter into rest.” Hebrews 4.3. The proof of this follows in the statement, “As I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest.” That was because they did not believe. The positive side of that oath is that those who believe shall enter into rest. The rest *remains*, is left behind for us, for it existed in the days of Israel in the wilderness, and they would not go in; therefore we enter in as soon as we believe. This is seen from the statement already quoted, “This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.” John 6.29. But the work of God is complete and perfect; therefore to have the work of God is to have His rest.

Work Finished and Rest Prepared.—They could not enter into God’s rest, because of unbelief, “although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.” What does that signify? —simply that the rest was prepared from the foundation of the world; for finished work means rest. When work is finished, rest must follow.

Remember that the rest offered is God’s rest; there is, indeed, no other. This rest is found in Christ, who calls all the weary to Himself. The rest is found in Christ, because in Him are all the works of God; He is the righteousness of God. Only in Him is there righteousness and strength.

Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The power of the cross is creative power, for “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Corinthians 5.17), or, as the margin of the Revision has it, “there is a new creation.” So we see the cross from the foundation of the world.

“By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast; for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before, prepared that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2.8-10, margin. We are created in Christ unto good works, but long before we were created the good works were prepared for us; they were finished from the foundation of the world. As soon as man was created, he found everything prepared for him. The Divine power of God had provided for him all things that pertain unto life and godliness. But as before stated, the cross of Christ is creation; therefore on the cross Christ cried out, “It is finished,” thus indicating that in His cross, and in that alone, could be found the perfect works that were prepared for man from the foundation of the world.

What a glorious Gospel of great joy! The works of righteousness are all done, and we have but to accept them in Christ, and walk in them. “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes.” Romans 10.4. He has overcome the world (John 16.33) and the warfare is finished in Him. Isaiah 40.2. Therefore our faith in Christ is the victory that has overcome the world. There is no other way under heaven that men can get the victory over sin, except by grasping and holding fast by faith to the fact that sin and Satan have already been conquered. Oh, why will weary, sin-laden souls seek to get righteousness by their own efforts, when the perfect righteousness of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ is all ready to their hand? Cease your vain strivings, and allow God to work in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

**“Come, weary soul, and here find rest,
Accept redemption, and be blest;
The Christ who died, by God is crowned,
To pardon on redemption ground.”**

The Seal of Perfection.—The works were finished from the foundation of the world. Creation and redemption are the same, as we read, in His Son “we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins . . . for in Him were all things created. Colossians 1.11-16. The cross of Christ redeems us by creating us anew. All this was done—these works finished—from the foundation of the world. What is the proof of this? —“For He spoke in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, and God did rest the seventh day from all His works. And in this place again, “They shall not enter into My rest.”” Hebrews 4.4, 5. “God did rest the seventh day from all His works.” That is proof that the works were finished, and that the rest was ready. The work being finished, rest must follow, and so it did, on the seventh day; and this, as the fifth verse in connection with the fourth shows, was the very same rest which the Jews rejected through unbelief, and which God now offers to us.

“In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” “The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God;” and as Sabbath means rest, and nothing else, we have God's own word for it that the Sabbath of the seventh day is His rest. Exodus 20.8-11

After the record of each day of creation we read, “And God saw that it was good.” At the close of each day the work was perfect as far as it had been done; but it was not finished, and therefore God could not rest from it until the close of the sixth day. Then God rested, and the seventh day was thus the seal of completion, of perfection. So when we who have wandered from God, and wearied ourselves with our own work, come to God through the cross of Christ, and are there made new creatures, He gives us His Sabbath as the seal of the perfect righteousness that Christ has wrought for us. So as the Sabbath is the memorial of creation,—of creation perfect and complete,—and the cross of Christ creates anew, it follows that the Sabbath is the memorial and the pledge of redemption through His blood.

Only by Faith.—“By grace are ye saved through faith.” The work of God is to believe (John 6.29), and since the work of God is finished and perfect, it is by faith that we enter into rest. The Sabbath, therefore, is not a substitute for faith, but a sign of faith. Without faith, there can be no Sabbath-keeping, for God says that the faithless ones cannot enter into His rest. Whoever professes to keep the Sabbath of the Lord, and yet does not fully and completely trust Christ for righteousness, is playing at being a Christian, he has at best only a form of godliness without the power. We do not keep the Sabbath in order to be saved, but because we are saved. Rest in God is salvation, and they who do not know rest and peace in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, do not know Sabbath-keeping, even though they nominally rest on the last day of the week. The Lord gives

His word for it that they who truly keep His Sabbath shall delight themselves in the Lord. Isaiah 58.13, 14. The Sabbath, therefore, God's Sabbath, means "joy in the Holy Spirit."

We must leave the further consideration of this subject till next week. This much, however, may be said here: Just as each day of God's work was perfect, and the Sabbath came as the crown of perfection when all was finished, even so there are many people whom God is forming into His own image, who have not as yet come to the light of the Sabbath, or who know it in form only, but not in reality, and yet who are counted perfect in God's sight. The work of grace was begun in them, and He who has begun a good work in them will perfect it unto the day of the Lord Jesus, and ere that perfect day comes they will have seen the truth of the Sabbath, and in it will have learned to rejoice in a power infinitely greater than any they had experienced or even dreamed of in all their previous Christian life. They will by no means consider it a burden laid upon them, since rest cannot possibly be a burden, but they will rejoice in it as a glorious gift, which God allows them to share with Him.

The Rest that Remains

We have seen that perfect rest follows finished and perfect work. No such work is ever found among men, and therefore real rest is unknown in this world. But “as for God, His way is perfect; and therefore His rest is perfect. The children of Israel did not learn the ways of God and therefore they did not enter into His rest. In Christ Jesus we are created unto good works, which God hath before prepared, that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2.10), and these works are ours by faith, for “this is the work of God, that we believe on Him whom He hath sent.” John 6.29. The Jews did not believe, therefore they did not get the works of God, and consequently they could not enter into His rest; for since God’s works are perfect and complete, whoever has the works, has the rest, and he in whom the works of God do not show themselves, does not have the rest.

Hebrews 4.1-12

“Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word, which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: “So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest,” although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works”; and again in this place: “They shall not enter My rest.” Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, “Today,” after such a long time, as it has been said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.” For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. 9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

It may be well to state that the words; “If they shall enter into My rest,” are the word for word rendering of the Hebrew idiom for, “They shall not enter into My rest.” We shall therefore, without further comment, use the English form of expression, as it is in the Revised Version, instead of the Hebrew form.

It should also be noted that in verse the Revised Version has “Joshua” instead of “Jesus.” Those who have Bibles with marginal references will find the word “Joshua” also in the margin. The two are identical in the Hebrew, being derived from the verb meaning, to save, to deliver. “Jesus” means Saviour (Matthew 1.21) as of course Joshua does. Joshua, who led the people of Israel into the earthly Canaan, is a type of Jesus, who leads His people into the heavenly Canaan—the heavenly country for which the patriarchs of old looked. Hebrews 11.11. When we recall the subject of the third

chapter, how the Israelites failed to enter into rest because of unbelief, and note that in the immediate connection we are told that the promise is left to us because they failed, we can readily see that the Joshua who succeeded Moses as leader of Israel, is the one referred to in verse 8. So in our study we shall read it, "For if Joshua had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of another day."

Now, since the main thing is to find out exactly what the Scripture says, we will spend a few moments in asking and answering some

Questions on the Text

- Why could not Israel of old enter into God's rest?
 - o "They could not enter in because of unbelief."
- What must we therefore fear?
 - o "Lest any" one "should seem to come short of it."
- What hope is there of our entering into His rest?
 - o "A promise is left us of entering into His rest."
- How do we stand related to it, as compared with the people of old?
 - o "Unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them."
- What benefit did they derive from the Gospel?
 - o "The Word preached did not profit them."
- Why not?
 - o "Not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."
- If we, unlike them, have faith, what advantage shall we have?
 - o "We which have believed do enter into rest."
- What assurance is given?
 - o "I have sworn in My wrath, they shall not enter into My rest."
- What have we seen to be the only reason why they could not enter in?
 - o "Because of unbelief."
- What evidence is there that they might at any time have entered in if they had believed?
 - o "The works were finished from the foundation of the world."
- What did God in one place say of the seventh day, which showed that the works were all finished?
 - o "He spoke in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works."

- What followed God's finished work?
 - o "God did rest."

- When did He rest?
 - o On "the seventh day."

- What then is the seventh day?
 - o The seventh day is the Rest of the Lord thy God." Exodus 20.9. (The word Sabbath is simply the untranslated Hebrew word meaning "rest.")

- Having said in one place of the seventh day, "God did rest the seventh day from all His works," what did He say of it in another place?
 - o "They shall not enter into My rest."

- Nevertheless what must necessarily take place?
 - o "Some must enter therein."

- Therefore since they to whom the rest was first offered entered not into it because of unbelief, what has God done?
 - o "Again He limits a certain day."

- To what time is the offer limited?
 - o "Today."

- Where is this word found?
 - o "In David."

- What is the word that is spoken to us?
 - o "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts?"

- How is the long suffering and forbearance of God shown in this offer?
 - o He repeats it in David, "after so long a time."

- But of what may we be fully assured, since "some must enter therein," and the ones to whom it was first offered rejected it?
 - o "There remains therefore a rest to the people of God."

- What time is allowed us in which to accept the rest?
 - o "Today."

- What is the condition of one who has entered into His rest?
 - o "He also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His."

- Ceasing from his own works, what works, if any, does he have?
 - o "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ

Jesus unto good works, which God has before prepared, that we should walk in them.”
Ephesians 2.8-10

- What are we then exhorted to do?
 - o “Let us labor therefore to enter into rest.”
- But what shall we do in order to work the works of God?
 - o “This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.” John 6.29
- What in our lesson shows that this is the way we are to labor to enter into rest?
 - o We are exhorted to labor to enter into rest “lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”
- What shows that the kind of labor that consists in receiving God’s Word in simple faith does not mean idleness and indifference?
 - o “The Word of God is living and active.”

God’s Oath.—In verse 3 we have the words, “As I have sworn in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest,” as proof that “we which have believed do enter into rest.” The only oath of God we find recorded in the Bible is in Genesis 22.16-18, where God swore to Abraham that in his Seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, and that his Seed should possess the gate of His enemies; and this is the same that constituted Christ Priest after the order of Melchizedek. See Hebrews 6.13-30. That was a promise of rest, consequent on Abraham’s faith. The promise of justification by faith is equal to a statement that the faithless shall not be justified, and likewise the statement, made of the unbelieving, “They shall not enter into rest,” is only the reverse side of the oath that they who believe shall enter into rest.

Faith, Works, Rest.—“By grace are ye saved through faith; . . . not of works, lest any man should boast; for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared, that we should walk in them.” Human works have nothing to do with salvation; for, as we have previously seen, they are always imperfect, and can therefore never be finished, so that rest can follow. But God’s works do save us. “For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.” Psalm 74.12. “Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work; I will triumph in the works of Thy hands.” Psalm 92.4. The works of God do save us; and these works we make ours by faith. John 6.29. The works are perfect and are all done, so that in getting them we get rest; therefore it is that “we which have believed do enter into rest.” Whoever believes finds that rest. Our part, therefore, is to acknowledge that our best works are only a damage to us (See Philippians 2.6, 7), and to recognize and worship God as the sole Creator of all things.

When the Rest was Prepared.—Those who did not and would not believe, could not enter into rest. Of them God swore, “They shall not enter into My rest,” and this in spite of the fact that “the works were finished from the foundation of the world.” It was not because the rest was not ready, that they could not enter in, for it was ready and waiting from the foundation of the world, when the perfect work of God was finished.

What Works?—What works were finished from the foundation of the world?—Manifestly, the works of creation; for in proof of the statement that the works were finished from the foundation of the world, we have this: “For He spoke in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works.” That “certain place” is Genesis 2.1-3, where, after the detailed account of the six day’s work in creating the heavens and the earth, we read: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which God created and made.” The “finished works,” therefore, which afforded the rest, were the new heavens and the new earth, which God pronounced “very good.”

Two things are said of the seventh day. In one place God says of it, “And God did rest the seventh day from all His works.” In another place He said of it, “They shall not enter into My rest.” Thus we see that the rest, which God enjoyed on the seventh day, when creation was finished, is the identical rest which He offered to Israel of old, and which He now offers to us. That is the rest into which those who believe do enter in. Let no one think that this is a belittling of God’s rest. No; it is not that God’s rest is a small thing, but that the Sabbath is a much greater and more blessed affair than most, even of those who regard it, know it to be. God’s rest is infinite and eternal; and the seventh day is the Sabbath-rest of the Lord.

Seal and Mark of Perfect, New Creation.—Jesus says, “Come unto Me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11.28. He gives rest because in Him the works of God are perfect. “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” In Him “we have our redemption, the forgiveness of sins . . . for in him were all things created.” Redemption through Christ is nothing else than creation—a new creation. Just before His crucifixion, Christ said to the Father, “I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.” John 17.4. And when He hung on the cross He cried, “It is finished; and He bowed his head, and gave up the Spirit.” John 19.30. Thus He indicated that in the cross are to be found all the perfect, finished works of the new creation. Now the Sabbath was given as the sign of a perfect creation completed; therefore it is the sign of those perfect works restored by the cross of Christ. That is to say: Since the Sabbath is the sign of a perfect creation completed, and the cross of Christ accomplishes a new creation, the Sabbath must be the sign of the cross. Try it and see if it is not.

A Gift, Not a Task Exacted.—Here is where so many people mistake: they think that the Sabbath is a hard requirement that God lays on men, and then they soon get in the way of thinking that God cannot require it of us, since He does not desire his people to be burdened. But salvation is not a thing required of us, but a gift to us; and the Sabbath is the sign of Christ’s saving power: He saves by the power by which He creates. Rest is not a burden - it is a pleasure. Nothing more absolutely delightful can be imagined than rest in the consciousness of work all done and well done, and this is the privilege of the people of God: “All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord, and Thy saints shall bless Thee. They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom and talk of Thy power; to make known to the sons of men Thy mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of Thy kingdom.” Psalm 145.10-12. “One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and

shall declare Thy mighty acts.” Verse 4. The Sabbath is the pledge and assurance to us, that the power by which the worlds were made has wrought good works for us in Christ, and that these works are all ours if we believe. This is the rest prepared for us from the foundation of the world. This is the rest to which Christ invites us—rest from our own sinful works.

“Some Must Enter In”—What a blessed assurance this is: Some must enter into that rest. God has sworn by Himself, and it must be done. God does not owe anything to sinful men, but He has put himself under obligations to Himself, so that he says: “I, even I, am He that blots out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember Thy sins.” Isaiah 43.25. So absolutely necessary is it that some must enter into the rest that God has prepared, and which can be entered into only by faith, that even if every man should be false and faithless, God would still remain true to his promise (Romans 3.3, 4), for He could take some of the ground and raise up children to Abraham. Matthew 3.9

It would be a manifestation of the same power that in the beginning made man of the dust of the ground; it would be only the same creative power now that takes the stony heart and reduces it to dust,—makes it contrite,—and then creates a new man in Christ Jesus. Therefore since God is able, and not only willing, but even under bonds (to Himself) to prepare people for His rest, let “whosoever will” come. “Him that comes to Me,” says Jesus who calls, “I will in no wise cast out.” John 6.37. The case is urgent, and the Lord is not requiring any certificates of good character, or making any examination of candidates. The worst, weakest, most degraded and despised, is accepted without any questions being asked except this: “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?”

**“Christ receives sinful men,
Even me with all my sin;
Purged from every spot and stain,
Heaven with Him I enter in.”**

None Compelled.—As anxiously as God longs to save men, and as urgent as the need is, He forces none, How could He? Think what it is that He offers: it is rest—rest from sin. Now it is an utter impossibility to force anybody to take rest. Mere cessation of activity is not necessarily rest. Bind a man who wishes to do a certain thing so tightly that he cannot by any possibility use a muscle, and he will not rest; he will wear himself out by the resistance of his mind against the enforced idleness. God not only does not and will not force anybody to be saved, but He cannot; for the very word “force” implies resistance, and the man who resists does not rest. Those, therefore, who make and enforce laws to compel people to be religious, show that they have not the faintest conception of what the Christian religion is; men who would compel people to keep the Sabbath, have no more idea of what the Sabbath really is, than they have of the language used by the inhabitants of Saturn. There is no one so foolish as to suppose that he can compel another to love him by kicking and beating him; yet many think that people can be compelled to serve the Lord, not knowing that God is love, and that His

service is love. Absolute freedom is what the Lord gives,—freedom from every sort of oppression. This is what the true keeping of the Sabbath brings.

“The Long suffering of God”—Because some must enter into the rest, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief, therefore God extended the time. When Moses was born, the time of the promise which God had sworn to Abraham drew near (Acts 7.19), yet five hundred years later, in the days of David, “after so long a time,” we hear the Spirit saying, “Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” And still the Spirit says, Come. Men abuse the long suffering of God, and mockingly say, “Where is the promise of His coming?” but we must remember that “the long suffering of our God is salvation.” He is not willing that any should perish. 2 Peter 3.3, 4, 9, 15

A Limited Time --“Another Day”— Although God is so long suffering; He has not given men eternity in which to repent and believe. Eternity of rest is what He offers, but He allows men only one day in which to accept the offer; and that day is Today. “Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.” 2 Corinthians 6.2. This is the day of which we read in Psalm 118.19, 20: “Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord. This gate of the Lord, is the gate into which the righteous shall enter.” Compare John 10.9: “I am the Door, by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved.” “I will praise Thee; for Thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The Stone which the builders rejected is become the head Stone of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice, and be glad in it. Save now, I beseech Thee, O Lord; O Lord, I beseech Thee, send now prosperity.” Psalm 118.21, 25. This is the day of the Lord which Abraham rejoiced to see, and in which He was glad (John 8.56), for the salvation which he enjoyed is the very same that is now offered to us. It is salvation from sin. See Romans 4.1-0. The “accepted time” has been extended, “another day,” and so from day to day God is patiently waiting. Who will heed the blessed invitation, “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”?

Ceasing from Our Own Works.—He that has entered into God’s rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His; but not for the same reason. God ceased from His works because they were finished and perfect; we are to cease from our own works because they are all imperfection, and there is no hope of making them good. Taking into consideration all the people of the earth, the Lord says, “Behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing.” Isaiah 41.29. “Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works; their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands.” Isaiah 59.6. The Lord rested in the contemplation of His own glorious works; we likewise find rest in the contemplation of His, not our own, gloriously perfect work. “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law, and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.” Romans 3.20-22

It is sometimes supposed that it is only the works of a man before his conversion, that are of no avail for righteousness, and that a man's works are all right after he is once converted. But this is a mistake. The best man in the world is but a man, and not God. The righteousness of the best man is not his own, but the righteousness of God by faith. The righteous man has no more strength than the sinner, but his advantage lies in the fact that He knows and acknowledges the Lord as the source of strength. A man must absolutely and forever cease from his own works, if he would rest in God. This is what the Sabbath of the Lord—the seventh day, teaches us. Sabbath keeping in spirit and in truth is the fullness of justification through faith.

Laboring to Enter into Rest.—“Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest,”—the rest that still remains. What kind of labor secures that rest?—the labor of faith, for “this is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.” Paul thanked God for the Thessalonians, when he remembered their “work of faith and labor of love.” 1 Thessalonians 1.3. Faith works by love. Galatians 5.6. Belief is salvation and rest, for “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” “If thou shalt confess with Thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Romans 10.9. But this does not mean idleness and indifference. It means compliance to the Word of God dwelling in us, that it may have free course, but that means intense activity, “for the Word of God is living and active.” Oh, weary, troubled soul, believe the Word of the Lord, and believe now.

**“Art thou weary, art thou languid, art thou sore oppressed?
Come to Me, saith One, and coming, be at rest.”**

A Practical Talk about Sabbath-keeping

There are two items in regard to the Sabbath that we should first notice before we take up the closing portion of the fourth chapter of Hebrews. The first is the objection that so many, especially poor people who labor for their daily bread, make to the keeping of the Sabbath, namely,—

“I couldn’t live if I kept the Sabbath”

That the seventh day is the Sabbath, and that the Lord has given it to men to keep, is admitted, but against all this is the frightful thought, “I couldn’t make a living and keep the seventh day; I should certainly lose my situation.”

As to losing the situation, that is quite possible, and yet not as absolutely certain as many suppose. God would have His witnesses everywhere, and in every legitimate calling, and therefore He is able to give His faithful children favor with the people, if He sees that their witness can be of use in any place. People who begin to keep the Sabbath often lose their situations, because they expect it, and plan for it. Some on becoming Christians seem to think it is necessary to leave unbelieving employers and get among those who have the same faith, forgetting that a light is needed only where there is darkness. The man, who cannot live the truth when surrounded by darkness and unbelief, cannot live it anywhere. A candle that will not burn except in the stove is good for nothing except to throw into the fire. Of course it is understood that the individual must be where God wishes him to be; but if a person accepts the truth while in service among unbelievers, he should take it as God’s will that he is to stay there until God makes it plain to him that he should leave. “Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called *while* a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use *it*. For he who is called in the Lord *while* a slave is the Lord’s freedman. Likewise he who is called *while* free is Christ’s slave.” 1 Corinthians 7.20-22

The Lord gave Joseph and Daniel, and Nehemiah, and “they of Cesar’s household” so much favor with worldly men that they kept important situations while faithfully living the truth of Christ. On the other hand, Abraham had to leave his father’s house, and Moses lost one of the best situations that the world ever had to offer any man, and neither of them were ever sorry for it. “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him.” 2 Chronicles 16.9. He has always been able to take care of His people. “When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people, He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, He reproveth kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm.” Psalm 105.13-15. The same God lives today.

The Laboring Man’s Friend

But, as a matter of fact, the Sabbath is the laboring man’s friend. It comes to him,

laden with God's richest blessings, and brings him perfect rest from all weariness and oppression. All the hopes and aims of Socialists of the best class, and of the most disinterested philanthropists, fall infinitely short of the blessed realities that the Sabbath of the Lord opens before those who accept it. The plans and efforts of the best of social reformers (outside, of course, of those who use Gospel methods only), have not materially if at all lessened the amount of poverty and suffering, but have resulted simply in arousing and aug-menting discontent. The Sabbath of the Lord, on the other hand, makes known to men the power that will enable them patiently and contentedly to endure that which for a season must be borne, and gives them the certainty of the speedy removal of all ills.

The Sabbath keeps ever before our minds the wondrous power manifested in creation, that power by which all who believe are saved from sin, and by which all men, whether they believe or not, are kept alive from day to day and from one moment to another. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." Acts 17.28. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness." Lamentations 3.22, 23. The Sabbath, which makes known God as Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer (Ezekiel 20.12), teaches confidence in Him, for whoever becomes acquainted with God trusts Him. Psalm 9.10. Therefore the Sabbath takes from the poor man the heavy load of care and anxiety that he has borne so long, by introducing him to the Almighty Father, "in whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind." Job 12.10. It is only when a man does not know the Sabbath and its Lord, that he says, "I couldn't live if I served Him." The one who knows the Lord will rather say, "I cannot live without Him."

Think a moment of the incongruity of the statement by a professed Christian that he couldn't live if he kept the Sabbath of the Lord; that he wouldn't dare take the risk. But if he dare not trust the Lord for the life that now is, how dare he trust Him for the life to come? If the Lord cannot keep us alive for a few short years, what possible hope is there of eternal life? "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" "Your heavenly Father knows that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6.32, 33

Sunday, the Sign of Justification by Works

We see that the Sabbath is the great and final test of faith in God, and is therefore the seal of righteousness; for "the just shall live by faith," and "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Romans 1.17; 14.23. It is the exact opposite of the Sunday, which is the badge of a system of religion that consists in justification by works. Let it be understood that it is not asserted that all those who observe the Sunday depend on works for justification. Far from it. The writer knows many by personal acquaintance, and is fully persuaded that there are many thousands more, who keep Sunday instead of the Sabbath, thinking it to be the Sabbath, and who nevertheless are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting in His merits alone for their salvation. We say "nevertheless," for their trust in the Lord Jesus is in spite of

their observance of Sunday, having by no means any connection with it, except to be hindered by it; for if they could but see the Sabbath as it is in Jesus, they would find a “joy and peace in believing” such as they never had before.

Now for the proof that the Sunday stands only for “another gospel” than that of the Lord Jesus, a gospel which consists in exalting the creature above the Creator. We have already seen that the Sabbath—God’s rest—is the assurance that God’s work is perfect and complete, and the acceptance of it in Spirit and in truth, is the ceasing of our own works and the resting in the finished work of God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. God worked, and then rested in the enjoyment of His perfect work; we, having wearied ourselves with our imperfect work, obey His call, and, leaving our works, rest in His.

“In six days the Lord made heaven and earth; the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.” Exodus 20. 11. A fact is a thing done, the fact remains forever, since it can never cease to be a fact that it has been done. It is a fact that God rested on the seventh day, and that fact will remain throughout eternity. In order, therefore, for the Sabbath to be “changed,” from the seventh day to some other day it would have to cease to be a fact that God rested on the seventh day; but that is impossible; so it is impossible for the Sabbath to be changed,—as impossible as for it to cease to be a fact that God created the heavens and the earth in six days, and rested the seventh day.

It is possible that another than the seventh day *might* have been made the Sabbath day, if God had so ordered it. In that case, however, the week would not have consisted of seven days, as now. Thus: God doubtless could have created all things in five days, and rested the sixth, making a week of six days; or He might have finished the work in four days, and rested the fifth; or He could have completed the work of creation in three days, and rested the fourth; or in two days, resting the third; or, since there is no limit to the power of God, He might have completed the work of creation in one day, and rested the second, making the week consist of but two days, and giving man a Sabbath every second day. God *did not* do any of these things: we only say that He *might* have done so if it had seemed good to Him; but one thing He could not possibly have done, and that is, to have created all things in one day, and at the same time rest on that day from all His works. That is to say, the first day of the week is the one-day of the week, which could not by any possibility be made the Sabbath of the Lord. But the first day of the week has been set apart by man as the Sabbath.

Thus, Dr. Isaac Williams, in “Plain Sermons on the Catechism” (Longmans, Green, & Co.), says:—

The reason why we keep the first day of the week holy instead of the seventh is for the same reason that we observe many other things, not because the Bible, but because the Church, has enjoined it.

“The Church,” therefore, in attempting to make a sabbath day, which God could not use as the sabbath, shows itself to be that power “who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped.” 2 Thessalonians 2.4

Scores of testimonials from doctors of divinity and learned men who themselves observe and teach others to observe Sunday, might be cited to show that the observance of Sunday rests on no Divine authority whatever, but is only an ordinance of men. The religion, therefore, of which it stands as the sign, and, as many of its advocates say, even the foundation, is a religion that rests on human works and human inventions, instead of the works and words of the Lord. To make Sunday the Sabbath, the facts and record of creation, must be ignored, and with these go the basis of the Gospel, since redemption is creation. Therefore we repeat that while the Sabbath of the Lord teaches redemption through trust in *the finished work* of God in Christ, the Sunday teaches redemption through man’s own imperfect work.

In so saying, we refer to the institution, and not to any man. As before stated, there are thousands of men and women who are strict observers of Sunday, supposing it to be the Sabbath, who are nevertheless depending on Christ for salvation, so far as they know Him. May God grant that they may soon see Him, as the Alpha, and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, the One in whom all things were created, and in whom all things consist, who redeems by no other word than that by which He in the beginning made the worlds. Reader, which will you choose; your own incomplete and imperfect works and unrest, or God’s complete and perfect work and His everlasting rest? He calls, “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest.” Now is the time to choose; “today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.”

The True Confession of Faith

How is it Made

We come now to the conclusion of the fourth chapter of Hebrews. The subject of the rest that remains for all who believe has been quite fully considered, although by no means exhausted, and we proceed from the exhortation to give diligence to enter into that rest lest any fall through unbelief, to that which follows, quoting the Revised Version, as being better worded. We must give diligence, or labor, to enter God's rest, because "The Word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

"Having then a great High Priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God; let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need." Hebrews 4.12-16, R.V.

Questions on the Text

- For, what are we exhorted to labor?
 - "To enter into that rest."
- How is it that we enter into that rest?
 - "We which have believed do enter into rest." Verse 3.
- What then is the work by which we enter into rest?
 - "This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." John 6.29
- And how does faith come?
 - "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Romans 10.17
- What evidence is there that this resting on the Word of God does not mean indolence?
 - "The Word of God is living and active." Greek, "energy."
- How keen is it?
 - "Sharper than any two edged sword."
- What does it do, that no two-edged sword can do?

- “Piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow.”
- What is said of the understanding of the Word?
 - “Quick to the heart.”
- Who is the embodiment of the Word of God?
 - “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.” “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” John 1.1, 3, 4, 14
- How much is hidden from the Word?
 - “There is no creature that is not manifest in His sight.”
- How do all things stand before Him?
 - “All things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”
- What is this ever-present, all-seeing Word?
 - “A great High Priest.”
- Where is He exercising His office?
 - He “hath passed through [or into] the heavens.”
- How does this concern us?
 - “We have a great High Priest.” (This is quoted from the common version solely on account of the direct form of speech. Precisely the same thing is stated in the Revised Version, but in words that do not allow so direct an answer to the question.)
- Seeing that we have such a great High Priest, what should we do?
 - “Hold fast our confession.”
- What encouragement have we thus to hold fast?
 - “For we have not a High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.
- How much does He know about them?
 - He “hath been in all points tempted like as we are.”
- How did He come forth from the temptations?
 - Without sin.”
- What may we therefore do?
 - “Draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace.”

- Of what may we be confident?
 - That we may receive mercy and may find grace to help us, in time of need.

Rest Not in Inactivity.—The rest that remains for the people of God is obtained by absolute acceptance of God’s Word. “The Word of Christ”, which is Spirit and life (John 6.63) is to be allowed to dwell richly in the soul. Colossians 3.16. “To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Romans 4.5), and faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Romans 10.17. But this does not imply idleness and inactivity on the part of the believer. Far from it; for the indwelling “Word of God is living and active.” Hebrews 4.12. The Greek word here translated “active” and in the common version “powerful,” is the word, which is transferred into English as “energy.” That is to say, the Word of God is force, and, since it is not merely alive, but is life itself, it will be seen that the Word of God is vital force. It is, indeed, all the force there is in the universe. Christ upholds all things “by the Word of His power.” Hebrews 1.3. All things that exist rest on His Word, yet everything in nature is in a state of intense activity. Everything is in motion. Therefore the soul that rests absolutely on the Word of God, and is filled with it, will be as active in the work that God has designed him for, as any part of God’s creation. God Himself will work in him to will and to do of His good pleasure.

“The Sword of the Spirit.”—The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, Christ is the Word of God, and in the Revelation He is represented with a sharp two-edged sword going out of His mouth. Revelation 1.16. But it is sharper than any two-edged sword on earth, for the sharpest earthly sword can pierce only between different portions of the body, but this pierces every fiber of the body, and the spirit as well.

God’s Word Our Life.—In Hebrews 4.12, 13 we have the representation of the indwelling Christ, “the power of God and the wisdom of God.” The Word of God piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow and discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart - is simply the Word made flesh. “In Him we live, and move, and have our being.” Christ says that He is “the life.” Every pulse beat is but the throbbing of His life. He is our life, for the life is the light of men, and it “lights every man that cometh into the world.” John 1.4, 9. Wherever there is life, there Christ is present, because He is “the life.” “In Him all things consist.”

The Reckoning Already Made.—Since the living Word is the life of every being, it most naturally follows that it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Thus God knows, because He *feels*. Not a thing touches humanity that does not touch Him. “He knows our frame,” not simply because He made it, but because He bears it. Every motion, every thought, comes upon the Word, which “was made flesh,” so that He understands our thoughts even better than we do ourselves, since He is more keenly sensitive. Indeed, our hearts deceive us, but not Him. Jeremiah 17.9. “O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off.” “For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.” Psalm 139.1, 2, 4. How is it that He knows it?—

Because He is there; prompting the good, as we yield to His influence, and enduring the evil when we hold down the truth in unrighteousness. Therefore all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. The reckoning is all made up every instant. There will be a time of judgment, but not for the purpose of enlightening the Lord. Whatever instant we look into the Word, we can see an accurate estimate of ourselves.

Our Confession.—“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, let us hold fast our profession,” or “confession,” as the Revision more accurately renders it. What is this “Confession of faith,” to which we are exhorted to hold fast? It is that which is referred to in the two preceding verses. *A confession is simply an acknowledgment of the truth.* The great truth—the Gospel of great joy—for all people, is that “Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.” 1 John 4.2. Whoever makes that confession is of God, because of the truth, we have been studying about the living and active Word piercing every fiber; now read Romans 10.8, 9, where of Christ the Word, we read: “The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the Word of faith which we preach: that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

“The Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart.” For what purpose is it so near?—“That you may do it.” Deuteronomy 30.14 The living Word is therefore in the mouth and heart of the sinner, in order that he may do it. So near has God brought His saving grace to all mankind. “He is not far from every one of us.” No; He is very near, even in our very hearts and mouths, “a very present help in trouble.” Lest any should think that this cannot be true of sinners, we will call attention to the following facts in connection with the Scriptures: No one first makes a thing true by confessing it; it does not become a fact because he confesses it, but *he confesses it because it is already a fact.* Therefore the confession of Christ is but the acknowledgment of the already existing fact, that He “is come in the flesh.” The Word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart—in thy flesh; confess this fact, and “thou shalt be saved.” This teaches the presence of Christ in every soul, waiting for recognition, in order that He may save.

“Then you would make no difference between a sinner and a Christian?”—Oh, yes, indeed; all the difference in the world, or, rather, all the difference between the world and heaven. Christ has come in the flesh,—that is in all mankind, for man is flesh (Genesis 6.3),—but while He dwells in the sinner without recognition, and is held down in unrighteousness (Romans 1.18), in the Christian He dwells “by faith.” Ephesians 3.17. The difference between the impenitent sinner and the Christian is the difference between a man who uses the gift of God without any recognition of the Giver, arrogating to himself God’s power, and a man who acknowledges that the Lord is his strength, and who yields all to His control.

Take any sinner; let him acknowledge the truth that is evident to every one, that he does not live by his own power, but that Christ is the only vital force, and let him live in constant recognition of that fact, and he will at once and for ever be a Christian, for he will necessarily allow Christ to have His own way, living His own life in full. Thus easy has God made the way of salvation: simply a constant giving up of self to the control of

the Power that keeps us alive. What a glorious Gospel this is to every poor sinner! And what a glorious thing to be permitted to proclaim it! Think of the joy of being able to assure the most debased soul that the fact that he still lives is evidence that there is salvation for him, if he desires salvation, and will yield to the power that keeps him alive. He, who is our High Priest on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, is also by the Spirit present in the flesh, with all power in heaven and on earth over all flesh. John 17.2. Confess this truth, and you have the victory over the world. 1 John 5.4, 5

This is the only confession of faith. Men may recite creeds until they are gray, and be no better for it, for you cannot put Christ on paper. The confession of faith is not a dogma or a formula of belief that can be recited in concert by a class of boys. The true confession of faith—the confession of Christ—is the recognition and acknowledgment of the living truth that Christ dwells personally by the Spirit in the one making the confession. Each one must make it for himself, as the result of personal conviction, in words coming from the fullness of his heart, and not dictated to him by another; and not only in words but in action, for the indwelling Word is living and active. The true confession of faith is therefore not a thing for a single hour, but of a lifetime, for it is the Christian life. When this confession is made in truth, the Scriptures will be carefully studied in order that the one confessing may consciously yield to their power, and thus live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

Encouragement.—“Let us hold fast our confession.” What confession?—That Jesus is come in the flesh - in our flesh. Why?—“For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” Clear that statement of the negatives, and we have the equivalent: “We have a High Priest which can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” The original word is “sympathize,” which means “to suffer with,” and thus it is rendered in many versions. We have a High Priest, which suffers with us in all our infirmities. “He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin,” and He still dwells in the flesh, suffering all its infirmities, bearing all its weakness and sin, by the same power by which He bore them eighteen hundred years ago without sin. Here is encouragement, yes, joy and rest for the weary sinner.

Not Ashamed.—We have read that He is not ashamed to call us His brethren; therefore He does not despise us. There are Pharisees in the church today, as well as in the days when Jesus lived in Judea, who trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others; who look with scorn and contempt on a poor outcast, and say, “Come not near to me; for I am holier than thou.” But “this Man receives sinners.” Although no trace of sin ever marred His character, He is all gentleness and tender compassion to the vilest sinner, for He knows the weight of sin. He encourages each one to pour into His ear all his troubles and temptation, saying, “My brother, I know all about it; I have suffered the same things, and I sympathize with you; trust Me, and I will work in you the same power by which I was kept from sin.” Who cannot love so tender and loving a Companion and Friend? When we know Jesus as He is, we shall find Him the most companionable of beings. We may tell Him everything, and He will never betray us. The sin that is committed to Him will be kept secret forever; none other will ever be allowed to know of it. Satan, the adversary of souls, will seek for it, in order to urge it against us in the Judgment, to our ruin, but it cannot be found; and even the Lord

Himself will forget it.

Boldness.—“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace, to help in time of need.” “Boldly,” literally, “free spoken; license of tongue. Speak out; do not be afraid to talk to Him, for He Himself has put the words in your mouth. He has said, “Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, I will do.” John 14.13, You cannot make too large an order, for He is “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” Ephesians 3.20. And you may be sure that what He is able to do He will do, for He has given His life as the pledge, and all things are yours in Him.

**“The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
I will not—I will not desert to its foes,
That soul—though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I’ll never,—no never,—no never forsake.”**

Christ the Sympathetic Priest

Our last lesson, the closing portion of the fourth chapter of Hebrews introduced us to Christ as our High Priest who, although in the heavens on the right hand of the Majesty, is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, so that we may come boldly unto the throne of grace, assured that we shall obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. In the following verses the apostle gives us further assurance of Christ's oneness with us, from which we are to derive comfort and encouragement.

“For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts wd sacrifices for sins; who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he also himself is compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he, that is called of God, as was Aaron, So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest, but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee. As He saith also in another place, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek. Who in the days of His flesh when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, ye learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him; called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchisedek. Of whom we have man, things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat [R.V., solid food.] For every one that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat [solid food] belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” Hebrews 5.1-14

This is a most important portion of Scripture, for it deals with the very heart and soul of the Gospel. It reveals the secret of Christian living and victory. It brings Christ to us in the closest fellowship, as the sympathizing friend and companion who, while knowing from experience all the weaknesses of the flesh, and therefore kindly sympathizing with those who are in sin, hath all power to deliver. Because it deals with the vital, practical part of Christianity, the enemy of souls has sought to envelop it in a fog, and the consequence is that the real truth concerning Christ is by many professed Christians counted as heresy. The whole trouble, however, lies in not taking the Scripture literally at its own word. Let us therefore question it closely, that we may be the better able to study it with true reverence.

Questions on the Text

- For what is every high priest taken from among men ordained or appointed?

- “That he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.”
- What kind of person must a high priest necessarily be?
 - One “who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.”
- How can he have compassion on such?
 - “For that he also himself is compassed with infirmity.”
- Since the priest must necessarily be one who is compassed with infirmity, what must he therefore do?
 - “He ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.”
- Can a man raise himself to this office?
 - “No man takes this honor to himself.”
- Who only can do the work of priest?
 - “He that is called of God, as was Aaron.”
- How did Christ show His fitness for the position?
 - “Christ glorified not Himself High Priest.”
- Who set Him apart to that office?
 - “He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, today have I begotten Thee.”
- What positive declaration did God also make to Christ?
 - “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek.”
- What did Christ do in the days of His flesh?
 - “Offered up prayers and supplications.”
- What showed that these prayers and supplications were not mere prayers of ceremony?
 - He offered up prayers and supplications “with strong crying and tears.”
- To whom did He offer these earnest petitions?
 - “Unto Him that was able to save Him from death.”
- What was it then from which He prayed with such agony of soul to be saved?
 - “From death.”
- Was His prayer answered?
 - He “was heard in that He feared.”
- What was Christ all the time?
 - “A Son.”

- What did He nevertheless learn?
 - “Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience.”
- How did He learn obedience?
 - “By the things, which He suffered.”
- When did He learn obedience by the things, which He suffered?
 - “In the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears.”
- What did He therefore become?
 - “The Author of eternal salvation.”
- To whom?
 - “Unto all them that obey Him.”
- When did He become the Author of eternal salvation to all that obey Him?
 - “Being made perfect.”
- What was He called-of God to be?
 - “Called of God an High Priest.”
- After what order?
 - “After the order of Melchisedek.”
- Is this great truth all that there is to be said of Christ?
 - “We have many things to say, and hard to be uttered.”
- Why is it so difficult to set forth the whole truth?
 - “Seeing ye are dull of hearing.”
- How dull?
 - “When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.”

The Work of an High Priest.—The office of high priest is no different in kind, but only in degree, from that of ordinary priests. All the people of God are priests (1 Peter 2.9) deriving their priesthood, as their life, from Christ the Head. Verses 4, 5. Therefore in the work and character of our great High Priest we learn what should be the work and character of all His followers. Every high priest “is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.” “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 2.5. So in Malachi 2.6, we read of Jesus Christ: “The law of truth was in His mouth, and iniquity was not found in His lips; He walked with Me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.” Therefore is given the

general rule: "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts." Verse 7. The work of high priest, as of all priests, is to make reconciliation for sins, by presenting righteousness. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and now Christ has committed to us in His stead the ministry of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5.18, 19

The Qualifications of High Priest.—He must be taken from among men, since his work is for them. He must be one "who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, "not imputing their trespasses unto them." He was not condemning, but pitying. Harshness repels, love draws. That is how God draws men to Himself. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." Jeremiah 31.3. But the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man" (Titus 3.1) appeared in Christ; for "God commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5.5. Therefore Christ said: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." John 12.32. It is the goodness of God that leads men to repentance. Romans 2.1. The word "goodness" as applied to God, means all that anybody means by goodness, and much more. It means more than what is ordinarily thought of as strict conformity to the law of right; it means kindness, benevolence, pity, sympathy, and forbearance. These are the qualities by which God draws men to Himself. No others can attract. All these are manifested in Christ. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." 2 Corinthians 5.19. "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." "This Man receives sinners, and eats with them." Luke 15.2. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke 13.34. Peter denied his Lord with cursing in the hour of His sorest need; "and the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." Luke 22.61. That look melted Peter, and made a new man of him. Oh, what gentleness and tenderness toward frail sinners is manifested in Christ!

"Learn of Me."—"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." Matthew 11.29. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6.2. Christ the High Priest is the example to the under priests. "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Ephesians 4.32. Nothing but love can by any possibility win an erring one, and yet professed followers of Christ, who are active and full of zeal in what is called Gospel work, often manifest impatience and even bitterness toward those who through weakness or ignorance wander out of the way. And what would seem most strange, if we did not know the wickedness of the human heart, this harshness, and lack of sympathy is often manifested to the most marked degree toward those who have the most claim on our love. Why is this?—Simply because the errors and frailties of those nearest to us are more likely to affect us personally than are the sins of others, and we find that our Christianity does not go to the extent of forgiving sins committed against us. We can quite readily deal gently with the sinner, so long as we regard the sin as only against God; but when it comes to us personally, that is quite another matter. We love ourselves more than

we love God, and so of course much more than we love another person, even our nearest friends. No one can be sure that he loves his friends, until they fall into sin, and into such sin as touches him personally. When that occurs it is too often made evident that the supposed love for others was only self-love. Their ease is disturbed, feelings are ruffled, their pride is touched, their self-love is wounded, and instead of pitying the erring ones, they pity themselves, and so drive the sinner farther away. When love is most needed, then is the least shown. But that is not Christ. Oh, that men and women who bear the name of Christ would learn that He has compassion on the ignorant and on those that are out of the way!

“To Make Reconciliation.”—The subject is too vitally important to be left here. The lesson ought to be impressed on every heart. The work of priest is to effect reconciliation. Of Christ it is said “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 reconciliation for the sins of the people.” Hebrews 2.17. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Note, reconciling, not creating or increasing enmity. Not even imputing their trespasses unto them, much less upbraiding them or turning the cold shoulder to them for their trespasses. A person may be cowed, but never reconciled, by harsh words or blows, or by surliness. No man ever yet made a friend by acting unfriendly. Christ’s work as High Priest is to make reconciliation, to win; if we are not doing the same, we are not associated with Him in His priestly work; and if we are not priests of God, then we are not among His chosen people. It is very evident that we all have needed to learn much in “the first principles of the oracles of God.”

The Secret of Sympathy.—The true priest can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way. “For that he also himself is compassed with infirmity.” No one can sympathize with a sufferer except one who feels the same pain, or at least has a vivid recollection of it. That is what the word itself means. “Sympathy” is made up of two Greek words, which mean, “to suffer with.” The word “compassion” has the same meaning, being formed from two Latin words. The only reason why the priest ordained of God has compassion on the ignorant and the erring, is because he himself has the same infirmities. People often mistake pity for sympathy or compassion. Pity may be expressed in words, but sympathy shares the burden. If one is staggering under a heavy load, the sympathizer gets beneath the load and helps bear it. This is true even of heart burdens. If one has lost a friend, a grasp of the hand, or a few words, or anything else done as only one who has lost a friend knows how to do, eases the pain. The true priest of God has kindly compassion for the sinner, because he knows his own frailty. “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

Taken from Among Men.—This is why the priest who is to make reconciliation for the sins of the people must be taken from among men; for only men have sinned. The angels in heaven have not sinned; therefore the work of preaching the Gospel could not be committed to them. They could not put themselves in our place. But the pitiful part is, that even fallen men lift themselves up so high in their own estimation that they forget that they are sinners like others, and so act as though they were not

men but gods. Men who are hard in their treatment of the erring, who thrust them back instead of drawing them with sympathy, show that they do not recognize that they are equally weak and erring, and that if they have not actually committed the same sin, it is only because of different circumstances. "All have sinned," "there is no difference," "Man at his best state is altogether vanity." He who remembers this, will never cause another to stumble. How much we need continually to be put in mind that we are but men.

The Man Christ Jesus.—All these qualifications of a high priest are found in Christ, and in Him alone in their fullness. He was taken from among men. Read Deuteronomy 18.18: "I will raise them up a Prophet *from among the brethren*, like unto thee, and will put My words in His mouth." Raised up from among His brethren, yet in all things "like unto His brethren." So also Psalm 89.19: "Then You spoke in a vision to Your holy one, and said: I have given help to one who is mighty; I have exalted *One chosen from the people*." "The Word was made flesh" and thus bore all the sins and infirmities of the flesh. "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Matthew 8.17. "Tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." "He Himself also is compassed with infirmity," because He is still in the flesh ("in thy mouth and in thy heart." Romans 10.8), and feels everything that mankind feels; and this is true not merely of mankind in general, but of each individual. He is still "the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2.5), and is therefore the Mediator. Judgment is committed to Him, "because He is the Son of man." John 5.27

Upon the expression, "By reason hereof," that is, of being compassed with infirmity, "He ought, as for the people, so also for Himself, to offer for sins," much might be said, but it is perhaps better to leave it to the reader's meditation. There are truths of God, which it is not lawful for men to utter. It is impossible for human mind to grasp the depth of the truth of Christ's Divinity and humanity. One thing must not be forgotten, and that is that there is as much the mystery of God in the humanity of Christ as in His Divinity. He was faultless; no taint of sin ever defiled Him, yet He was in the flesh, "sinful flesh." So He insisted on being baptized, for said He, "thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Matthew 3.15. So He made an offering for His own sins, and in that an offering for the sins of all the people, for it was the sins of the people that He made His own, God was in Christ, not imputing the trespasses of the people unto them, but assuming all the responsibility of them Himself, as though He Himself had committed them. The Just suffered for the unjust; for in His suffering the justice of God is revealed. Romans 3.26. This was because He was man in every sense of the word, having in Himself, although sinless, all the frailties of mankind. So closely has He identified Himself with us.

The tendency is to minimize the humanity of Christ, as though thereby His Divinity could be exalted. It is the devil who has been instrumental in leading the minds away from Jesus as man, because the more Christ is regarded as remote from us, and out of touch with humanity, the less He is treated as a Saviour. In losing sight of the humanity of Jesus—His oneness with mankind,—men have not, as they thought, exalted His Divinity, but just the contrary; for the Word that was, in the beginning with God, and

which was God, is revealed to us only as “made flesh.” To ignore the humanity of Christ is therefore to deny His Divinity.

Praying to Be Saved.—This same Jesus who was the only begotten Son of God, and also Priest after the order of Melchisedek, “in the days of His flesh” “offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death.” Think of it! The Son of God praying in agony to be saved from death. Dare anyone even remotely suggest that this was only a sort of acting, and that there was no real danger? No; there was no guile in His mouth. He is the Truth itself. He did nothing simply for effect or show. The fact that He prayed shows that there was need of prayer; and the fact that He prayed with strong crying and tears, shows that the need was urgent. Jesus had voluntarily, for our sakes, put Himself in a place of danger,—where there was danger of death,—and from this He prayed with anguish to be delivered.

The Sting of Death.—“The sting of death is sin.” “Sin when it is finished brings forth death.” Death cannot harm one in whom is no sin. Where there is no sin, there is no danger of death. Therefore that which Jesus really prayed to be saved from was sin, for only in being saved from sin could He be saved from death. He was in the flesh as helpless as we, for He said, “I can of Mine own self do nothing” (John 5.30) yet all our sins were upon Him. His only help lay in God. Read again the twenty-second Psalm, and see, how He trusted in God for deliverance. Also Isaiah 50.7, 8. “For the Lord God will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near who justifies Me.” Or Psalm 16.8, 9: “I have set the Lord always before Me; because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore My heart is glad and My glory rejoices; My flesh also shall rest in hope.” His hope in death was that He had been saved from sin. Mark this: it is not that He had ever committed sin, and that He was saved from its consequences, but that He had all the sins of humanity in His flesh, and was saved from their dominion. Not once did they master Him. Not for an instant did He yield to their power.

Saved from Death.—He “was heard in that He feared,” or “for His godly fear.” In what was He heard?—In His prayer to be saved from death. “But He died, nevertheless,” you say. Yes, but He was not overcome by death; He went into the grave a conqueror. He laid down His own life, that He might, take it again, in spite of death. Not all the power of Satan could take His life from Him. Even on the cross He gave up His own life, and the Roman soldier’s spear thrust in His side simply furnished proof that He was already dead. When the appointed time came, He came forth from the grave in spite of all the power Satan could muster. “It was not possible that He should be held” by death (Acts 2.24), because He had not once been betrayed into sin. He trusted wholly in God, who was able to save Him from death, and therefore from sin, which causes death, and was heard for His godly fear. His victory was every moment of His life complete. But it was a real victory, for He fought a real fight. Jesus did not come to earth to amuse the universe with the sight of a sham fight with sin. This idea, altogether too general, that Jesus was not in the same situation as we are, and that He had not to resist sin as we do, not having temptations in the same way that we do, is the reason for so many sham victories, among professed Christians.

“By His Stripes We Are Healed.”—“We being made, perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.” Now we come to the joy of the truth that Jesus was in all respects in our condition, with all our weaknesses, wholly dependent on God for deliverance. We must not think that He was simply in a condition *similar* to ours, but that He is in our identical condition, for it was *our* sins that were in Him. He was here in our behalf. His whole life work was for us, not for Himself. The victory He gained was our victory. So when we come into temptation, and sin presses us closely, “this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith.” Remember that the sin is already overcome. Jesus in the flesh overcame it for us, and He still lives in our flesh to maintain the victory, which He has gained, provided we confess Him. Isn’t there the joy of victory in this truth? My sins are already overcome, and I have but to enjoy the fruits of victory, which is peace. Who would be overcome by an enemy, which he knew, was already overcome and disarmed? This confidence in what Christ has done for us is our strength. He has the joy of victory, and the joy of the Lord is our strength. Therefore let us say, and continue to say from the heart: “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in Me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Galatians 2.20

In the Name of Jesus

A few points in the fifth chapter of Hebrews, in addition to what we had last week, can still profitably claim our attention, but as we had the text before us then, with questions upon it, we will not repeat them. That which is of special interest is what is said of Christ in verse 7. This may well be taken in connection with Hebrews 4.16

We are exhorted to come boldly unto the throne of grace. But how shall we come? "What are our recommendations?" Can we come presenting what we have done as a recommendation to favor? No; for what we have done shows us deserving of death. The criminal dare not come boldly into court, claiming freedom on account of his crimes. We have nothing of our own with which to appear before the King.

Neither can we claim anything by virtue of what we promised to do. We have made promises too often, and broken them, to have any confidence placed in them. Our promises are worthless, because however good the intention may be to perform, we find in us no good thing with which to fulfill the promise. "Man at his best state is altogether vanity;" so that we have nothing in ourselves, whether past, present, or future, to give us boldness in coming to the King on His throne with our requests.

But we have better promises than our own, even the King's own promises. And we have a warrant from the King's own Son: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall w ask anything in My name, I will do it." John 14.13, 14. Now the only thing we need is deliverance from sin; when we have that, we have everything worth having, both in this world and in the world to come. We know that Jesus was delivered from sin, for "in the days of His flee he when He had offered up prayer and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death," He "was heard." Hebrews 5.7. Although in the flesh, "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8.3), as weak as the weakest man that ever lived, for no man can be weaker than to be able to do nothing of himself (see John 5.30),—yet He was delivered from all the sins of the flesh.

But what has that to do with us? How is it that we can ask anything in His name, and for His sake? This is the question, which reaches to the very core of the Gospel. It is the "mystery," over which the unbeliever stumbles, calling it folly and injustice, because he does not see the vital connection between Christ the only-begotten Son of all mankind. "The Word was made flesh." Who's flesh?—"Forasmuch then as the children are 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 them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham." Hebrews 2.14-16. He took your flesh, my flesh, the flesh of all mankind, sinful flesh, so that He was in all things made like unto His brethren. We are partakers of flesh and blood: "He also Himself likewise took part of *the same*."

Whatever we have, He had, even the self-same things. John pointed to Jesus, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away (bears!) the sin of the world." There is not a temptation that has oppressed any human being, and overcome him, that did not press in with all its might upon Jesus, without overcoming Him. But the temptation was nonetheless real. People seem to think that the fact that Jesus never sinned is proof that He was not tempted in the same way that we are. As much as to say that if He had been tempted as we are, He would have sinned! Or, in other words, the same as saying that there is no possibility of successfully resisting temptation. Those who would separate Jesus from the fullest share in our human nature do not realize that in so doing they are laboring to deprive mankind of all hope.

It was our sins that nailed Jesus to the cross. 1 Peter 2.2-1. And it was our sins that He bore in the garden of Gethsemane and in the wilderness of temptation. It was our sins (He had none of His own) for deliverance from which He spent whole nights in prayer. But He "was heard in that He feared." Ah, thank God for that. What? Why, Jesus of Nazareth, in the flesh, in the weakest human flesh, with your and my sins upon Him, was delivered from them, He gained the victory over them. Isn't that joyful news? Believe it, accept it, and pass it to others.

"Let us therefore hold fast our confession?" What confession?—"That Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, in our flesh; that "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me." He is still "*touched* with the feeling of our infirmities." Whatever affects us, also affects Him. "He ever lives to make intercession" for us. That is, He prays for us now as He did when on earth; and as surely as He was heard them, so surely will He be heard now.

So we come in His name. It is "not I but Christ." Christ in me is making petition to be delivered from this sin. I do not ask for my own sake; I have no personal claim in the Lord; but I ask it for His sake. Can there be any doubt that the prayer will be heard?—Certainly not; for it has already been heard, and answered. This very sin from which we are praying to be delivered, your own personal sin, and mine,—has been agonized over and conquered! The victory, then, is ours, is it not?—Most assuredly. "Thanks be to God which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Gospel in Unselfishness

Can you not see that even in personal conflict with sin, the fundamental principle of the Gospel—self-forgetfulness—comes in? "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." This was true of Christ on the cross. The same must be true of us; and the same spirit of absorbed interest in others, and self-forgetfulness, must be in even our most earnest prayer for personal help, if we would pray the prayer that is certain to be answered. When we come to the throne of grace absorbed in the thought that it is Jesus who is pleading to be delivered from the sins that oppress us, that it is He and not we who are appearing before God, and we lose sight and thought of ourselves in our interest in His mortal struggle with sin, then we are saved. Our personality is lost in His; we lose ourselves in Him; and then comes the

thrilling thought, He was heard! He gained the victory over this very trial! Human words cannot describe the joy of the thought, because it is “the joy of the Lord.” And the joy of the Lord is our strength. Nehemiah 8.10

Jesus was “made of the seed of David according to the flesh” but “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” Romans 1.3, 4. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was the demonstration of the fact that He was the Son of God with power. It was impossible for Him to be held by the grave, because He had done no sin. But being raised from the dead, He was raised to the right hand of God, from which place He sends the Holy Spirit to all, thereby coming to dwell in all who believe. So we read, “being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.” This is a parallel to what we read in Christ’s prayer. John 17.1, 2: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son may also glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You hast given Him.”

“And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” Do you know Him? If not, make haste to become acquainted with Him as the Son of God and the Son of man.

Christ “Glorified not Himself”

An important lesson is to be learned from the first portion of the fifth of Hebrews. If every one who professes to be Christian would learn it, there would never be any seeking for place, any striving for the mastery, in the church. No one would ever put himself forward for a position of prominence or supposed honor.

No more honorable position than High Priest was ever known. If ever any position of responsibility and honor was to be coveted, that is the place. And no one more worthy of all honor than Jesus Christ ever lived. He was in every way worthy of the position. Therefore if anybody in the world could ever plead his own claims to any position, Jesus might have sought the office of High Priest for Himself. But what are the facts?

“No man takes this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an high priest, but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, today have I begotten Thee.”

The Lesson for Us

What is the lesson—Just this: Since Jesus, who was in every way worthy, and perfectly fitted for the position of High Priest, would not and did not put Himself forward for the place, there is no human being who can ever with any grace lay claim it. No; not with any grace, for just to the extent that any man pleads his own cause, and seeks a position, does he show himself ignorant and destitute of the grace of Christ.

Because Jesus humbled Himself, therefore “God also hath highly exalted Him.” Philippians 2.9. His modesty, His humility, the utter absence of self-glorification, are the marks which showed His worthiness. Let every member of the church get this portion of the Word of God indelibly fixed in his mind. We may not advance ourselves, we may not plead our fitness for any place, nay, we may not even in our own minds canvass the ground and think ourselves worthy of the place. Love “seeks not her own.” We must not only be silent before others, but we must not exalt ourselves to the place, even in our own thoughts. Therein lies all the danger. If we exalt ourselves even in thought, we are putting ourselves ahead of Christ, for He did not exalt Himself. Thus we would be showing our oneness with the “man of sin” (2 Thessalonians 2.3, 4) instead of Christ.

“A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven.” John 3.27. And whatever God designs a man shall have He is fully able to see that the right man has, instead of another. “Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

The Power of the World to Come

In reading the fifth chapter of Hebrews, we always stop with wonder and awe over the picture presented in verses 7-9. The thought of the only-begotten Son of God absolutely in the condition of the weakest man in the flesh, so that, oppressed by temptation, and with no power in Himself to resist, He was constrained to cry out with tears of anguish to Him who alone could save Him from threatening destruction, seems to some irreverent, yet it is just the picture that is presented to us by the apostle, and it is the sinner's comfort; for *He was delivered*, and it was in our flesh, and from our sins, that He was delivered; therefore in Him we have the victory and are free! But great as is this truth, the apostle writes as though he had not yet begun to say the really deep and difficult things about Christ. The dullness of his hearers, that is, our dullness, hinders him from giving utterance to all the wonderful things that he had seen in Christ.

It is a fact that to the great mass of professed Christians these things are enigmas. These things, which are the very foundation principles of the Gospel, are unknown to thousands of professors in every denomination under heaven. Therefore it is necessary that they be taught the first principles of their profession. But that is a sad condition of things. For note well, the Christian is in this world "in Christ's stead." Christians indeed are chosen as priests of God, to show forth the excellences of God, even as Christ did. Now it is true that there is always more for the Christian to learn, since no one can be a teacher who does not continually keep learning; but it is also true that the teacher must be well grounded in the first principles, else he cannot teach at all. Most people seem to think that a church is simply a company assembled to receive instruction from some man; whereas it is a people called out to be taught of God and to teach other people. The least in the church ought certainly to be familiar with the alphabet of Christian knowledge. This is so self-evident that the apostle's conclusion in the beginning of the text that follows is most natural:—

"Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. Hebrews 6.1-6

The Whole Contains the Parts.—Some fancy that in the first two verses the Apostle speaks slightly of repentance faith toward God, baptism, etc., because he exhorts us to leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and go on to perfection. These are indeed the first principles, but the apostle does

not by any means say that they should be ignored. Quite the contrary. He exhorts us to go on to perfection, and perfection can be acquired only by adhering to first principles. It is an axiom, that the whole is equal to the sum of all the parts. If any of the parts are lacking, the whole is lacking by just so much. Every part is essential in order to make a perfect whole. The twenty-six letters of the alphabet lie at the beginning of all learning. For a time the child is wholly absorbed with them, but soon he masters them. Then we say to him, "Let us now leave these first principles, and go on to something higher." Does that mean that he has nothing more to do with the alphabet, and can ignore them?—By no means; he can never get away from them without going wrong. He must use them continually; but we should not like to have him talk of nothing else but the alphabet, however essential it is. Let us take these first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and proceed to build on them.

Only One Foundation.—"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 3.11. That foundation is eternal. It is the Rock of Ages. That once laid, there is no need of laying another; indeed, there can be no other. Therefore if we lay again the foundation of repentance, it can only be because we have repudiated the one, true foundation. We cannot overturn or tear down the foundation, which God Himself has laid; but we reject it, so that it will be to us as though it were not laid. The exhortation, therefore, to "go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation," is an exhortation to hold fast to the first principles. "As ye have therefore received the Lord Jesus Christ, so walk ye in Him; rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught." Colossians 2.6, 7. The trouble, with too many is that they forget first principles. If, having learned one truth, they would understand that it is always and everywhere the truth, and would hold to it in every case, they would never go wrong; for the highest perfection consists simply in the use of first principles. The multiplication table contains all the principles that the most accomplished mathematician can ever use; for it is capable of endless combinations. When one has accepted Christ, He has the key of all knowledge, for He is the truth. Everything is in Christ, and that is why one can go on advancing to all eternity in the knowledge of Christ.

The Laying on of Hands.—This is the one expression in the list that gives special difficulty. Not but that the others afford room for much thought and study; but they are to a degree understood and practiced, while the laying on of hands is not so well understood. It must, however, be remembered that not all the things mentioned in this list are things to be practiced, as the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. But the laying on of hands is something to be done, and the question is often asked, "Why is not the laying on of hands generally practiced?" The only reply is, Because of ignorance of the principles of the doctrine of Christ. Suppose some one should say, "Let us all adopt the practice of laying on hands;" then the question would be, "What for?" Certainly it would be but mockery to go through the ceremony of laying hands on people, while not knowing the object of the act. The first thing, therefore, is to learn why hands were laid on men.

Paul wrote to Timothy: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the eldership." 1 Timothy 4.14. So it appears that some gift was imparted by the laying on of hands. If it were not so then the act would be a farce. What the gift was, if it was in all cases the same, is an open question.

Some will tell us that the laying on of hands was always for the imparting of the Holy Spirit. It is true that sometimes the Holy Spirit was imparted in this way, but not always. Instances may be seen in Acts 8.15-18; 19.6. But in the case of the disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2.1-4), the Holy Spirit was imparted without any laying on of hands; likewise in the case of Cornelius and his friends. Acts 10.44. "One thing, however, is certain, that while the gift of the Holy Spirit was imparted both with and without the laying on of hands, so that the laying on of hands is not an absolute necessity to the receiving of the Spirit, something in the possession of the one who laid on hands was always imparted to the one on whom the hands were laid.

There is therefore one other factor in the answer to the question, "Why is not the laying on of hands universally practiced in the church?" And that is, because as a general thing no one has anything to impart by that method. To go through the ceremony, simply because we see that the apostles sometimes did it, without the apostolic power, and with no results, would be to reduce sacred things to the level of child's play. Note that nowhere have we any commandment to lay on hands. Therefore we are safe in concluding that the possession of a gift that may be imparted by the laying on of hands, will of itself direct the possessor in the matter of how, when, and why it should be done. Let us therefore pray for "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him."

The Powers of the World to Come.—What is the power of the world to come?—Since the world to come is the earth made new, it is evident that the power thereof must be creative power. In other words, it is the fullness of the mighty power of God. It is the mighty power, which God wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead. Ephesians 1.19, 30. That is the power by which men are made new creatures. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1.16), and in the things that God has made that power—"eternal power"—is seen. Verse 20. The Word of the Gospel is the Word that plants the heavens, and lays the foundation of the earth. See Isaiah 51.16. The power of the world to come is therefore all the power of the cross, or all the power of God.

An Impossibility.—The sum of Hebrews 6.4-6 is that if one rejects and despises all this power, having once known and tasted it, it is impossible to renew him again to repentance. Of course, since there is no greater power than that which he has rejected. There is no other name under heaven, except that of Christ, by which salvation can be had. If, now, one treads under foot the Son of God, and counts the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing (Hebrews 10.29), it is evident that there is no hope for him. It is simply the question that we had in the beginning of our study, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

The Danger of Falling.—Is it possible that one who has gone so far as to be made partaker of the Holy Spirit, and to taste the good Word of God and the power of the world to come, having been fully enlightened, to fall away? Some say it is not, but if it were not, the apostle would not have shown the hopelessness of such a fall. How does one stand?—"By faith." Romans 11.20. The question then is, "Is it possible for a man to depart from the faith, and thus to fall?" We have only to read 1 Timothy 4.1, for an answer. We are familiar enough with the old saying that the fact that they turned away is evidence that they were never fully in the faith, but that is easily disproved. Take for example the case of Peter. While on his way to meet Jesus on the water, he sank. Why did he sink?—Because his faith wavered. He doubted. Shall we say that the fact that he began to sink is evidence that he had not walked on the water by faith? That would be to deny the fact. It is possible for a person to lose the faith by which he stands; therefore "be not high minded but fear."

A Ground of Hope.—Those of whom the apostle speaks in the text before us, are those "who were once enlightened." When they turned away, therefore, they did it with their eyes open. They deliberately turned away from the light. They have rejected everything that God has for them. Therefore it is impossible *to renew them again unto repentance*. They are hardened, and have no hatred of sin, and no desire for salvation. Cannot the poor, trembling, fearful soul, who imagines that this text cuts off his hope of salvation, see that it does not mean him at all? He would be saved, but is afraid that he cannot be. But the text speaks of those who do not wish to be saved, they cannot be moved to repentance. Christ is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. Hebrews 7.25. The worst sinner in the world, yea, the worst backslider, may be saved, provided he repents. The only hopeless case is the man who feels no sorrow for sin. There is hope, for "the Lord upholds all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down." Psalm 145.14. So we may say, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise." Micah 7.8. Yet it is better not to fall, and from this we may be kept, for He "is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." Jude 24

The Fruits of Grace

Our last lesson, Hebrews 6.1-6, showed that the unpardonable sin is the sin that is not repented of, or, rather, the sin of willfully rejecting the grace that brings salvation.

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men.” Matthew 12.31

Sin against the Holy Spirit

It was through the eternal Spirit “that Christ offered Himself.” Hebrews 9.14. The rejection of the Holy Spirit is the rejection of the means of salvation, which the Holy Spirit provides. Now “whosoever will” may be saved. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3.16. There is no sin that man can possibly commit for which there is not forgiveness, for “with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption.” Psalm 130.7. But if a man will not be forgiven, if he does despite to the Spirit of grace; how can there be salvation for him? Will you say, “Is not God able to provide other means?” If you do, you impeach His goodness, by implying that His present salvation is deficient—that He has not done all that He could. But He has given *Himself*, and that is all that there is to give; it is enough, and none need reproach God because there is no salvation for those who will not be saved; no life for those who reject the Author of life.

Bear in mind that the text speaks of those whom it is impossible to renew again unto repentance, and not of those who repent but cannot find salvation. The fault, therefore, is not with God, but with the ones who resist all His gracious efforts to renew them. For note further that the very text implies the utmost effort on the part of God, for it says, “it is impossible, . . . if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.” But if the utmost effort were not put forth, it could not be said that it is impossible. So the text before us teaches us, contrary to what many think, that God never remits His efforts to save men. Here then is hope for the sinner. Do you wish to be saved?—“Yes.” Well, God is most anxious for you to be saved; now if you are willing and anxious, and He is also willing and anxious, what can hinder it, He has all power?

An Illustration

So we continue our reading in the same line:—

“For the earth which drinks in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and brings forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God; but that which bears thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.” Hebrews 6.7, 8

The bringing forth of fruit by the earth is used by the Lord as an illustration of the bearing of the fruits of righteousness by men. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not thither, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth." Isaiah 55.10, 11. "For as the earth brings forth her bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." Isaiah 61.11

Again we read: "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knows not how." Mark 4.26, 27. But it is the rain from heaven that causes the earth to bring forth and bud; therefore the rain that falls on the earth is a visible representation of the grace and righteousness that God rains upon men. Thus we read: "Drop down ye heavens from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together." Isaiah 45.8

On the Just and on the Unjust

Let us now see how it is with the rain upon the earth. God said to Job: "Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder; to cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness, where there is no man; to satisfy the desolate and waste ground, and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth?" Job 38.25-27. God's rain is like His grace; indeed, it is His grace, for Christ refers to it to show His kindness and forgiveness: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and unjust." Matthew 5.44, 45. God sends rain upon the wicked man's farm, as well as the garden of the saint; yea, He sends rain on the desert, on the barren rocks, and on the sea. He is not sparing of His gifts. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Romans 5.20

Just as the rain comes for the purpose of causing the earth to bring forth fruit, and it falls not only on the soft, rich soil, but on the hard, barren, desolate places, so with God's grace that brings salvation. The barren soil or the soil that brings forth only thorns and thistles cannot plead as an excuse that it does not receive any encouragement in the shape of moisture. So in the text before us, Hebrews 6.7, 8, the rain is represented as falling oft upon both the earth that is fruitful and upon that which brings forth thorns and thistles. The earth, which drinks in the rain that cometh oft upon it "receives blessing of God; but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected." It receives the grace of God in vain. So we see that even those texts, which men so naturally use to prove that God has laid some hindrance in the way of their salvation, are full of encouragement.

It is all mercy that comes from God. Yes, but the Bible says, that He hath "mercy on whomever He will have mercy, and whomever He will He hardens." Very true; but we

need to read the connection. Go back a few verses: "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion. So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth. Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens." Romans 9.14-18

Pharaoh's Hard Heart

Can you not see that it is all mercy and compassion? He does not say that He will have mercy on whomever He will have mercy, and that He will withhold it from whomever He will withhold it. No; but it is mercy and compassion. But then, how about the hardening? Why, that comes simply from mercy rejected. When the plagues were on Pharaoh he said, "I have sinned," and promised to obey the Lord, and let Israel go; but as soon as God took away the plague, his heart was hardened. There are some folks who look upon kindness and favor as an indication of weakness. When God took away the plagues, Pharaoh looked upon it as an evidence that God was giving way, and that he was prevailing, and so he presumed upon God's mercy. The same sunshine has both a softening and a hardening, effect. The rain that falls upon some soil makes it soft for the plough, while the same rain makes other soil hard and stiff.

"But the earth is not to blame for that." No; of course not, for the earth is inanimate, and so is not an absolutely perfect illustration of man, who is endowed with the power to reason and to will. Man is to blame if he receives the gifts of God in vain. The rain of grace falls constantly. "Showers of blessing" the Lord gives. If the soul drinks it in, the fruits of righteousness will be brought forth, for they are the fruits meet for Him by whom it is dressed. If, in spite of God's ever-flowing mercy, the soul remains obdurate, despising the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing nor caring that this goodness is to bring it to repentance, it heaps up to itself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. See Romans 2.4, 5. But God will be clear when He judges.

"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love which ye have showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." Hebrews 6.9, 10

"It is God which works in you, both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2.13), yet He gives the soul credit for the work which it allows God to accomplish in it just as though it was spontaneous. There is nothing without God, yet He says, "For the earth brings forth fruit of itself." Mark 4.28. He counts it to the credit of the earth just as though it had done it all. So when we yield to the influence of His Spirit, and the fruits of the Spirit appear, God counts it to us just as though we ourselves had originated it; for He endows us with His own Divine nature, and calls it

our own. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"
"Praise the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endures for ever."

**"There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice,
Which is more than liberty.**

**"If our love were but more simple,
We should take Him at His word;
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the sweetness of our Lord."**

Our Strong Consolation

When we began the study of the book of Hebrews, we said that we should take up the first four or five chapters. With this number we close the sixth chapter, and since this is even more than we contemplated doing or promised to do when we began, we shall discontinue the study for a few months, to resume it later. In the meantime other portions of the Bible will be studied, no less interesting and profitable than the book of Hebrews; and as every part of the Bible is a help to the study of every other part, we shall derive the more profit from Hebrews when we proceed with it.

It will be remembered that the portion of the epistle comprising the latter part of the fifth chapter and the first half of the sixth, is a personal appeal. Those to whom it is addressed are charged with being dull and slow to apprehend the deep truths of the Gospel, and are exhorted to go on unto perfection; they are warned of the danger of receiving the grace of God in vain, but are at the same time encouraged by a recognition of the fact that they had already shown love to the Lord in ministering to the saints. Then the exhortation, and the encouragement, which we find in our present

Scripture Lesson

“And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast and which enters into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made, an high priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek.” Hebrews 6.11-20

Some Peculiar Idioms.—The words; “Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee,” are a literal translation of the Hebrew words of the promise, in Genesis 22.17. But everybody who has given any study to language knows that an idiom, that is, a characteristic expression, in one language, does not make good sense if translated word for word into another language. A word for word translation is not an exact rendering. In the Hebrew language, repetition of a sentence; phrase; word; or even of a single letter in a word, indicates emphasis, positiveness. For example, in Genesis 2.16 we have the statement, “Thou may freely eat,” which is as plain as anything can be; but the word for word rendering of

the equally plain expression in the Hebrew, is given in the margin, "eating thou shalt eat," which in English means nothing. So also in the next verse, where we read, "Thou shalt surely die," we have in the margin, "dying thou shalt die." This latter expression, although meaningless, is the word for word rendering of the Hebrew words conveying the positive assurance, "I will certainly bless thee, and I will surely multiply thee."

Not Slothful, but Faithful and Patient.—Be not slothful, but followers [or, imitators] of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Faith and patience! Trust and endure. We see that faith means activity, since it is contrasted with slothfulness. Faith works. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God, and "the Word of God is living and active." The "wicked and slothful servant" is the servant who does not have faith in the Master.

The Promise to Abraham.— When God made the promise to Abraham, scripture says, "And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness." Genesis 15.6. So, the promise is therefore that by which righteousness is obtained.

There is probably no other subject in the Bible, concerning which so great a web of speculative nonsense has been spun, as that of the promise to Israel, which is none other than to Abraham. All this confusion would be avoided, if men would but hold to the plain words of the Bible, letting them stand for just what they say.

Note this:—

"For all the promises of God in Him [Christ] are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us." 2 Corinthians 1.20

God makes no promise, except in Christ; the promise to Abraham, as already seen, was confirmed in Christ (Galatians 3.17); therefore no promise of God is fulfilled except to Christians. God keeps faith with all and His promises are such that whoever accepts them thereby becomes a Christian. Any talk about promises to be fulfilled to Jews, as distinct from Christians, comes from ignorance or rejection of the everlasting Gospel, which is the same in every age and to all people.

"He Obtained the Promise."—In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews it is said of Abraham and all his posterity, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises" (verse 13), and still later, "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise." Verse 39. Yet in Hebrews 6.15, it is said of Abraham, "And so, after he had patiently endured, he received the promise." How is this?—It is easily reconciled, when we consider that, "in Isaac shall thy seed be called." Isaac was the child of promise, born of the Spirit. His birth was life from the dead. See Romans 4.19. So when Abraham was tried he offered up Isaac; "and he that received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." Hebrews 11.17-19. Christ is the Seed, and He could come only through Isaac's line; yet so

firmly did Abraham's faith grasp Christ as the One "who is, and who was, and who is to come" that he calmly proceeded to offer up Isaac, assured that the Christ who was to come from him was already alive from the dead, with power to raise Isaac from the dead so that the promise that He should be born of his line might be fulfilled. Truly Abraham had the promise, even as he who for a surety knows the promise of God that he shall be "heir of the world," already has tasted "the power of the world to come."

"Two Immutable Things"—What these two immutable things are, by which we have "a strong consolation," is plainly stated in the text. They are the promise and the oath of God. God's promise is unchangeable; "the Word of the Lord endures for ever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." 1 Peter 1.25. The Word needs nothing added to it to strengthen it. Let men remember this, when they presume to uphold God's Word by assertions of their own. Any attempt of man to strengthen the Word of God, is but a reproach to it, a disparagement of it. The Lord receives not the testimony of man, and His cause is never strengthened by quotations from eminent men of the world in favor of the Bible. Abraham did not need anything more than the Word of God, for, let it be noted, the oath was not added for his sake, but for ours. Read Genesis 22.1-18 and James 2.21-24. There we see that the oath was not given until after Abraham's faith in the promises had been shown to be perfect.

"Interposed Himself by an Oath"—Thus we have it in the margin of verse 17. God swore by Himself. Now when one swears by any object, that object is put up as a forfeit. If the thing sworn is not fulfilled, the object is forfeited, God set Himself apart as a forfeit, or, interposed Himself between those to whom the promise was made and the possibility of failure. The promise is as sure as the life of God. If the promise should fail of fulfillment, in a single particular, then God would cease to exist. So sure is it. But if God should cease to exist, then would the universe be annihilated, for He is its support. Now God has created all things in Jesus Christ, and in Him all things consist (Ephesians 3.9; Colossians 1.16, 17), so that it is literally true that in Christ we have all things. Romans 8.32. All the promises of God are in Christ, so that the oath of God is in Christ; Christ is set forth as the very being and presence of God. Thus it is that the existence and stability of the whole universe depends on the fulfillment of God's promise to us. And what is the promise?—Righteousness; the forgiveness of sins. "Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." Acts 13.38. Forgiveness of sins comprises cleansing from all unrighteousness (1 John 1.9) and complete redemption. Ephesians 1.7. That God will do this, that He is faithful to His promise, and that not a sinner can apply in vain to Him for pardon and cleansing, we have the assurance in every blade of grass, in the sun, moon, and stars, that still pursue their courses. The snow and vapors and stormy wind fulfill His Word. Psalm 148.8. "For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever; Thy faithfulness shalt Thou establish in the very heavens." Psalm 89.2

For Our Sakes.—Abraham's faith was counted to him for righteousness. "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to

whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Romans 4.23-25. So the oath was sworn to Abraham, "that we might have a strong consolation." You and I have an interest in that oath to Abraham, and therefore in the promise to him. Every soul who comes to God comes to Him by virtue of that which God promised to Abraham.

Christians Children of Abraham.—"Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, "In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." Galatians 3.7-9. The oath of God to Abraham gives strong consolation to those who flee to Christ for refuge. On this is based the hymn beginning,

**"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word;
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
Who unto the Saviour for refuge have fled?"**

But it is sinners that flee for refuge to Christ, and it is sinners that have a firm foundation for their faith in fleeing to Him for refuge. It was for the benefit of us sinners that the oath was given, for God would not leave the shadow of a chance for a reasonable doubt in the mind of any sinner. To be sure the same consolation remains for those who have been made saints; "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." Romans 5.10. Let every soul come to the Lord with this assurance of pardon and acceptance, that God has more at stake than he has, even as God's life is worth more than any man's. Thus, if God should refuse to hear my prayer, and should not forgive my sins, I should be lost, but God would also be lost, and His loss would be greater than mine. If we believe God, and hold to His Word, our cases are as sure as His. Surely this is a strong consolation.

Christ the Forerunner.—This hope is as an anchor sure and steadfast, which enters into that which is within the veil, that is in the secret dwelling-place of God, into which place Jesus the Forerunner is entered for us. A forerunner implies others following after. We have already seen that Christ is forever identified with mankind as Brother. He is one with us. He is the Son of man, "the Man Christ Jesus." Well, now, there is one Man—the representative Man—already in the presence of God in person. He is already seated "on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens," a King on the Father's throne. But it is one of us, who has gone there; One who is made in all things like unto His brethren. He is indeed "the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8.29), but we are joint-heirs with Him. Verse 17. Therefore if we believe in Him, if we have "put on Christ" in baptism, and are become Abraham's seed, and children of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3.26-29) we have the same right to enter heaven and sit upon the throne

that He has. He has simply gone before us to show us the way, and to prepare a place for us. John 14.1-3

A Kingly Priest.—“Made an High Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek.” Who was Melchisedek?—He was “king of Salem” and “priest of the Most High God.” Hebrews 7.1. So Christ is both King and Priest. “Thus says the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the Man whose name is The BRANCH; and He shall grow up out of His place, and 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; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” Zechariah 6.12, 13. What is Christ’s work as Priest?—“To make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” How much power has He to do this?—All His power as King; all the power of the throne of grace on which He sits. What more could be said to give confidence to a trembling soul? He is King of righteousness, and also King of peace. Let Him reign in your heart, “and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” “Blessed be His glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen and Amen.”