

## Christ Manifesting Himself to His Disciples.

THREE IMPORTANT LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE.

Luke xxiv. 13-36.

## III. "He that watereth shall be watered also himself."—Closing Caution and Counsel.

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For the Presbyterian Review.

Before concluding our consideration of the interesting and instructive narrative of the experience of Cleopas and his companion, on the day of our Lord's resurrection, it may serve a good purpose to add a few closing remarks, suggested by the fact, which is only too manifest, that such experiences as we have been calling attention to are not a distinguishing feature of the religious interest of these times. And are there not some to whom the consideration of these experiences is almost like speaking in an unknown tongue? There are many Christians, perhaps genuine, who are troubled often and perplexed about many things, but who have no experience of Christ's drawing near to them, and dispelling their darkness and making their "hearts burn within them," by making them to see, in "God's marvellous light," what has been perplexing them. And how often, when He has drawn near to us and has given us a measure of light and comfort, do we think we have gotten all we need, when, in reality, we have only gotten all we care to get? Taken up with other things, and not supremely interested about Christ as the two disciples were, we allow Him to withdraw, without our obtaining the full measure of satisfaction which we are near obtaining, and which we would most surely obtain, if only we were so interested as to follow up the advantage of a great opportunity. And therefore it is that we are, so many of us, wanting in the spiritual experience that qualifies for helpfulness to those who are in the deep waters of perplexity and adversity, we cannot help others by telling them what Christ has done for our own souls.

That the religion of any of us is wanting in the experience of the gracious presence of Christ, such as the two disciples had, can be owing only to our being wanting in that loving regard for Him which made their interest about Him *supreme*. We are, no doubt, possessed of a certain kind of religious interest, which animates and influences us. But there is a religious interest other than that which craves experience of the *conscious presence* of Christ, such as His promise warrants, and some have experience of. "He that loveth me," He says, "shall be loved of my Father and I will love Him and will manifest myself unto Him." "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," John xiv. 21-23. But are we not wanting in this warm loving personal regard for Christ, such as dominated the two disciples, and made their interest about Him *supreme*? I fear that, at least, many of us or most of us are. There are, of course, grand exceptions. There are still, as there have always been and always will be, men who stand out conspicuously in their readiness to "suffer the loss of all things" for Christ, and to follow Him, in "enduring all things for the elect's sake." 11 Tim. ii. 10. But we may be very sure that those are only the men who "cannot live" without experience of *intimate fellowship* with Christ.

Allowing that we are not destitute of interest about Christ,—allowing that our interest cannot be questioned, is it not more than possible that we are *satisfied* with it, that we are not aware *how slender* it is, and are not concerned to have it increased? Notwithstanding our carelessness, Christ comes to us, from time to time, and puts us in a happy spiritual frame, which, in spite of past disappointments, we hope will be permanent. But, untaught by all the lessons of the past, because "as the horse or as the mule," Pa. xxxii. 9, *unteachable*, we make no serious effort to *detain* Him. We *let Him* go, and He leaves us. Our interest about *other* things is so great that our normal carelessness speedily resumes its sway: so that "in us is fulfilled" the saying of the parable. "The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful," Mark iv. 19.

None of us, I trust, belongs to the too common class of those who have no desire at all for the presence of Christ, but would rather that He should not approach them, because His approach, they know, would interfere with their sinful indulgences or with their devotedness to the world. But whether or not, we do, all of us, well to remember not only that He justly rears and may terribly punish the carnal indifference that pays no regard to Him when He "stands at the door and knocks," Prov. i. 24-31; Luke xiii. 25-28, 34; xix. 41-44; etc.; but that "Ye cannot but manifest His displeasure with those whose hearts are, "at any time," so "overcharged with the cares of this life," that His gracious approaches are disregarded by them equally with those whose

hearts are "overcharged with self-seeking and drunkenness," Luke xxi. 34.

To those who are seriously concerned about the dead thrifless spiritual condition in which we are, so many of us, notwithstanding the religious activities which we are sometimes almost compelled to participate in,—to those who do not think we are "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," Rev. iii. 17, and who are longing perhaps for such experience as our two disciples had, the present writer would say, from personal experience that dates back over half a century, and was, he believes, one of many similar experiences during the great revival which culminated in the disruption of 1813, "Leave the anchorite to the indulgence of his solitary imaginations, and the ascetic to his voluntary or self-imposed afflictions, and be one of *two or three* who associate with one another as *Christians*, or whose fellowship is *distinctively Christian*. And when, as is sure to happen, light and comfort have come to you, call to mind what is here written for your learning, and do not let the author of your light and comfort go, till His manifestation of Himself to you is *complete beyond all doubt*. And then, having now the witness in yourselves, delay not to add your testimony to that of all the past ages; and very surely, while seeking to enlighten and comfort others, no small addition will be made to your own light and comfort."

## Sabbath School Thoughts.

The first duty of the teacher is that of acquiring a knowledge of the lesson to be taught. He cannot teach that he has not learned. It is not necessary, and, in most instances, not possible for him to know all that the lesson contains, but he cannot be a successful teacher unless he has learned something more than his pupils already know.

In committing passages of Scripture to memory it is of the first importance to be absolutely accurate. We should fix in our minds the exact words of the book. If we attempt to get the idea in our own language, we may get what is not contained in the text. If we commit the words as they stand we have the basis of an accurate knowledge of the truth which the passage contains.

The Sunday-school class is not a place for theological controversy or for the display of skill in argument. But the thoughtful pupil should be encouraged to ask questions. This will aid the teacher in his effort to overcome difficulties and will enable him to get the truth of the lesson more effectively before the minds of his pupils.

Pertinent illustrations may aid the teacher in setting forth the truth of the lesson. But this method of teaching is attended with some danger and should be used with caution. An illustration may not only fail to elucidate the truth of the text, but, if carelessly used, it may convey to the mind of the pupil a positively erroneous thought.

In the study of the lesson a thorough exposition of the text is an absolute necessity. Neither the pupil nor the teacher will make any considerable progress without it. The professional scholar needs this aid; much more is it needful to the non-professional student.

Professor Thomas Davidson said in a recent address: "It is almost nineteen hundred years since Jesus declared that the Kingdom of Heaven had come down upon earth, and taught His followers to pray to God, 'Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven' (how seldom do we think what that means!). and yet that Kingdom has not yet been realized. Just think of it! Nineteen hundred years, and Christ's Kingdom, God's Kingdom, has not yet come! In Christ's Kingdom all men and women would love each other as brothers and sisters, and each would strive to prefer his neighbor to himself. He that wished to be great would be the servant of all. Can you say, do you think, that Christ's Kingdom has come? And if it has not, will you not do something that it may come, that His commandment may be obeyed—'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another'?"

Genuine humility occupies a chief place among the graces of the Spirit. But it is not the office of humility to inspire us with the conviction that we can do nothing, that we have no capacity for work in the Master's vineyard. A spirit of presumption, an inclination to assume that we can accomplish whatever we undertake in our own strength, is a temptation of the evil one, but this is only one degree worse than the feeling that we can do nothing. This is false humility, and may be as really from beneath, as a spirit of presumption.

Humility was a virtue unknown in the ancient world, and even to-day it is not widely cultivated. And yet it was one of the most striking characteristics in the life of the Lord Jesus. "He humbled Himself,"