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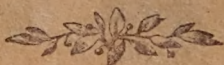
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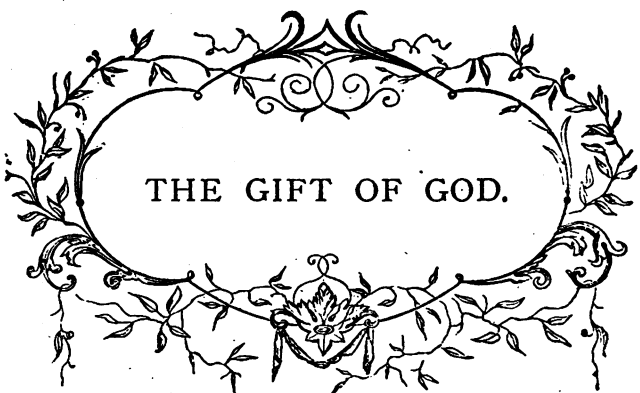
BY
THEODORE MONOD.



LONDON:

MORGAN

AND SCOTT.



THE GIFT OF GOD.



THE GIFT OF GOD.

A Series of Addresses

BY

THEODORE MONOD.



“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”—2 Cor. ix. 15.

LONDON: MORGAN AND SCOTT,

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PREFACE.

THESE Addresses were delivered at the Union Conference for the Promotion of Scriptural Holiness, held at Freemasons' Hall, London, in 1876.

There is reason to believe that they have been blessed to some of those who have heard them, or who have read them as reported in *The Christian*; I have therefore willingly consented to their being republished in a more convenient form. That they may help the reader to search the word of God, to lay hold of his unspeakable gift, and to glorify Him by living upon the fulness of his grace in Christ, is my hope and prayer.

“Lord God, whatever I have spoken which is of thine, let thy people recognize. If I have spoken aught which is of mine, forgive Thou, and let thy people forgive.”*

* AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate*.

PARIS, September, 1876.

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“Three words only: but in those three words lies the whole secret of life.”—*Page 3.*

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THE GIFT OF GOD.



I.—Its Source.

“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 iii. 16.*



THE GIFT OF GOD.

CHAPTER I.

Its Source.

“**T**HE old, old Story.” That is what I should like to go over once more with you; and whatever I have to say, I desire to gather around the one great thought—nay, the one great fact—of *the Gift of God*. “If thou knewest the gift of God,” said the Lord to the woman of Samaria. After all, that is what we most need. If we have got hold of the gift of God, we have got hold of everything. It is a pity that we should sometimes quarrel as to the best definition of the act of taking the gift, instead of just taking it, and living upon it, and thriving upon it.

As to my authority, it is all in this book. I

do not intend to quote any man, whether living or dead. I intend to quote the Word of God, and that alone. I do not know how you feel about the books and words of men. I confess that, especially for the last year or so of overflowing religious literature, I feel very much like letting it all alone for a season, to go back to the Bible, and read what is written there.

I do not know much about theology—not that I wish to disparage it at all; indeed, I think there is needful work to be done in that field—but the consequence of my ignorance is, that many puzzling questions are spared me. I am often reminded of a good peasant—a Christian—who was discussing some knotty question with a very learned man, and the learned man said, “My friend, you do not seem to be much acquainted with the fathers.” “Well,” said he, “that is the fact; I am not much acquainted with the fathers, but I am pretty well acquainted with the grandfathers,” meaning the apostles.

There is a good lesson in that for every one of us. We all have our traditions—excellent books written by men of God, whom we respect and love; but let us take care lest, whilst we are pitying the blindness of Roman Catholics because they appeal to the fathers, we should be doing exactly the same thing.

Let us set all books aside, and even set experience aside, as far as these short Addresses are concerned; not, however, as some friends, who are for hiding all the good experience out of sight, and putting all the bad experience to the front. We will not appeal to experience—only to the Word of God.

When thinking of the gift of God, the first question is, Where does the gift come from? that is, How is it that God has a gift for us at all? Think of God, who created all things, who had only to say, "Let there be light: and there was light;" of whom we can do little more than utter the name with trembling lips; who not only is holy, but is purity itself, and majesty, and truth. Think of God, of whom we are afraid. Every man naturally wants to run away from God. To be sure, there is something in him that says, "You need God;" but there is also something that says, "You have offended God." And man wants to hide, as Adam did in the garden.

This world is without God and against Him. He might have said, "Let them be without Me;" He might have left us to our perdition. But He has not done that. Has He sent us

instruction and teaching? He has done more than that. Has He set before us a perfect pattern of holiness, of obedience, of patience? He has done a great deal more than that. He has sent us *a gift*. He did not sell us anything; He did not hand to us anything in exchange for something that we brought to Him; He did not promise to give us something; He did not merely *offer* us something; He did not offer his Son to the world; He *gave* his Son—there He is. Suppose I were to put a pile of gold on this table, and say, "I give it; any one may take as many pieces as he pleases." You may call it an offer, as far as you are concerned, if you like; but, as far as I am concerned, it is a gift, and you would not have a right to take it if it were not.

What is the gift? We will not dwell much on this at present, but of course this is the substance of it all—God has given us *his own Son*.

When did He give Him? From the beginning. Before you and I were born, before our forefathers were born, before Adam was made, before the world was made, He gave Him in his heart of hearts,—gave Him to us, gave Him for us. *Why* did He give Him? Because He loved us. Oh, brethren, that we could understand this—that God loved us!

"God is love,"¹ says the apostle. There are

¹ 1 John iv. 8.

not many definitions of God in the Bible; there are however two or three. They tell us not what He commands; or promises, or gives, but what He *is*.

In the first place, "*I am that I am.*"² "I AM sent thee to them," says God to Moses. A careful study of the name seems to indicate not only or chiefly the idea of *being*, in a metaphysical sense, but the idea of faithfulness to his own nature. Again, "*God is light;*"³ that is, truth and holiness, reality itself, and purity itself. And besides this, "*God is love.*"

That Being, who is LIGHT and LOVE, has many attributes. It is nowhere stated, however, that God *is* majesty, that God *is* justice, or any other of his perfections; but it is said that "God *is* love," and "God *is* light;" not that He *has* light and love, but that He *is* love—righteous love, holy love, wise love, chastising love, almighty love, everlasting love.

Love to whom? In the first place, the question occurs, "How could God love at all, before the world was made or anything was in existence?" Suppose there was a man who spent his life alone in a wilderness, and you were to say, "That man is a very loving man." How do you know it? Whom does he love? How does he show his love?

² Exod. iii. 14.

³ 1 John i. 5.

Ah, my brethren, this lets us deep into the very essence of God! If God is love, whom did He love before He made anything? The Bible answers that God has a Son, whom He loves; that God, for ever and ever, has One to love, who is as Himself; that the unity of God is not a solitude; that there is, in that unity of God, heart answering to heart, and love answering to love; that there is One who is the brightness of his glory for ever, and the express image of his person, in whom He beholds Himself and loves Himself, yet in another. . . . Let our words be few while speaking of things into which angels "desire to look;" and concerning which we will do well to confine ourselves to the statements of the Bible, obtaining through them a glimpse, as it were, of this wonderful love of God. What a God is ours! Not the God of philosophy—a poor, cold, lonely god. No; a God who is a Father from everlasting. Think of that! The kingdom of God is the kingdom of a Father. If there is such a thing on earth as the heart of a father, it is because there is a Father in heaven. God is the everlasting Father, and Christ is the everlasting Son. He is the One whom God loves, first of all.

Does He love anybody else? We see in the Bible a number of men of whom it is said God loved them. Take one instance—Daniel.

“O man greatly beloved!”⁴ says the angel. We say to ourselves, Oh that I were a Daniel!

We see that the people of Israel were loved of God. Here is one of the many statements to that effect: “The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you.”⁵ Again: “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.”⁶ And again, the first words in the book of Malachi: “I have loved you, saith the Lord.” And we say to ourselves, Oh that I were the people of Israel!

But there is more than this. You need not be Daniel or Israel. See what Paul says: “After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared.”⁷ God loved man. God made man in his own image, and loved him; He loved him before he fell, and after he fell.

Do not let us make any confusion here. There are two very different subjects that must not be confounded—God’s *love* to man, to the vilest man, God’s *love* to rebels; and God’s *delight* in a man when that man returns to Him. See the father of the prodigal son. Did he, for one instant, cease to love his child? Did not he

⁴ Dan. x. 19.

⁵ Deut. vii. 7, 8.

⁶ Jer. xxxi. 3.

⁷ Titus iii. 4.

love him before he left the house, and after he left the house, and all the time he was out of the house? But he did not delight in him, and did not approve him; and he never could have received him if the son had wanted to bring back with him the companions of his evil living, those miserable women with whom he had wasted his substance. As soon as he comes back the father receives him with open arms; and now he delights in him, and gives him the place that had been waiting for him all the time. But his love to his child does not begin on that day.

Just so we can say to any man, God loves you; but that is the very reason why you must not remain in your rebellion, estranged from God. Hasten back to the Father's home, and the Father's heart, that his love may rest upon you, that He may delight in you.

See what the apostle says to the Romans: "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."⁸ He says to us, "Love your enemies." Surely He does as much. He died for his enemies, to make them his friends. He took on Himself, in Christ Jesus, the iniquity of us all.

Here are Christ's own words: "God so loved the world, that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish,

⁸ Rom. v. 8.

but have everlasting life.”⁹ Here is the measure of his love. Now do you see your name in the Bible? Are you *in* the world, *of* the world? “God so loved *the world*, that He gave his only-begotten Son.” There is the Gift.

Think of God looking down upon this miserable little world of sinners, and seeing that He could not receive these sinners into fellowship with Himself, because they had forfeited their very life, because a mortal disease had taken hold of them, because they were guilty and polluted, because God’s law must in some way be sanctioned. If we can speak thus of God, we can imagine Him questioning within Himself what He could do to save the world; and finally, seeing that if the world is to be saved at all, He must Himself, in his own Son (“God was in Christ”¹), go down and be a Man, in order to atone for the guilt of men, and to reconcile the world unto Himself.

And He did so. He gave his own Son. He delivered Him up into the hands of sinners, and the Son said, “Lo! here am I to do thy will.” He made Himself as a servant, and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Oh, my brethren, do you understand that love? No, you do not; I do not; the angels do not. And nobody does but God. We read—and

⁹ John iii. 16.

¹ 2 Cor. v. 19.

with this word we will close for the present—that when Christ was standing by the grave of Lazarus, face to face with the sorrow, the misery, the ruin that sin had brought into the world, He wept. Then said the Jews, when they saw Him weep, “Behold how He loved him!” As much as to say, We knew He was an acquaintance of theirs—a friend; but we never imagined He loved him so much as that.”

Oh, my brethren, when the Lord Jesus, the only-begotten Son of God, in our mortal flesh, died as a malefactor on the cross, when his tears and his blood flowed for them that had nailed Him there—then, methinks, the angels looked upon Him and upon one another in awe, and seraphim whispered to seraphim, beneath the shadow of the wings wherewith they cover their faces, “Behold how He loves them!”

THE GIFT OF GOD.



II.—Its Nature.

“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”—*Rom. vi. 23.*



CHAPTER II.

Its Nature.

IN the previous Address we considered the source of the Gift, and that is the love of God. God so loved the world, that He did—what? Oh, this is the difference between the gospel and anything that pretends to be the gospel, and is not! Some will say, God so loved the world, that He allowed one Man to be the great Example to his fellow-men, and that He died out of love for them. God loved the world more than that. Some will say, God so loved the world, that He created a very superior Being, who came into this world and died for men. God loved the world more than that. God *so* loved the world, that He gave us his only-begotten Son. Such is the gift of God, and the love of God.

What is the nature of the Gift?—Suppose I gave a child a sovereign, what would be the source of the gift? It would be my kindness,

my affection for the child. What is the nature of the gift? Look at it. It is gold; it is a piece of precious metal, with which he can get anything he pleases, as far as the money goes. Likewise, what is the gift of God to men? His Son. What is the nature of the gift? To answer the question, we must know who Jesus Christ is. Who is Jesus Christ? I will not go over what was said in the previous Address. He is the incarnation of the Word, concerning whom it is written: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."¹ He is the Life. He says Himself, "I am the Life."² So that if God has given us his Son, He has given us the Life. That is just what the apostle says: "The gift of God is eternal life through [the text has *in*] Jesus Christ our Lord."³

Again, let us take only one more passage, well known. We cannot read it often enough. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."⁴ If we get hold of that, we have everything.

In his Son God has given us life. As we were told yesterday, life cannot be separated from the living person or thing. It does not exist in the

¹ John i. 1.

³ Rom. vi. 23.

² John xiv. 6.

⁴ 1 John v. 11, 12.

abstract. There is no life if there is not some body or some thing living. Well, if God has given us life, He has given it to us in One who is living, who is *the* life—God's life. He has given us life in a Person, and that life is divine life, because it is the life of God in his Son.

And it is the true human life, because Christ took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. He was a man; yea, more than a man—He was *the* Man. Pilate spoke deeper truth than he knew when he exclaimed, "Behold the man!" He was a true man, and yet in his life you have the divine life united in one living Person with the human life. That is just what we need, is it not? In Christ we have this human and divine life. We have it as a gift; and on what other terms could we have it? Suppose some one should tell me that I might this day be possessor of the most princely mansion in England. I should understand very well that he did not expect me to have money enough to buy it. It must be a gift made over to me. So, if I am to have God's life, I must not imagine that my little doings and sufferings and deservings will secure it for me. It is absolutely a free gift; and if any man will not have it as a gift, he cannot have it at all. The apostle asks, "Who hath first given to God, and it shall be recompensed unto

him again?"⁵ Where is the man who will rise and answer, "I am the one; I have given Him something"? We have nothing to give but what He gives us. God must be the beginning, the middle, and the end of everything that is good.

It is a free gift, and it is a full gift; that is, a gift that includes everything. If you can name to me one good thing that is not in Christ, then you will have named one good thing that has not been given to us. But if you cannot find one good thing that is not in Christ, you cannot find one good thing that is not yours and mine, if we will but take it at the hand of God.

What does the Bible say? The passages are innumerable; take two of them: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us *with all spiritual blessings* in heavenly places in Christ."⁶ Do not forget those last two words; it is only in Christ that God has thus blessed us. Now listen to the apostle Peter. What does he say? "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power *hath given unto us all things* that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue."⁷ So that it is a full gift—one that comprehends and includes

⁵ Rom. xi. 35.

⁶ Eph. i. 3.

⁷ 2 Peter i. 2, 3.

everything. When God gives Christ, He gives all He can give.

How is this gift to reach us?

I am not entering upon the subject for the next Address—ITS RECEPTION; but simply asking this question: How is it that eternal life can be the gift of God to guilty men? Remember what Christ says. He not only says, "I am the Life"—and yet that is saying much—He further says, "I am *the Resurrection* and the Life." He came to man dead in sin—twice dead; his soul dead and his body dead; everything dead. He lived and died, and rose again—the second Adam, the quickening Spirit; He quickened the soul, yea, and the body of man. How did He do that? He did it by taking out of the way that which entirely prevented us from returning to God. He took out of the way our sinfulness, our guilt. Not by saying to us in the name of God that sin is a small matter after all, and that God, being very kind, overlooks sin; no! such a God would be—I do not say beneath the God of the Bible, that is plain enough—but beneath the enlightened conscience of man. God could not do any such thing.

What then did He do? "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."⁸ "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew

⁸ John i. 29.

no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."⁹ Fallen man, guilty man, lost man, dead man—Christ consented to represent him, to stand in his stead, to say, as it were, "I am the Man," and to bear the iniquity of us all.

Oh, we do not know what that implies! We do not know the agony which He suffered. We do not know the darkness—thicker than Egypt's—which was around his soul when He cried "My God"—not only "My Father," but "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" He felt Himself to be for the moment without God, because our sins stood between God and his soul.

Now the door is open. Now the law of God has received its satisfaction, which is the death of the sinner. And mark, the law of God must receive its satisfaction in your case, either in your death or in the death of Christ, if you will take Him for your own. Now we see how the door is open, and how God's justice is magnified at the same time as his mercy ; how the least, the last, and the vilest of sinners—yea, the most worldly-minded and indifferent and cold-hearted sinner—hardest of all to be converted—can come and be welcome. Because Christ died.

But, my brethren, observe this : that the ultimate object of Christ's death is to give us life. He did not come merely to give us his death ;

⁹ 2 Cor. v. 21.

He came to give us his life. And because that life could not be ours except through death, He died. And by his death we are made alive; that is, by his resurrection, through his death. He died, and we died in Him: and now it is, as it were, that a new chapter in our history begins; we might even say, that the history itself begins anew. In the second Adam, in Christ risen from the dead, we have our life. Why did He make Himself one with us on the cross which we deserved? Just to make us one with Him in the power and glory of the resurrection. Do you think He would have come and made Himself one with us in shame and sorrow and agony, and then have parted company with us? Not so. Now He wants to see of the travail of his soul; to reap what He has sown at so great a price; to have us and keep us one with Him in his own life, his life of love, and purity, and obedience to God.

Observe again. When Christ thus gives us his life, it is not simply a title to life. I think that is, after all, the great mistake—I will not say with those who are not in sympathy with “the movement,” as it is called, because I know that among those who oppose it there are many that go with me in every word I am about to say—but there are numbers of souls in all churches who really do not believe anything

further than this, that Christ has given them a title, a kind of ticket, something that will take them to heaven anyhow. It is all right with them; they have their passport. They will show it at the gate, and are sure to be let in. My friends, take heed; for Christ expressly says that there are those who will come at the last and say not only that they professed to believe in Him at such a time, but that they preached in his name, and did miracles in his name, to whom He will answer, "I never knew you."¹

But if these are words of caution, they are especially words of encouragement and joy. Having received Christ we have not the title only (for we do have the title in Him) to eternal life, but likewise its possession. Would you be satisfied if, while you were living, I will suppose, in a miserable tumble-down cottage, some one came and told you, "I give you a nice comfortable house," and then put into your hand a piece of paper, saying, "Here it is." "Yes," you would reply, "there is the title; but where is the house?"—"Oh, we will see about the house later on! in a few years perhaps; meanwhile you have the title."

God has given us his Son—something more than a title—his life. True, it is "everlasting" life, but surely that does not detract anything

¹ Matt. vii. 23.

from it ; it adds greatly to it. It is an endless life, and its power is the power of an endless life. But it is the very life of God given to us *now*, that we may be the children of God in Christ—loving children, suffering children ; at times, it may be, though it need not be, erring children, but at all times children who have for their own all that Christ has and is.

You cannot separate any one gift of Christ's—neither his righteousness, nor his strength, nor his joy, nor anything else—from Himself, from his person. He that hath the Son hath life. Yet there are Christians who tell us that all their confidence is in Christ, while it is apparent that they do not receive Christ for their souls' daily and hourly life. How can this be ?

They remind us, for instance, in speaking of the Passover, that the blood was sprinkled on the door-posts ; and if only the blood was on the door-posts, the angel would pass, and do no harm to those who were in the house. Very true ; but let me read to you the passage, "Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. . . . They shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side-posts, and on the upper door-post of the houses, *wherein they shall eat it.*"² Suppose there was a family in Israel that reasoned

² Ex. xii. 5-7.

thus: "God has said that if the blood is on the door-posts, everything will be right. We need not eat that lamb. We will kill the lamb, and put the blood on the door-posts, but we will not eat it; we will eat some other meat, or we will eat nothing at all." Do you think God would not have seen through that? Would He not have seen that they were disobeying Him altogether, while pretending to obey Him by doing one-half of what He had told them to do?

So it is not enough to say, "I am safe; I am safe." God has declared—blessed be his name!—that you are perfectly safe in Christ; but if you are outside of Christ, you are not safe at all, however much you may imagine you are. If you love sin, if you do not live for the Saviour, you are not safe at all.

But does not the apostle say something to the effect that we have nothing to fear? Yes, he does, a great many times. Here, for instance, is one passage: "Of Him are ye *in Christ Jesus*, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."³ You observe, everything is given freely *in Him*. And again, "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God *in Him*."⁴ And again, when He speaks of his own experience, what

³ 1 Cor. i. 30.

⁴ 2 Cor. v. 21.

does he say? "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win"—what?—"that I may win Christ, and be found *in Him*, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know *Him*, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."⁵

Now, my brethren, is not this perfectly plain? Is not this the teaching of God's Word? and is it not high time that every professing Christian should thus take hold, not of his Christianity, but of Christ, on Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, and every other day? It is true, as was pointed out yesterday, that at certain times—say when the communion season comes round—we do seek Christ, and ask Him to put away from us whatever is an offence in his sight. We at least endeavour to feed upon Him then, as the bread of life, the broken lamb; but we do not expect it to last. We do not expect that we are going to have Christ with us at the dinner-table as well as at the communion-table. We do not expect to take Christ into the parlour, the kitchen,

⁵ Phil. iii. 8-10.

the workshop, the street—everywhere. Let us understand then the nature of the gift. Let us take Him as a Person, a living Person, in whom God has given us all things at all times. There is not one word in the Bible that says or implies that the life which God gives us is an intermittent life.

But to conclude for the present. I am afraid I made a somewhat rash promise in my first Address, when I said I would quote no one, because I have fallen on a passage so striking that I must give it to you: not as an authority, properly speaking—our authority, as Protestants, being only the Bible—but it is good and precious to find a man of God expressing truth in a forcible way, and especially when he is one who is universally revered for his judgment, knowledge, and piety.

I will tell you at once who is the writer, because some people do not listen to a thing properly unless they know who said it. The question is not *What* is said? but *Who* said it? If Mr. So-and-So said it, it is all right; but if Mr. So-and-So said it, it is suspicious. Well, you know our brethren in Scotland have a very strong, clear, scriptural theology. I am about to quote one of the most eminent among their theologians, the late Dr. Candlish, of the Free Church. Let me read, in conclusion, a few

paragraphs from his *Sermons on the Sonship and Brotherhood of Believers*:—

“Let me look upon my justification as not merely, on my part, an acquiescence, an approval of and reliance in a legal or judicial transaction between the Father and the Son for my pardon and peace. Let me look upon it as a real and personal union between myself and Christ. It is not my dealing with a work, a ministry, a service of doing or suffering, which may be called the righteousness of Christ, but my dealing with Christ Himself. I am moved to embrace Christ. I am shut up to Christ. I abide in Christ. I am one with Christ. So thoroughly am I one with Him, that I humbly challenge an interest and joint-proprietorship in all that is his; and first and primarily in his justifying righteousness.”—(Page 41.)

“For the only virtue of Faith is, that it shuts me up into Christ, and that by it, or in it, I embrace Christ. Through this oneness—or, rather, in this oneness—all saving benefits reach me. There is no such thing as any one of them from Christ. [I never heard it put so strongly as that before.] I have them all only in Christ; in union and communion with Him. I do not receive a justifying righteousness, wrought out for me by Christ, and handed over to me for acceptance. In Christ I am righteous, being one with the righteous One. I am not sanctified by a holy power or influence imparted unto me for Christ’s sake, and through Christ’s mediation. Such a method of sanctification would scarcely now content me. I am glad to learn that, being one with Christ, I partake with Him in his own holiness. Yes! For it implies, not only my being born of the Spirit with Him, but my being crucified with Him, that I may live with Him.”—(Pages 55, 56.)

“If the principle holds true, that our partaking of the benefits of Christ’s redemption depends itself upon our having union and communion with Christ in them all, then it is not so much the benefits that we are to be concerned about receiving, but rather Christ Himself. It is with Christ personally that we have to do. He is set before us—the Lord our righteousness; the Lord our strength; the Holy One of God; the Son. He is given to us freely, to be ours; ours if we will but have Him to be ours.

“This is our gospel to you sinners! We preach Christ; we hold Him forth to you. We press Him as God’s gift on your instant acceptance. We do not ask you to receive the benefits of his redemption; we ask you to receive Himself. Nay; it is He Himself who asks you. He asks you to be his, and let Him be yours. He invites you, not to take good things out of his hands, purchased by Him for you; but to take Himself, to be one with Himself. ‘Come unto Me.’ ‘Abide in Me.’ ‘Learn of Me.’ Let Me into your heart. Feed upon Me. Let us be one; by mutual consent one; unreservedly, inseparably, thoroughly one. Then 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.’ **GET CHRIST, AND YOU GET ALL; KEEP CHRIST, AND YOU KEEP ALL.**”—(Pages 61-65.)

THE GIFT OF GOD.



III.—Its Reception.

“As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”—*John i. 12.*



CHAPTER III.

Its Reception.

OUR present subject is "THE RECEPTION" of the gift of God. We have seen that the gift flows altogether from God—from his everlasting, boundless love. We have seen that this gift is nothing else but the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who is the Life. And in the Addresses that are to follow this, we will speak of *the result* of that life in us; of the way to keep and increase *the power* of that life; and, lastly, of *the purpose* of the gift of God.

But between this and that there is one all-important link; it is *the reception* of the gift. We may know that the gift is free and full; we may know that the results of receiving it are holiness and happiness, grace and glory; but of what use will it be to us if we do not have the gift? There may be, even in this audience, one soul at least that has not yet received the gift of God, and

that says to itself, "What have I to do? Must I not exercise this or that grace, and be in this or that state, in order to be entitled to the gift of God? Is not the gift of God made to believers; and before I claim it as mine, must I not have evidence that I am a believer?" That is the way the question is often put, but it appears to me a very bewildering and unscriptural way of putting it.

God says He so loved—not "believers," but—the world, that He gave his Son to be "the Saviour of the world,"¹ that *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Of course, you cannot have this life except by believing; that is as much as to say, you must accept the gift in order to have possession of it. But God has given it to you, free as the waters of the sea, free as the air of heaven. "*Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*"² But what is it to take? What is it to receive? It seems as if the simplest questions were those around which we manage to gather the thickest mists and clouds of difficulties.

At a conference in France, some time ago, I heard from a Swiss brother the following narrative on this point:

A Sunday-school teacher wanted to explain to the children what was the gift of God, and

¹ John iv. 42.

² Rev. xxii. 17.

how they might have it. So he left his desk, and went round among the scholars with his watch in his hand. He held it up as he passed before them, and said to the first child, "I give you that watch." The boy stared at it, and that was all he did. He went on to the next, and repeated, "I give you that watch." The boy blushed, and that was all *he* did. And so he went slowly round the class; some of them stared, some blushed, some smiled incredulously; but nobody took the watch. We may imagine one of the older, wiser boys pondering over the subject: "How can he give us his watch? Surely he does not mean what he says. I wonder what he is after." But whilst the wise boy was deep in his thought, the watch passed him, and he did not take it. Finally a small boy just reached out his hand and took the watch. The teacher let go the chain, and watch and chain were in the scholar's hand. As the teacher went back to his place, the little fellow said very gently, "Then, if you please, sir, the watch is mine?" "Yes, of course it is yours." The big boys were fairly roused by this time. "Do you mean to say, sir, he may *keep* the watch?" "Certainly; I gave it to any boy who would have it." "Oh, if I had known that," exclaimed one of them, "I would have taken it!" "Did I not tell you I gave it to you?" "Oh, yes; but I did not

believe you were in earnest!" "So much the worse for you; he believed me, and he has the watch."

I do not know that I would recommend every Sunday-school teacher to give away his watch; but I think this one placed his at very good interest. The lesson was of use to his scholars and to many souls; I trust it may be of use to us now. Receiving the gift of God is as simple as that. God comes, and says, "Here is everlasting life to whosoever will." We keep thinking, and reflecting, and discussing, wondering how He can give it, and how we can take it, instead of saying, "It is mine!"

But some one will say the comparison is not a good one. Here we have a material object—a watch—that can be seen, and we have a hand that can take hold of the watch. Whereas eternal life is not something that can be seen, and we have no hand to take hold of it. My dear friends, every day we take hold of things not seen, and do so without a hand to grasp them. For instance, I receive a letter from some kind, Christian gentleman, who writes: "I have placed at your credit, at such a banker's, £100 for missionary work in France." I have the letter, nothing more. And yet I tell you, and I write home, that I have the money. I have not seen it; I have simply believed. We

are acting thus all the while. A son has grievously offended his father. The father sends him word: "I love you. I forgive you. Come home." The son's heart is at rest; his eyes fill with tears. What has done it? Nothing but a few words spoken to him. But behind the words he feels the heart of his father, just as I, behind the letter, see the money in the bank, as really as the little boy saw the teacher's watch.

Now, God has sent us his Word. Think of that! He tells us that He has given to us—not to us believers, not to us saints, but to us sinners—his Son to die for us "when we were enemies."³ So that, having in Him reconciled the world unto Himself, whosoever will may be reconciled. What have we to do? Just to take the thing as a fact, because God tells us so. Not because we understand it, or feel it, or deserve it in any degree; not because we have made ourselves ready for it, but because God says so. Then will come something else, something more, even the Spirit of God bearing witness with our spirit that we are indeed his children. But we must take the gift first.

If this be so, how can we account for the fact that so many thousands, or shall I say millions, among those who hear the glad tidings (and with

³ Rom. v. 10.

whom alone we have to do for the present) do not take the gift? Many reasons may account for it. Many do not take it because they do not care for it. They do not desire salvation; while the very folly of their indifference shows how much they stand in need of it.

Others do not believe that God really has given his Son to the world. It is not likely that any of them has found his way into this meeting, so that I need not address myself to them, further than to say, "If any man will do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."⁴

But let us pass on to others. They hear, they are attentive, they feel their need, they do not doubt the Word of God, yet they do not take his gift. Now, believing the Word and taking the gift must go together. If that Sunday-school boy had not believed the master's word, of course he would not have taken the watch; on the other hand, if the boy had believed his word, and yet had not taken his gift, that belief would have been of no use to him.

There are those then who believe, but do not take. Why? Some because they are labouring under a very subtle form of unbelief, which they call *humility*. They say, "Well, it may be for sinners, but it cannot be for me, because I

⁴ John vii. 17.

am too bad ; I am too hard ; I have offended God too often ; I am too light, too fickle ; I cannot be depended on." As though God expected to depend on us ! We have to depend on Him, and that is all He asks us to do. Then these poor souls go worrying, and groaning, and wearing themselves out for weeks, and months, and years—perhaps a lifetime ; some of them, after all, believing, but they dare not say so ; losing all the joy, the peace, the power, and much of the fruitfulness of their faith ; while others among them never truly take the gift.

Some do not take the gift for an entirely opposite reason : because they are *too proud* to take it, because they will not have it as a gift. They must give something back to God for it—their good works, or at least their good intentions ; their prayers, or perhaps their sorrow for sin. Not that these things are wrong, but they carry them to God as so much money wherewith to buy his salvation. God will not sell his gift. He will no more accept our supplications or our tears as a payment for his gift, than He would our gold and silver. He will have none of them. He wants us to come to Him as empty and naked, blind and lost ; as hopeless bankrupts and beggars, having nothing to say for ourselves beyond this : "God be merciful to me a sinner." "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

“I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all ;
But Jesus Christ is my all in all.”

Be sure that many souls—honest, respectable people—are thus kept from the grace of God, being too proud to bow down to the dust before Him, to approach Him on the same level as publicans and sinners, as the most degraded of women, as the most despised of men, as the thief on the cross, who could bring nothing, who could promise nothing, who had but a breath of life, and could only say, “Remember me.” As long as a sinner is unwilling to do this, he cannot take the gift of God.

Finally, there is another reason, and perhaps the chief reason, that hinders many from taking the gift. It is, that they have their hands full. God will only fill empty hands. If our hands are full, God will not and cannot fill them. They may be full of what we call very good things, perhaps of religious works, and I know not what ; in fact, and to sum it all up in one word, they are full of *self*—full of self-love, self-trust, self-wisdom, self-power, self-dignity, self-glory, and so on.

Christ comes for the very purpose of putting down self, of casting out self, of occupying the place of self, of taking the government and management of our heart and life into his own hands. We all feel this almost unconsciously

when we come to Christ or have Him set before us. People understand that if they take the Saviour, they accept a Master; that if they give themselves to Him to be forgiven, they give themselves to Him to do his will. But they are still questioning and wondering which is better, his will or theirs? which is the true freedom, doing his will or theirs? which is the life of happiness, his will or theirs? which is the life of tender care, the life of love and gentleness towards their own souls, his will or theirs? It takes years sometimes to come to a conclusion on that point. What a great mystery is this! How utterly we must have been given up to sin, and to the insanity of sin, to hesitate for one instant between our will and God's will—the will of the only wise God, of the Almighty God, of the God who *is* love!

Is not this the reason why some have not taken the gift? They have their hands full, and they will not drop what fills their hands. Does this mean then that a man must first put himself into a certain condition before he can receive the glad tidings? No. If a man is really willing to accept Christ, at the very time when he is taking hold of the Saviour he is dropping that which filled his hands. A man when he comes to Christ turns round towards God. This is sometimes called *repentance*, which accom-

panies faith. But what is repentance? Is it a certain state of feeling into which we are to work ourselves before we believe? Surely not. The word simply means, as is now generally admitted, a turning round towards God. When Christ began to preach, He summed up the whole of his teaching in these two words: "Repent ye, and believe the gospel."⁵

So the apostle Paul, when he reminds the Ephesian elders of his labours among them, says: "I have taught you publicly . . . repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."⁶ In other words: "Turn round toward God and take the gift of his love." The two things must go together. Suppose I put a gift on this table for one of you who is sitting with his back to me—say the gentleman taking notes, down there. Well, if he wants to have my gift, he must turn round and take it; it is not enough that he should hear my voice behind him and wish for the gift. But, on the other hand, if he does take the gift, I shall certainly not put the question to him: "Stop a moment; are you quite sure you have turned round?" Of course he has; the fact of his taking it is the evidence of his having turned round. So the gift is in God's hands, and the natural man turns his back upon God. God calls to him,

⁵ Mark i. 15.

⁶ Acts xx. 20, 21.

and says, "Here is a gift for you." As long as a man will not have the gift, will not listen to God, will not be dependent on God, he goes on running off from God. He neither repents nor believes. But just as soon as a man believes the Word, and takes Christ for his Saviour, then he has turned his face toward God, and that is repentance. But so long as a man will not turn his face—I mean his heart and his life—toward God, he may talk as much as he pleases about believing, but he does not believe. He just goes on in a life of self-will, which is a life of disobedience and unbelief, though he may thus be walking to perdition with a Bible under his arm.

This then is the practical question: Will you take the gift? Will you turn round and take it? Will you, instead of looking forward to your own plans and purposes, look into the eyes of the Father, and tell Him, "Here am I to receive thy gift, and to do thy will, O God"? If so, the gift is yours, and you may know it to-day.

There is a great difficulty about this sometimes. There are many who think that if they receive the gift and say, "It is mine," there will be some wonderful glow of feeling; there will be something entirely new that will happen; some tongue of fire that will come down upon them at once. No such thing is promised. The

gift of God is there for you. Claim it in prayer as yours, in the name of Christ. Believe it is yours, *and use it* at once. That is the way to know whether it is yours or not. If the little boy of whom we have spoken so often this morning had any subsequent misgivings about the watch being his, he had only to take it out of his pocket and see what time it was. Just so, if you have any doubt whether Christ is yours, use Him, put Him to the test.

For instance, some angry or disagreeable word is spoken to you to-day. Instead of saying, "I wish I had a better temper," remember you have a Saviour with you. Speak to Him; count upon Him; and you will find that instead of an angry reply, or some of those worse than angry replies that taste of honey and vinegar, you will have a soft word and also a soft feeling, and you will wonder where that comes from. It comes from the Lord Jesus Christ. Then you will begin to think to yourself, "Well, He *is* mine, after all." Henceforth all that He has is yours; his righteousness is yours, and you stand before God in Him a justified child. You have his strength, his patience, his light, his love, for your own, if you truly take Him as the gift of God to your soul.

But, my brethren, if we go to the root of the matter, can we do that of ourselves? Is it

enough that we should be cast upon our own will to make sure of salvation, even as the free gift of God? Have you tried it? Have you not found that this will of ours is the very thing that most requires to be changed in us? And then, have you not rejoiced that there is in God's Word such a declaration as this: "*He worketh in us to will*"?⁷ Have you not sometimes exclaimed: "Oh that I only were sincerely willing! They tell me to be willing, and that is all. Yes, but that is everything. I am not willing." Remember two things. On the one hand, you must not expect God to take your place, and to will in your stead. Some Christians are apprehensive, especially of late, lest one should seem to teach that the Spirit of God destroys the personality of man. Surely this is an error to be guarded against. God will neither believe in your stead, nor trust in your stead, nor will in your stead, nor act in your stead. But, on the other hand, He is ever ready to enable you to believe, and to trust, and to will, and to act. How is that? you inquire. By the Holy Spirit. He gives the Holy Spirit to all that ask Him.

The Holy Spirit is sent on purpose to make us willing; to show Christ to our hearts; to lead our hearts to Christ, so that we can no longer

⁷ Phil. ii. 13.

help ourselves—or, shall I rather say, can no longer go on ruining ourselves—but must turn to Him, and exclaim, “My Lord, and my God!” “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord,” says St. Paul, “but by the Holy Ghost;”⁸ that is, say so in sincerity. He does not mean to teach, of course, that a man needs the Holy Spirit to say with his tongue that Jesus is Lord. As to a religion of mere talk, it has existed in all ages. Hear how the apostle John disposes of it: “If we *say* that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we *lie*.”⁹ Now, my brethren, will you despair of yourselves? Will you come to God and say, “The flesh cannot so much as *receive* the Spirit; it must be the Spirit that receives the Spirit. It must be Thyself, O God, Thyself in me, that I may desire, that I may will, that I may pray, that I may believe, that I may do anything that is good.” And that Spirit shall be given freely, given now, given to any one of us who will ask, no matter if his heart is bad and cold, no matter if he has tried and failed twelve hundred times, ay, twelve thousand times. If we have failed, it is because we have trusted in ourselves. Trusting in the Lord, in his blood, in his Word, in his Spirit, in his grace, we shall not, we cannot be confounded.

⁸ 1 Cor. xii. 3.

⁹ 1 John i. 6.

A few days ago I came across a short poem, entitled "The Sinner's Joy." It is taken from a book published in London as long ago as 1692, and will be a fit conclusion to this Address.

"THE SINNER'S JOY.

"O my soul ! why so dismayed ?
Why so sad, so sore afraid ?
Canst thou view those gracious eyes,
 Quenched in tears for thee,
And disdain such powerful cries,
 Such humility ?
Sinners' souls must sorrow keep ;
Man may mourn when God can weep.

"Soul, though thou hast done amiss,
Yet rejoice, for thou art his !
See, his soul was sad to death
 In his agony—
Sad to ease thy woful breath
 In his misery.
Be not faithless, but believe ;
Man may sigh when God can grieve.

"Do not grudge to lend a tear ;
Canst thou doubt, or canst thou fear ?
Canst thou see his bleeding heart,
 And not believe Him ?
Wounded soul that bears a part
 Can never grieve Him.
Timely tears are precious seed ;
Man may weep when God can bleed.

THE GIFT OF GOD.

“Weep no more, but wipe thine eyes;
See to-day thy Saviour rise.
Happy soul! thy debts are paid:
He has ascended.
Death is not; be not afraid;
Thy woes are ended.
Grieve no more; believe, and live;
MAN MAY TAKE WHEN GOD CAN GIVE.”

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THE GIFT OF GOD.



IV.—Its Consequences.

“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?”—*Rom. viii. 32.*



CHAPTER IV.

Its Consequences.

WHAT it was to *receive* "The Gift of God" was our subject yesterday, and, I hope, something more than our "subject." I confess to you, my brethren, that I have a fear lest, in our anxiety, our most legitimate anxiety, to give more place in these than in former Conferences, to teaching—to systematic teaching, if I may use the word—we should be in danger of losing sight of the fact that our main point is not so much to exhibit well-known truth, as to take hold of Christ, to get closer to Him, to clasp Him with a firmer hand, with a more willing and trusting heart. Let us beware lest our very efforts to bring the light forward be made use of by the enemy to keep us away from the Saviour. He alone is the Light.

Now, I address myself to a believer who has

said "Yes" to God, who has accepted the gift. What is the consequence? The apostle says, "How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

Observe the form of the argument: "If He spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" It is a question without an answer; as much as to say, the thought of his not giving us all things with Jesus is utterly absurd. This question reminds me of another which escaped me yesterday, but to which I would call your attention for a moment before entering upon our special topic. In fact, it is the connecting link between one subject and the other. It is a question in the same form. The Lord says to the Jews, "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"¹

This is a very important passage, because it shows, from the lips of our Lord Himself, that there may be a moral obstacle to real faith; that faith in Him is an act in which the whole soul of a man, the whole will of a man, the whole purpose and life of a man, are engaged. Christ says to the Jews, "How *can* ye believe?" And what is the reason? Not that the truth is not

¹ John v. 44.

plain enough; not that ye do not know what faith is; not that ye do not profess to be believers; but that *ye receive honour one of another*; that you have something in your heart—namely, the honour which cometh from men—about which you are more anxious than about the honour which cometh from God. And as long as you are in that disposition, how *can* ye believe? And that may apply to any sin. As long as ye hug that sin to your bosom, how can ye believe? It is impossible.

We now return to the soul that has said, "Here I am, with all my sins; bound in sin, a slave to sin; but I am willing and anxious to be set free, and to be thine. Lord, I trust in Thee." That soul then belongs to the Lord. The fetters fall off; the Son makes that soul free, and it is free indeed. The consequences are twofold.

In the first place, *Christ is yours*. Think of that. A venerable friend, not in full sympathy with such meetings as these, wrote lately that the portion of truth held forth amounted only to this, and nothing more—that we have everything in Christ. Granted; but is not that a great deal? Is it not everything? Can you add anything to it? Can you conceive of anything more?

The whole of life, the whole of truth, are summed up in this, that all things are in Christ for all sinners—for you, for me, for “whosoever will.” Christ is yours. The Son of God is yours. God is yours in Christ.

Now, do we wish to unfold our treasure? to open the golden casket where all our gems are hidden? Oh, that will be the work of every day, of every year—the work of eternity! And we shall never know fully what it means, that Christ is ours.

Take then anything that belongs to Christ, and say of it, “It is mine.” Write your name by the side of his upon it. The *righteousness* of Christ is yours; the whole of it is yours. It is reckoned as yours; it is made over to you; it is imputed to you; it belongs to you. God, as it were, opens an account for you, and there He puts the righteousness of Christ to your credit without any merit of yours about it at all.

But now, if you please, what does this mean? Am I not going to make use of it? If the gift of God is mine *in Christ*, is this practically equivalent to its being mine only in name? or, rather, is it not mine in very deed, just *because* it is mine *in Him*, for ever safe in his keeping? If it is mine, surely it is that I should draw upon that unfailing credit, and out of that unlimited supply; it is, that in the name of the

Righteous One I should ever draw near with full assurance of faith to the Father, and that I should take the very righteousness of Christ, and make it my own, in actual life ; that, as often as I need anything—and I need everything all the while—I should draw it out of the Righteous One ; that it should be mine in possession, as it is mine in title and in right before God. I should like to know how a thing can be a fact for God, and not be a fact for me. If it is a fact for God, surely it is a fact for me, and I have a right to treat it as such, living upon the righteousness of Christ as mine, just because it is his, and He is mine. I have nothing in the world of my own, and therefore I will go to Him and say, “Thy righteousness is mine, that I may be accepted with the Father, and that I may live upon it all my days.” After all, his righteousness embodies everything.

But—to go into particulars—take for instance the effect of this God-given righteousness upon our conscience ; that is, *peace*. What peace ? What kind of peace ? *My* peace ? No ; *his* peace becoming mine. “My peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you.”² The world gives, and takes back again. Not thus does He give unto us.

His *power*, his strength, is ours. It is made

² John xiv. 27.

perfect, not in strength, or in some little measure of strength, but in weakness. "To them that have no might He increaseth strength."³ And how? By giving them his own.

Is it *purity*? You have Christ the spotless One, and his own self in the Holy Spirit, coming to you, that you may be pure.

Is it *light*—guidance? "I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."⁴ How then have we the light? By having Christ. It has repeatedly been pointed out, and cannot be too often stated, or too strongly insisted upon, that every good gift is in Christ, and that Christ *is*—not merely *has*—everything good. He does not, strictly speaking, *send* it to us; He *brings* it to us by giving Himself to us. Every gift of God is a living gift. His bread is living bread; his way is a living way; his light is a living light. You may imagine ever so many perplexities in life, difficult situations that may occur—perhaps you are in one of them now—but you have Christ; and if you have Christ, you have the light. You may have to wait till the light moves on further, to see what direction it will take; but you have the light.

Is it *love*? He is Love. Having Him, we have love; and there is no other way to love God, or

³ Isa. xl. 29.

⁴ John viii. 12.

the brethren, or all men, than to dwell in Christ, and thus to have Christ in one's heart. The two go together: "Abide in Me, and I in you."⁵ His love belongs to us. God's command is Love, and God's gift is Christ. We take the gift, and then we gladly, joyfully obey the command.

His *joy* is ours. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy may be full."⁶ Indeed, our joy must be full, if it is *his* joy abiding in us. Does that mean that we shall have no measure of sorrow or suffering? Oh, how can we believe that it is Christ's life, and that it can be anything but a life of sorrow? The very sorrow of love, the very sorrow of holiness surrounded by sin; the very sorrow of Him who has to fight not only against sin in the world, but who knows that there is a law of sin in his members. That is enough to make any man sober. Besides that, we shall have our own sufferings that God will send to us on purpose, because we belong to Christ, and to make us more like Christ. He will deal very tenderly with us; but there is no doubt that if we will draw nearer to Him we shall be more and more partakers of his sufferings. Observe, the apostle names the sufferings after the resurrection: "That I may know Him, and the power of his resurrection,

⁵ John xv. 4.

⁶ John xv. 11.

and the fellowship of his sufferings.”⁷ It is no easy, careless, and selfish kind of life that God gives to us, when He gives us Christ. *His cross* is ours. *His glory* is also ours. His glory. . . . Do I mean heaven? I do; but I also mean the earnest of heaven, that glory of which He said, “The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them,”⁸ and of which the apostle says that “we are changed into the same image from glory to glory.”⁹ The hope of his appearing is also the hope of our appearing “with Him in glory.”¹

So then, Christ being ours, *all things are ours*, because they are his. How simple the argument!—just as a child may say everything that belongs to his father is his; in this sense, that the father will give him whatever is best for him. There is not a thing in the house that does not belong to the child, because it belongs to the father.

Look at temporal things—circumstances, as we call them; that is, literally, the things that stand around us. Who makes them stand around us, and puts us in these circumstances? God—*the will of God*; and thus providence and grace go together. As long as you are fighting against God, or living a selfish life, then God is obliged, I will say, in very mercy towards you,

⁷ Phil. iii. 10.

⁹ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

⁸ John xvii. 22.

¹ Col. iii. 4.

to make his providence go, as it seems to you, against you. But why? To shut you up, to hedge you in, until you return to Him. After you have done this, his providence is at your service. When a king is on his travels, he has some officer who goes before him and sees that everything is straight and ready—who opens up the way. Just so providence is the servant of grace, and walks before, that everything may be ready for God's children wherever they go. And there is not a day in our lives that we do not see it—that God's providence is the handmaid of God's grace, and that all things do work, and work together, for good to them that love God. "All your need," says the apostle, "my God shall supply."² Everything—things temporal and things spiritual, things present and things to come—all things are ours; not only, as the apostle says to the Romans, all these things *cannot separate us* from the love of Christ, but, as he says to the Corinthians, they *belong to us* in Christ.³

Angels, for instance, are ours. They are the servants of those who are to be heirs of salvation. We do not see them; that matters very little. God tells us they are our servants. And even our enemies, if we have any, the greatest difficulties we can meet with, the very spiritual

² Phil. iv. 19.

³ Rom. viii. 38, 39; I Cor. iii. 21-23.

powers in high places, are obliged to work for our good, to keep us watchful; are obliged to try our faith and strengthen it, if we abide in Christ.

When "the evil day" comes,—and it must come,—there is no reason why it should turn us aside from Christ. The evil day is made on purpose to give us a firmer hold on Christ. Then do not let us be afraid of it. Christ is ours, and in Him all things are ours.

All things but one—that is, yourselves. "Ye are *not* your own."⁴ That is the second point. "Christ is mine, and I am His." At the very time when the apostle says, "All things are yours," he adds immediately, "and *ye are Christ's*." There is no separating these two things. If you are not Christ's—if you do not belong to Him—if you are not his servant—nothing belongs to you. If you do belong to Him, all things are yours.

"Ah," says some one, "this is the new teaching; this is Consecration!" Very likely it is. Consecration just means your putting your name and seal to the fact that you are not your own, as you did to the fact that Christ died for you, a sinner. If you did that in earnest, and your faith is a true faith, you also set your seal to

⁴ 1 Cor. vi. 19.

this—that you belong to Him, that you are bought with a price; that if One died for all, then all died; and that He died for all, that they that live should not live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again. Consecration does not originate with the sinner; it is his accepting, through the grace of God, the position that God has given him in Christ, separated from the present evil world.

A very earnest, devoted servant of God said to me some time ago, "What do you mean by telling people about the higher life?" "I do not know that I said much about the higher life," I replied; "I rather avoid the expression as unscriptural and liable to misconception." "Well, but you teach people that there is a consecration distinct from conversion. When I was converted, I was consecrated to God; I never understood it in any other way." Very good; that is the normal Christian experience. But is it not true that there are thousands who say they are converted, but who dare not say, and perhaps have reason not to say, they are consecrated to God,—that is, simply set apart for God's service; that they actually belong to God, and not to themselves; that they have no right to do their own will; that they are the servants of Him who bought them, and to whom, therefore, they belong.

If, however, you want to press the argument, it comes to this: You tell me, "If a man is converted, he is also consecrated." Very well; then, on the other hand, *if a man is not consecrated, he is not converted.* Such is the searching question that will have to go round the churches, sending every one to his knees before God; and if he finds out, after all, that he is living a life of which he is the master, he will have to ask of God's Word and Spirit whether he ever was converted or not.

There is a striking argument of Mr. Aitken's on this point. He says, "Faith is the most searching of all spiritual habits; for we cannot trust a person who knows our hearts, while we keep anything back from him." This goes very deep. Of course, you cannot trust a person who knows your heart, and say to him, "I am thy servant; I trust thee," while you keep anything back from him, and he sees it, and you know he sees it, all the time. Hence the necessity for an honest and complete surrender of ourselves to God.

If then the second consequence of receiving the gift of God is this, that *we are not our own*, nothing that we have is our own; that stands to reason and common sense. Your time is not your own; your money is not your own; your members are not your own; no, not even that

little member, as the apostle James calls it, "that boasteth great things," and does such mischief in the world and in the Church. Your *tongue* is not your own; you have no right to "say what you have a mind to."

Your *thoughts* are not your own; you have no right to think at your pleasure; to follow all the vagaries of your imagination; your thoughts must be brought into subjection to Christ, they belong to Christ; and, after all, this is the main point in practical sanctification—to give to Christ the government of our thoughts. We cannot be carried very far away, as long as our thoughts are centred upon Him—as long as we truly believe that we are not "sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves,"⁵ and that all our sufficiency is of God.

Your *affections* are not your own. You have no right to hate, to think any one an offence in your sight; no right to entertain in your heart any bitter feeling against any one. Christ prayed for his enemies. He loved them; He asked the Father to forgive them. If we are Christ's, his Spirit is ours, and our carnal mind must not be ours any longer. We have to let the Master of the house occupy the whole of it—every room, every back-room, every corner. Oh, that is freedom, to be not at all one's own, not in anything

⁵ 2 Cor, iii. 5.

one's own, not at any moment one's own! And whenever we take hold of anything—of a portion of our time, of a penny of our money, of a thought, of an affection—and say, "This is mine, independently of God," then we are in sin, and going further into sin; and we have but one thing to do—to return to Him, to crave forgiveness, and to give Him back what never ceased to be his in right. We are not in any sense, at any time, our own.

"Our *will*?" you say. It is not our own; it now belongs to God. Does this mean, that we lose ourselves in such a sense that there is no personality left—that we cease to be So-and-So, and are nobody in particular? By no means. Do you think the apostle Paul was nobody in particular? If ever there was a character that had its own stamp, he was the man. So with the apostle John, and with Peter. So with every man who truly surrenders to God. As soon as you say of your will, "It is not mine, it is thine; not my will, but thine be done," then you find your will again; you find it in the will of God—a new will, pure and strong. You find your thoughts again, but they are new thoughts, good thoughts. You are a new man, in short, and that the true man, your real self, such as God would have you and made you—such as, ruined by sin, Christ has redeemed.

A man never knows what is his true nature, nor what God wants to do with him in the world, until he has given himself clear over to Christ. Do you know the reason why there are numbers of Christians almost exactly alike—like so many eggs in a basket? Just because they copy one another. They have before their mind a certain ideal, or rather specimen, of what “a good Christian” ought to be, and they try to be that. So there is a great sameness about them; whereas if each one gives himself to God to enquire, “What wilt Thou have me to do?” we shall have variety in unity, which is the characteristic of every one of God’s works. And the Church will be a great Church, will be a beautiful Church, with infinite diversity of gifts—each man in his own place, and no man saying to another, “You are wrong, because you are not employing your time just as I do;” but each one saying to the great Master, who gives to every man his work, “Thanks be unto Thee, that Thou hast given him his part, and me my part, and we all work together for thy glory.”

And, finally, let me call your attention to a word in a chapter that was read yesterday. Christ is mine, and I am Christ’s. Is this then the end of it? Have I nothing further to do but to go on repeating to myself that He is mine, and I am his? If God has given me everything,

it would seem logical at least to infer that I have nothing to ask for. But the Bible does not profess to be a book of logic ; it is a book of truth —of life. Hear what the apostle John says : “As many as *received Him*, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. . . . Of his fulness *have all we received*, and grace for grace.”⁶

So there are two receivings. You first receive Him, and then, having Him in his fulness, you again receive out of his fulness grace for grace. That is, if I understand it, God gives you one grace ; you give it back to Him in obedience and thanksgiving, and He gives you another, a larger one, instead. This is practical, daily receiving. The Holy Spirit fulfils that very office. He takes out of the infinite fulness of Chrst, which is ours, and gives to us from day to day, from hour to hour, just what we need ; through us it flows out towards others, and thus we become “a river of living water,” as Christ has promised.

One question. The consequence of receiving Christ I have shown to be this : He is yours ; you are his ; all things are yours, because they are his. What then is the consequence of *not receiving Christ* ? Oh, my brethren, if all is in Him, there is nothing outside of Him ! If a

⁶ John i. 12, 16.

man is outside of the boat, he is in the sea ; if a man is outside of Christ, he is under the wrath of God. It cannot be otherwise. Do not think that God will devise some other way. He did all that could be done for sinners when He gave them his own Son. If you will not have this Christ, you have nothing—absolutely nothing.

Oh, will you not take Him, and have everything? Will you not take Him, unconverted sinner? Will you not take Him, unfruitful saint? You know your wretchedness; surely we can never know it too well. But is that all? I read, not very long ago, in a religious paper, that a Christian should ever remember those words of Christ: "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."⁷ There the quotation ended. Now, that is only the beginning of it. Will any man stop his ears whilst Christ goes on to say, "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich"? This is what Christ wants; He wants us not to go about saying, "I am rich," nor to go about saying, "I am wretched," but to go to Him and be made rich, and say *He* is rich—as "having nothing, and

⁷ Rev. iii. 17.

yet possessing all things"⁸—and to live upon his riches as the children of a King.

Our subject this morning may be summed up in three practical questions from the Word of God: "*How can ye believe, which receive honour of one another?*"—"How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"—"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

⁸ 2 Cor. vi. 10.

THE GIFT OF GOD.

V.—How to use it: (I) Holding Fast.

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”—*Rev. iii. 11.*



CHAPTER V.

Keeping Fast.

WE saw yesterday in the Word of God what it is that a man has received when he has received Christ, and that the consequences of it are twofold—first, that Christ is his; and secondly, that he is Christ's.

Now we have come to the practical part of the subject. (Not that the rest is not practical, but I mean to that part of the subject that is visible before men, although it has, of course, also an invisible part; for the walk of the Christian is only the outgoing of what is in his heart.) And we ought to feel that this is, after all, the test of all the rest. Sometimes a man has contrived some wonderful new invention, and all his explanations about it are very clear and plausible. Perhaps he even has a little model to show; it is very pretty, and moves on very

nicely; but a practical man comes to him and asks, "Will it work?" They put it to the test in the factory; and if it will not work, then it is of no use at all. Many men of the world, and you know it, think that all our Christianity is very fine talk, very interesting, elevating, edifying, does well for the lecture-room, for the pulpit, anything you please, only it will not work. The question is, Does it work? Can it work? Must it work? Has God said that it should work? Has God made it to work?

The question before us to-day then is this: how we can get the gift of God working in us, working itself out in our life,—I mean in our words and deeds, in our thoughts and affections,—so that the world will not need to go round asking our neighbours, or asking us, whether we are Christians, but will see at once that we are.

The text I selected for this address is Rev. iii. 11: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." This was addressed to a church, or to the minister of a church, and to the whole church in his person, and, after all, to every member of the Church and to ourselves: "Hold that fast which thou hast."

It appears to me that this sums up the whole subject. We must first hear about the gift. Faith

cometh by hearing. How can you believe a thing you never heard? But when we have heard and accepted and given thanks, there is one thing more to do: it is to hold fast that which we have; not to go about seeking after something we have not, but to hold fast that which we have, that which God has given us, that which God has said is ours.

The first question then is just this: What have we? I am afraid that many sermons on the use of the gift of God are to very little purpose in the hearers' daily life. Why? Because the hearers have not the gift. How can you use what you have not? People want to be told all sorts of things about progress in the spiritual life; that is fair enough, but the first point is, "Have you spiritual life at all?" We must first seek it, and find it, and have it; then, having it, we must hold it fast. To know what we have to hold fast, we must know what it is we have.

Well, what is it you have, when you have received the gift of God? Let me again remind you of it. You have Christ; you *have* Him; observe, He is positively yours. But you have a right to expect from Him—more than that, you have a right to use in Him—whatever is in Him that God the Father has revealed to you, and given to you in Christ.

God was in Christ, and is in Christ. He that hath seen Him hath seen the Father. You have a Redeemer, a Brother, a Fellow-man (if I dare use the expression), as well as Him whom God Himself calls his "fellow."¹ He comes to you, and you can put your hand into his hand; it was pierced for you. You have Him by whose stripes you are healed. You have Him who was tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin, having at once all sympathy and all power, perfectly able, as well as perfectly willing, to keep you from falling. You have Him who as our great High Priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, ever liveth to make intercession for us. You have Him who is preparing a place for you, and has bid you wait for his coming. In a word, you have a Saviour, and through this Saviour you have a Father; and having the Father and Son revealed to you, you have, of course, the Spirit; for it is the Spirit who does it all. The revelation of Father and Son to your soul is the very proof that you have the Spirit. God Himself has come within you, and has made you his dwelling-place; and what is the dwelling-place of God but a temple? "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost."² Ye are set apart for God; ye are God's. He is in you;

¹ Zech. xiii. 7.

² 1 Cor. vi. 19.

you have the Father; you have the Son; you have the Holy Ghost.

And what else have you? You have the Word of God. God has spoken; and not only has He spoken, but, knowing how words would be lost and altered and perverted, He has caused his Word to be written; so that we have the written Word of God. And on every subject we may and must enquire, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?"³ You *have* the Word of God.

Well, my brother, hold fast that which thou hast; each one of you, hold fast the Father, hold fast the Son, hold fast the Holy Ghost, hold fast the Word of God. That is the way to use the gift. Hold it fast, because there are those who would "take thy crown."

Yes, if a man is engaged in some worldly pursuit, reaching after some object of worldly ambition, there will be many to encourage and applaud. Here is a man, for instance, giving his time, his strength, his mind, his days and nights, to scientific discovery, or to commercial enterprise, or to literary labour—his fellow-citizens are ready to reward his success with praise and distinction. But if a man starts in pursuit of the crown of life, if a man will give himself altogether to the work of Christ, and

³ Luke x. 26.

the glory of Christ, the world deems it a piece of extravagance. It cannot abide it. It will do its best, by persecution, or mockery, or flattery, or temptation, to take that man's crown from him. If men thus endeavour to bring us down, how much more "the rulers of the darkness of this world"! Let us hold fast that which we have.

By what means is this to be done? How am I to hold fast? In the first place, we are to remember that when we have, in deed and in truth—not in word—put our hand into the hand of Christ, his grasp of us is stronger than our clasp of Him. *He* holds us, after all. And that is our safety, happiness, and glory. Therefore our prayer must be unceasingly, "Hold me fast, that I may hold Thee fast."

And again, we have very plain exhortations in the Scriptures as to the daily practice of the Christian life, a great many of them going into details. What a wonderful book this Word of God is! In the very same parts of it where we are told of our standing in Christ, how safe and sure it is, and of our being dead with Him and risen with Him,⁴ we have the most minute particulars as to our daily life—wives, husbands, children, fathers, servants, masters, and so on.

⁴ Col. ii. iii.

"If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." Observe that. Many of us would have said, If ye be risen with Christ, ye need not trouble yourselves. You will not think of anything else than the things that are above. But the apostle says, "Seek them." You will always find them, but still you must seek them. "Set your affection" (your *mind*, the margin says) "on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Here the separation of chapters makes us lose something of the strength of the passage. In chapter ii. 20, we have that very striking expression—"If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances (touch not; taste not; handle not)"—men's rules? Men want to make themselves holy by their own set of rules. That will never do, says the apostle. He asks, "Why do people give you all these ordinances, as though living in the world?" It would seem a matter of course that we are living in the world. No, says the apostle. You are not living there; you are dead; your life is hid with Christ in God. Your members are in the world; you have to carry on God's work there; but you are citizens of heaven on an earthly mission. "Mortify therefore your members which are

upon the earth—fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection," and so on.

Here again see how different is the Word of God from the wisdom of men. Men say, if you only mortify yourselves enough you will finally be dead; but God says, you are dead, and must therefore mortify your members. To vivify requires life; and to mortify requires death. If you are dead with Christ, it will be comparatively easy; it will be a joy—in fellowship with Him and in the might of his Spirit—to mortify uncleanness, inordinate affection, covetousness, and everything that is vile.

After all, my brethren, the way to *use* the gift of God is, first of all, to *know*—and that is what seems to be so difficult to us—what the gift is, and where we stand. We hear a great deal said now about the importance of not confounding our standing with our walk. That is very true. But there is something just as important as not confounding them, and that is, while carefully distinguishing, not to separate them. We stand in Christ—on Christ. We have nothing else to stand upon. As that beautiful hymn says which we love to sing—

“On Christ the solid Rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.”⁵

But when you do stand thus before God,

⁵ H. Bonar.

actually in Christ, who is your Representative, and has stood in your stead on the Cross—who still stands in your stead before God—does that mean that you have ceased to exist? Not at all. It means that you are actually there in Him; you have your standing in Him. “Now,” says the apostle, “as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.” Stand in Christ, and then walk in Christ. It is not “our standing and our falling,” but “our standing and our walking”—our standing, and our going straight on. As ye have received Him, so walk ye in Him.

The question resolves itself into this :

How did you receive Him ?

—When I despaired of myself.

—So walk ye in Him.

—I received Him when I accepted everything from Him.

—So walk ye in Him.

—I received Him when I was ready to do his will, and said, “What wilt Thou have me to do?”

—So walk ye in Him. Go right on in that despair of self, in that entire trust in Christ, in that willingness to do what He commands, and that will be using the gift. And you shall see that, by the use of the gift, the gift itself will grow every day more precious; not

that it can be more precious in itself than it is, but more precious to us. We shall know more of it, love it better, use it more faithfully, and see it growing in our hands. "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given." If a man does not use the gift, he cannot but lose it. God does not give us his Son that we should lay Him aside, or have a good look at Him on Sundays, or at our morning and evening prayer. He does not give us his Son as one of those rare pieces of confectionery one sees on the table on special occasions; but to be the daily bread of life—richer than any feast, and yet our daily bread. Not the seasoning of life, but its aliment, yea, its very element—that which is life, and gives life, and out of which there is no life. (I think I have got outside of what I had meant to say; but sometimes what we mean to say is not best, and God gives us something else.) To return. Having taken, by faith, what God has given, we must now use, also by faith, what belongs to us in Christ; and the first condition in order to use it is to hold it fast.

What, then, are the *means* of holding fast? They are very old—watchfulness, prayer, soberness, and the Bible: these are the four principal means constantly set before us.

Watchfulness, to begin with. What is it to watch? It is just the reverse of to sleep; it

is to have one's eyes open, "to walk," as the apostle says, "circumspectly," which means looking all around. In order to watch, you must be in the light; it is not of much use to watch if you are in Egyptian darkness, so that the enemy coming stealthily, making no noise, suddenly lays his hand on you. You must be in the light. You can then see very far off; you can be on your guard; you can meet the enemy in time. Watch, looking to Christ always; that is the way to watch.

Do you think you lose sight then of the difficulties, the enemies, the dangers, the deceitfulness of your own heart? Not at all. He will show you all that in his own light. Then you will see it well. But if you make it your business to be your own watcher, you will be sure to go to sleep, or you will not see things as they are at all. You will say there is an enemy coming from the left, and he will be coming from the right before you know it. Let us keep our eyes steadily on the Lord; He will show us everything.

To watchfulness, let us add *prayer*. They always go together; but it is a remarkable fact that watchfulness is often mentioned before prayer. Why is this? Perhaps for this reason: that a man may pray after a fashion, and yet not watch. He may pray, and then say, "I

have made known my requests to God ; now I am all safe for to-day." That would be a great mistake. Whereas, if a man truly watches, he will "watch unto prayer," as the apostle says.⁶ If he watches, he will see the need of prayer, to begin with. If he watches, he will see opportunities for prayer—for special prayer—a little moment when he can be alone with God, or pray with a friend or two. If he watches, he will see answers to prayer ; he will be thankful and thus inclined to pray more and to watch more. So let them always go together ; pray with watchfulness, and watch unto prayer.

Nor let us forget *soberness*. Because we are children of the day, the apostle says, we must watch and be sober. Make a temperate use of all things, of all the appetites, all the affections, all the thoughts, all the delights of this world, even the best of them, such as household joys, literature, science, the fine arts, or anything of that kind. All good things must be used only as they come to us directly from the hand of Christ ; otherwise not, for they would then be dangerous, and sure to lead us astray.

Let us watch therefore, and pray, and be sober ; let us possess all things ; but let nothing take possession of us except Christ. Let Him possess us altogether ; then we shall possess all

⁶ 1 Peter iv. 7.

things, in Him and for Him. If a man does that, he will be going on using the gift of God. It is impossible that he should not, and he will find it a necessity, a moral necessity, and a delight, to seek in God's Word for those things that God has given him.

The Word of God! Oh, that is a great means of using the gift. There you have the inventory, as it were, of all the various gifts summed up in Christ. Every promise a gift; every example a gift; every command a gift; every warning—shall we say, every threatening?—a gift. The object of it all is, to keep us straight; to prevent us from turning aside to the right or to the left; to bind us to Christ; to make us grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour. That is the object of all the Word of God, of all the grace of God, and of all the providence of God. Oh, let us make that Word our study at all times!

With the Word is given to us the Spirit, the two going together, to be our light, and power, and safety. Do not separate them. Christ said to the Sadducees, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God."⁷ To know the power of God, or to think we know it, and set aside the Scriptures, is the most dangerous thing in the world. It leads

⁷ Matt. xxii. 29.

straight into every kind of fanaticism. On the other hand, to know, or think we know, the Word of God, and not know his power—that is, his Spirit, what He can do, what He has promised to do, and what He is doing—that is mere head-belief, dead and unfruitful. It may put many truths in our minds; but it will put no life in our hearts. Let us turn to our Bible and read it on our knees, asking God to guide us in the very choice of the portions we are to read, to give us perseverance in the reading of them, and to grant us his light and power. It is a great deal better to read two verses, and pray and think over them, than to read two chapters in a hurry, and have nothing but a confused notion of what one has been reading.

Reading the Bible in the Spirit, we shall “know the things that are freely given to us of God,”⁸ because we will have them. The Holy Spirit takes them, as it were, out of the Bible, and puts them into our hearts. Through Him alone the Bible can become the book of life to us. He alone can make the pure gold that is there for us, to be in our hand as so much ready money, applicable to every emergency of life.

I end as I began. All that we can say about

⁸ 1 Cor. ii, 12.

the gift of God will be of very little use to us, and of no use at all, as far as our action on the world is concerned, if it does not pass from theory into practice, and if that life of ours which is "hid with Christ" in heavenly places is not made manifest to men upon the earth.

THE GIFT OF GOD.



VI.—How to use it; (2) Abiding.

“Abide in Me, and I in you.”—*John xv. 4.*



CHAPTER VI.

Abiding.

YOU probably have read of a surprise that the friends of Mr. Moody in Chicago gave him a few years ago. A rich man had built a row of houses, and he determined, without saying anything to Mr. Moody, that one of the houses should be given to him. He told a few friends, and said, "Now, do not speak to him at all about it; I give the house, and you furnish it." And so they did.

When New Year's-day came, some of them went out in a carriage to fetch Mr. Moody and his wife, but never told them what was their purpose. And when they stepped out of the carriage before that pretty house, he wondered what friend's house he was going to, as the place was new to him. Great was his astonishment when he went in, for there did not seem to be any master of the house to greet him, and he found a great many of his best friends there.

Then the owner came up, and said, "Here is a free lease of this house; it is *your* house, friend Moody."

He was perfectly astonished. Then he walked up and down the house: every room was his; everything was ready for him in every room, and even the cupboards had not been left empty.

The next thing, I suppose, after the friends had gone, and he found himself alone with his wife, was to say to her, "Now, how are we going to manage things in this house?" It was easy enough to understand that the cooking was to be done in the kitchen, the eating in the dining-room, and so on. But do you think it would have occurred to them that the thing they had to do was to return and dwell in the house they had left—the narrow, uncomfortable house—and there to be talking all day long of the best way to live in the new one?

That is just how the matter stands with a great many of us. We keep living in the old house, having meetings, and talking to each other of the way of behaving ourselves in the new house. Why, the first thing is to dwell in it. And, after all, when you come to the point, is not that the question that we are putting to each other nowadays? Yes, I understand God gives me Christ; I receive Christ, and I have Him; but how am I to *dwell* in Him?

We have all things *in Him*. You may read the New Testament, and try to find out how many times the expression "in Him" or "in Christ" occurs: it will take you many a day to do it. We have all things in Him, and the great point is *not to leave Him*. How are we going to do that? Let us go to the Word of God for an answer.

In 1 John ii. 24, I find this: "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." It is very plain, and it answers exactly to the words of Christ Himself in John xv., where He says, "If ye abide in Me, and my words abide in you." The truth must abide in us; we must abide in the truth. We must retain the things that we have heard. No question here of any emotion, or excitement, or extraordinary experience. Believe what ye have heard from the Word of God. Do not forget it; do not let it escape you. Keep reading the Word itself, that you may be reminded of the truth; and not only reminded, but go further and deeper into the truth, that you may know better how rich it is.

It is said that the new man is "renewed in view of knowledge;"¹ knowledge is insisted on

¹ Col. iii. 10. Alford's rendering is "towards perfect knowledge."

everywhere in the Bible.² We must know what God has said ; what He has done ; what He is to us. If we do that, if what we have heard remains in us, we shall continue or abide in the Son and in the Father. That is one thing.

Here is another, in the same book, chapter iv. 12: "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." Verse 16: "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." If you want to dwell in God, dwell in love.

Perhaps you will say this is reasoning in a circle. I do not know but that we miss the point of a great many passages by insisting upon this argument of ours. The fact is that God gives us very often the same truth under two forms, or rather He give us two ways of getting at a blessing. You tell a man, Dwell in God ; very well, if he does it—by faith dwells in God—of course he dwells in love, and obedience, and all the rest.

But there is another way. God says, Do this, and do that; and it will not answer at all to reply, "I cannot do it unless I dwell in Thee." Do it, and you will find out for yourself, surely

² See, for instance, Rom. xv. 14; 1 Cor. i. 5; Phil. i. 9; 2 Peter i. 5.

enough, that you cannot do it except you dwell in Him. You will have a definite purpose before you, that of obeying a specific command of God; and if you do that, you will find not only that it is the result of the grace of God in you, but that it is a great means of grace. To make this more clear: suppose you have a friend who has been ill, and you inquire about his health. Some one tells you: "I saw him yesterday, and he was partaking of a hearty meal." Well, that is a result of his being better, and a sign of it; but it also helps to *make* him better. If he had not taken the hearty meal he would have become weak and sick again. So every act of obedience, in answer to God's command, not only proves that there is some spiritual life in us, but also helps on that life, and makes us stronger. "My meat," the Lord said, "is to do the will of Him that sent Me."³

So when you are tempted to do anything against love—be it love to a bad man, or an enemy; love to those that hate you, or,—more difficult still perhaps,—to those that "aggravate" you—just remember that you are *bound* to dwell in love. There is no choice about the matter. It is the command of God; and therefore He is perfectly willing and anxious to make you able to do it. Say, "O God, I will love

³ John iv. 34.

him! I do love him!" and the Spirit of God will enable you to do it. You will have the strongest proof that the Spirit of God is at work in you. Do not allow yourself any bitterness, or envy, or uncharitableness, or anything of the kind. Here are two means then of abiding in Christ—truth, and love.

Here is another, chapter iii. 24: "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him." Observe this. It applies to all the commandments. Let a man set his heart upon obedience—simple obedience to the commands of God—and that man will dwell in God. And every command will bring him closer to God; and he will find more and more what God's commands are.

The natural man does not know what God's commands are. He thinks they are very grievous, though the word of God says his commands are "not grievous." And so Paul says we have to be transformed by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

We then find out that God's commands, as has been said to us, are so many promises. When God says, "Arise," it means "I heal you; I give you power to arise." When He says, "Do a thing," it means, "I enable you to do it." This is the meaning of a remarkable verse in

that long and wonderful psalm, which is but one hymn of praise to the law of God: "Teach me good judgment and knowledge; for I have believed thy commandments;"⁴ not I have heard them, or have loved them, or have obeyed them; but have *believed* them. Believed that they are wise and good; that they carry with them—because every word of God is a word of power—the ability to obey them.

Then, keeping his commandments, you will dwell in Him. If not, if we think that we can have a careless walk, live a selfish life, and yet in some fanciful way be dwelling in Christ, perhaps by working up our feelings with books, and hymns, and addresses, and the like—we delude ourselves. If we will not obey, we cannot dwell in Christ.

And there is a great danger here, because many will persuade us that we are all right. We are not, if we live in disobedience. Through Christ we have access to the Father at all times. If any man has disobeyed, has sinned, we have an Advocate with the Father. Let us go and make a clean breast of it—confess the sin; "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."⁵ Then let us go on, *and not sin*;⁶ let us fear and abhor sin, and go to God

⁴ Ps. cxix. 66. ⁵ I John i. 9. ⁶ Ps. iv. 4; I Cor. xv. 34.

unceasingly—not so much for comfort and joy, but for obedience; and the comfort and joy will be given us besides.

I learnt a good lesson the other day. Passing along your streets, I remarked that at the door of a good many of the houses there are two bells; one is called the *visitors' bell*, the other the *servants' bell*. Now in our Father's house, where we can always go, through Christ, there is only one bell, and that is the servants' bell. Satan, however, has put on the outside another bell, prettier, and higher up—a gilt bell, and written beside it, "*Visitors' bell!*" But, though one may pull at it ever so lustily, the door does not open, for there is no wire to that brass knob, no real bell that corresponds to it, no sound heard inside the house.

And that is the reason why a great many people pray in vain. They go every Sunday and pull at the visitors' bell. They want to pay God a nice little visit, and then be off again. Every day perhaps, morning and evening, they have a pull at that bell, but get no answer. God does not so much as hear such a prayer. It is to Him a mere sound of words, and no prayer at all; it is a sin and a mockery. But if one comes as a sinner, ringing at the servants' bell, God answers him. If we come in the name of Christ, how can we come otherwise than as

servants? What did Christ come for, except to serve? We likewise have to serve, and do nothing but serve; to serve God, and serve one another. Nor can these two kinds of service be separated. What we have "freely received" we must "freely give;" for such is the nature of the gift of God, that by keeping it to ourselves we lose it, and we can only keep it and increase it by bestowing it upon others. Do that, and you will not be much troubled about difficulties as to what it is to dwell in Christ.

Finally, there is another passage on the subject in the same epistle: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."⁷ "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."⁸ We must bear testimony to Christ; we must not be ashamed of Christ. Not that we are to be always talking of Him; but, as occasion serves us, as the guiding star leads us, when, placing ourselves in the Lord's hands, we see it to be our duty to speak, let us speak. Nor will it be so difficult as we apprehend. He will be with our heart, our mind, our lips. Of course it is an easy thing to be witnesses for Christ in such a meeting as this; but I mean when you are in the presence of those who are cold, who are unbelieving. Bide your time—or rather God's time. Ask Him to show

⁷ 1 John iv. 15.

⁸ Rom. x. 10.

you the right moment, the right thing to say. When it does come, do not be ashamed of Christ, because it is just like running away from Him to be ashamed to confess his name. And that is another means, a very effectual one, of abiding in Him.

Speaking of testimony, I was told yesterday a very simple and, I think, useful word, coming from a man who probably will never know that what he said has been quoted and been blessed to others. A lady who labours among the navvies told me of a conversation between two of them. One of them was a Christian man, and he had heard something of all these recent discussions about holiness. His friend asked him, "Well, what does it all amount to?" He answered, "I do not understand it very well; but, as far as I am concerned, I just came to Christ the Lord Jesus, *and then I never said to Him, 'Good-bye.'*"

Now, that is all. Go and do likewise. You have come to Christ, and perhaps you have said "Good-bye." He still holds out his promise to us this evening: "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."⁹ Let us come unto Him once more, and never take leave of Him. At the root of all spiritual life is that ineffable communion with the Saviour of which He spoke in the words, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him."¹

⁹ John vi. 37.

¹ John vi. 56.

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THE GIFT OF GOD.

VII.—Its Purpose.

“That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted
in Christ.”—*Eph.* i. 12.



CHAPTER VII.

Its Purpose.

OUR subject now is, "*The Purpose of the Gift of God.*" We have considered in succession, you will remember, the source of that gift—even the love of God; its nature—eternal life in Christ Jesus; its reception—by simple faith; its consequences—namely, that all things are ours; its use—in faith, in the prayer of faith, in the watchfulness of faith, in the reading of God's Word in faith, in the obedience of faith, in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. We now come to its purpose.

This, my brethren, is the best of all. *Its purpose!* What is it all meant for? What is its object? Is it our comfort? Of course not. Is it even—as its ultimate end, I mean—our purity, our holiness? No. Its ultimate purpose is that, through our regeneration by the Spirit of God, God Himself shall be glorified.

We read in the very first line of the Bible,

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth;” and in the nineteenth Psalm, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork.” And in the last book of the Bible, we read, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”¹

The object of the whole work of creation is the glory of God, is to show forth his handiwork, to let every intelligent creature understand what a mighty worker God is, and what a wonderful artist; to make it apparent that all power, that all beauty come from Him. My brethren, that first lesson is just the lesson our generation will not hear. What would you think of a man who, looking upon a beautiful picture, should admire and enjoy it, should praise the drawing, the colouring, the grouping, every part and the whole of it, and then proceed to scratch out the name of the painter, so that one might behold the work but never know who was its author? Does not a great artist have the right that his work should be not only for people's satisfaction—for the glory of the work in itself considered—but for his glory who conceived it and made it?

Well, nowadays, our generation—at least, the wise men of our generation—are busy scratching

¹ Rev. iv. 11.

out God's name from all his works; and the more they understand his works, the further they go into them, and are able to explain them with the very intellect which they hold from God, and which is part of the image of God, the more they refuse to see God.

We want to show the world that there is a God. How are we going to do that? Not by calling men's attention to the magnificent order of the universe, or to this body of ours, these hands of ours, these eyes of ours, which are indeed fearfully and wonderfully made; for they discern no God there, their understanding being darkened. We must show them the work of God—the presence of God—in some other way. If God has glorified Himself in creation, He has a far greater glory; He has shown the world something more of Himself in the work of redemption. As a Christian preacher has well said, "In creation God reveals his hand; in redemption He opens his heart."

When the Child was born in Bethlehem, what was the song of the angel and the multitude of the heavenly host? It was this, "Glory to God in the highest." And when the little Child, increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man, was twelve years old, what did He say? He said to Mary and to Joseph: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's

business?"²—literally, "about the things of my Father." That was what He came for—the things of his Father. He told the Jews, "I seek not mine own glory."³ Mark this; Christ Himself came not into the world to seek his own glory.

When the shadow of death was ready to fall upon Him, what did He do then? Oh, remember! His soul was troubled—it is no sin to have one's soul troubled in the prospect of suffering—his soul was troubled. "And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'?" Was that what He would ask for? No. "'For this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.' Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, 'I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.'"⁴ And when He was very near the hour of death, summing up his whole life upon earth before it was yet quite over, He said, "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."⁵ That work was to glorify God. Christ came for that very purpose: that, drawing men into unity with Himself, He should enable them to glorify God; their sins being atoned for and put away, his blood being shed for sinners, and his risen life being the life of

² Luke ii. 49.

⁴ John xii. 27, 28.

³ John viii. 50.

⁵ John xvii. 4.

sinner for the glory of God. What does the apostle Paul say about this whole work of salvation? What is it for? What is its object? "That we should be to the praise of his glory."⁶

Are you willing to take God's gift in that way, with that view, not thinking of yourself so much, and whether you are determined to accept it, and what you are going to do with it, but saying to yourself, "Here is God, my 'faithful Creator,' my Redeemer; and shall I live for his glory or not?" You cannot live for his glory in your own strength, can you? Have you tried it? Does it glorify God at all? Nay. It glorifies you perhaps, or you think it does. But to glorify God, it must be the life of God; it must be Christ in us. Not even man can derive credit from that with which he has had nothing to do. If a work is to glorify God, it must be God's work. Oh, let us take hold of this and rejoice in this. Surely it is a great and most blessed step in our life, when we begin, even faintly, to apprehend, as a distant glimmer of light, this fact: that it is our duty,—and shall I not say, our high privilege?—to live to the glory of God; that God is so kind that He consents to be glorified—to get some glory by such creatures as we are, if we will but place ourselves in his hands and be his workmanship, to his praise.

⁶ Eph. i. 12.

Now then, let us go forth from this place to our labours, and live for the glory of God. If I remember right, it is to servants the apostle says, to encourage them in their humble, often painful, service: "As to the Lord, and not unto men;"—do it for God. Sweep the room for God; do anything for God. You have a right to do it for God; it is your happiness and duty, it is your glory, to do it for God. Have you to suffer? Suffer for the glory of God, and you will not be asking so many questions as to why and wherefore you are called to suffer this or that. What is the key to the Book of Job, if not this? that a man may suffer, not on account of such or such a particular sin he has committed, but that God may be glorified in him. So, when Lazarus was sick, what did Christ say?—"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." And it proved to be indeed for the glory of God, did it not? In your sicknesses, your complaints, your bereavement, your heart-breaking, in any difficulty you have to meet with—perhaps in your own family—in anything and everything you have to suffer, say to God, "O God, I do not know why, I do not understand it at all; I do not try to understand it. Get glory to Thyself from it."

If we take life in that way, the question

7 Col. iii. 23.

whether life is of faith or not solves itself; it must be the life of faith, because it must be the life of God. Says the apostle to the Romans, "It is of faith, *that it might be by grace.*"⁸ If it is through grace, it must be constantly by faith; there is no way of receiving grace except by faith. Then again, see what Abraham did—the great example of faith, the father of the faithful: "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God."⁹ There you have it: "giving glory to God;" and every time you have faith, you give glory to God, and none at all to yourself. If you will give glory to God in anything, you cannot do it except by expecting and asking all from Him. Then you will constantly receive all from Him, and be a true child of Abraham, strong in faith, giving glory to God.

Is not this the great sin of us Christians—that we do not give glory to God—not half enough; not one millionth part enough? We said a while ago that the world (and I saw you were indignant at the thought) will not give glory to God in the work of creation: are we giving glory to God in the work of redemption?—that is the question. How many are seeking—what shall I say?—their own glory, their personal glory, or perhaps the glory of their church? Oh, my dear friends, it

⁸ Rom. iv. 16.

⁹ Rom. iv. 20.

is a great thing to love one's church, to labour in one's church and for one's church; but observe, if you let the glory of your church—whatever church it is—stand before the glory of God, you will find neither the one nor the other. But if you have God's glory in view, be sure He will take care of your church, and will make you a good worker in your church. And when all churches do that, they will find themselves very near to each other.

Neither let us seek the glory of our system. This applies to us very directly and definitely at this time. Of course, we have been ready to say that others were seeking the glory of their systems; but then, we may at the same time be seeking the glory of our own system, if it be a system at all. Whether or not a man agrees with us and sympathizes with us is a very small matter. God will not ask any man whether he was "in the movement" or out of the movement; He will ask him whether he is in Christ or out of Christ. I should not wonder if the great adversary was hard at work now, trying to make us start forth in this cause—unfolding, not God's banner, but our own flag. That would bring disgrace upon the whole movement—and serve us right, too.

Nor let us seek the glory of our own piety—the enemy's masterpiece is to get a man to live with the thought, "Now I am rather a good man,

and even have the name of a pious man ; I am somebody." This, I suppose, was Satan's chief sin. He was an angel, and a very intelligent one. He had great gifts, and he tried in some way to set them up independently of God, and to use them to his own glory. So he got up a party : they were called angels then ; they are now called devils.

Let us be on our guard against so heinous a sin ; let us pray for every man who is in special danger on that account. Those who are called most frequently to speak or to write greatly need to be prayed for. Let us then "pray for all saints," and particularly for such as are most exposed. Some one told me the other day of a very good prayer for a Christian preacher—"O God, hold him up! O God, keep him down!"

Finally, if we do this, not only shall we be blessed in our own heart and church, in our families, in everything we set our hand to, but we shall be made a blessing to others ; others will glorify God because of us. Think of that. What a privilege and joy! That is the very command of Christ. He says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."¹ There must be something to be seen

¹ Matt. v. 16.

in a true Christian's life; it will not do to say that the life is so far hidden that nobody sees it. True, it is "hid with Christ in God," but it is apparent before men; it cannot but be: light is seen, if it is light at all. Men therefore must *see* our good works, and *glorify* our Father.

In the Gospel of St. Luke there are two or three interesting passages on this subject. "The shepherds returned, *glorifying and praising God.*"² The man to whom Christ said, "Arise and walk," "immediately rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, *glorifying God.*"³ Again, we read that the poor blind man, as soon as he received his sight, "followed Him, *glorifying God.* And all the people, when they saw it, *gave praise unto God.*"⁴ Thus the apostle Paul, reminding the Galatians of his conversion, writes, "And they *glorified God* in me."⁵ How beautiful! They did not glorify *him* at all; they glorified God in him. Let us be earnest about this; let us make it a matter of prayer; let us glorify God for every good gift He gives to any brother or sister, but do not let us glorify *them*. Our religious newspapers would do well to make a note of that point. They are full of the glorification of men. Let them drop the habit. It does no man a particle of

² Luke ii. 20.

³ Luke v. 25.

⁴ Luke xviii. 43.

⁵ Gal. i. 24.

good ; it may do much harm, and it gives the world occasion to rail at the Church.

Whilst others will glorify God because of us, what shall we be doing ? We shall be glorying in God. It is in the nature of man to glory about something. There is a voice in us that wants to praise. And men do praise very miserable things—worldly pomp and power, bloodshed, lust, their own ruin and perdition often-times. At best, they praise our common humanity. But we have a right to praise God.

The apostle says, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."⁶ Another very familiar passage is this : "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, *do all to the glory of God.*"⁷ Let us help on everything that is done for the glory of God, and nothing that is done for any other purpose. "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."⁸ It must be his planting, "the planting of the Lord, *that He might be glorified.*"⁹ You remember the beautiful passage in Jeremiah ix. 23, "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches : but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I

⁶ 1 Cor. i. 31.

⁸ Matt. xv. 13.

⁷ 1 Cor. x. 31.

⁹ Isa. lxi. 3.

am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." This reminds us of what Moses said to the Lord, "I beseech Thee, show me thy glory. And He said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee."¹ Truly a wonderful dialogue, making it apparent that God does not separate his glory from his goodness. His chief glory lies in his love, and is bound up, therefore, with our own welfare, our highest interests, our true happiness, which lie closer to his heart than to ours.

Thus we end where we began: God is love, and the glory of God is his grace. "The exceeding riches of his grace" are "the riches of his glory."²

In conclusion, let me read from the Scriptures a few passages ascribing praise to God.

PSALM cxv. 1.—*"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."*

ISAIAH vi. 1-3.—*"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with*

¹ Ex. xxxiii. 18, 19.

² Eph. ii. 7; iii. 16.

twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

ROMANS xi. 35, 36.—*Who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."*

HEBREWS xiii. 20, 21.—*"The God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."*

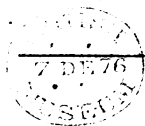
I PETER v. 10, 11.—*"The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."*

REVELATION vii. 9-12.—*"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could*

number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

And until we join in that song, let our lips, let our minds, let our hearts, let our life, continually say with the whole Church of God in all ages—

“GLORY BE TO THE FATHER, AND TO THE SON, AND TO THE HOLY GHOST; AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING, IS NOW, AND EVER SHALL BE, WORLD WITHOUT END. AMEN.”



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