

“NO MORE CONSCIENCE OF SINS.”

HEBREWS X.

The object of redemption is to bring us nigh to God, as it is written, “Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” But what is our state before God when brought nigh? The right understanding of this is most important. It is impossible that we could be happy even in the presence of God, if there still existed a thought of His being against us. I need the perfect settled assurance that there is no sin upon me before Him. The sense of responsibility ever makes a person unhappy where there is any question as to sin standing against him; see the case of a servant and his master, or that of a child and its parent—the conscience is miserable if there be upon it the sense of that which will be judged. So God’s presence must be indeed terrible, unless the conscience be perfectly good. If there be happiness for me there, it can only be in the sense of His favour, and of the completeness with which we have been brought back—the perfect assurance of “the worshipper once purged” having “no more conscience of sins.”

God speaks to us according to His estimate of our standing: it may not be our heart’s experience. There is a distinctness between the operation of the Spirit of God in bringing me unto Jesus, bearing witness to me of God’s love, and of the efficacy of what Christ has done, and His operation in my soul.

in producing in me the love of God. That which is the subject of experience is what is produced in my soul, whereas that which gives me peace is His testimony to the work of Jesus. A Christian who doubts the Father's love to him, and who looks for peace to that which passes in his own heart, is doubting God's truth.

The gospel is the revelation God has given of Himself: it displays the love of God towards us, and what is in His heart. I can trust the declaration of what is in God's heart, and not what I think of myself.

The apostle speaks of a due time; "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." It is almost always true that there is in us a terrible process of breaking the heart, in order that we may be brought to the ascertainment that we are lost and ruined sinners; but the gospel begins at the close of God's experience of man's heart, and calls us from that in order that we should have joy and peace from the experience of what is in His heart.

Man left alone before the flood, put under the law, in Canaan, indeed under all and every trial of his nature and tendency up to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, was just God's putting him to the test.

One would have thought, after Adam had been turned out of paradise for transgression, that would have been a sufficient warning; but his first-born became a murderer. We should have supposed that the flood which swept off the workers of iniquity

would have repressed for a time at least, by the terror of judgment, the outbreak of sin; but we find immediately afterwards Noah getting drunk, and Ham dishonouring his father. The devouring fire of Sinai, which made even Moses fear and quake, seemed sufficient to subdue the rebel heart and make it bow beneath God's hand; but the golden calf was the awful evidence that the heart of man was "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Again in Canaan a part of the world was tried to the utmost to be cultivated, but it would not do. A bad tree producing bad fruit was the only type by which God could set Israel forth. (See Is. v.) He might dig about it and dung it, but after all these efforts it could only bring forth more bad fruit. At last He said, "I have yet one son, perhaps they will reverence my son," but man preferred having the world to himself, and so crucified Jesus. Looking to His cross, Christ said, "Now is the judgment of this world." (John xii.)

At the crucifixion of Jesus, the veil was rent, and the holiest opened; what God was within the veil then shone out in all its fulness. When grace reveals this to me, I get confidence. I see God holy and expecting holiness—true; but the peace of God is in knowing what He is to us, and not what we are to Him. He knows all the evil of our hearts. Nothing can be worse than the rejection of Jesus—man's hatred is shown out there, and God's love, to the full. The wretched soldier (who, in the cowardly impotence of the consciousness that he

could with impunity insult the meek and lowly Jesus, pierced His side with a spear), let out in that disgraceful act, the water and the blood, which was able to cleanse even such as he. Here God's heart was revealed, what He is to the sinner; and this is our salvation.

Death and judgment teach me redemption. God judged sin indeed in sacrificing His well-beloved Son to put it away. It must be punished; Jesus bore the blow—this rent the veil, and shewed out what God really is. The very blow that let out the holiness of God put away the sin which His holiness judged.

The perfect certainty of God's love and the perfect cleansing of the conscience is that which the defiled and trembling sinner needs.

“By the grace of God” Jesus Christ has “tasted death.” Death, the wages of sin, is seen in the cross of Jesus as the consequence of “the grace of God.” “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness.” Were anyone to demand of me a proof of God's love, I could not give more than God has done in that “He spared not His own Son;” none other could be so great. But then, it might be asked, may not my sin affect it? No, God knew all your sin, and He has provided for it all; “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

In real communion the conscience must be purged: there can be no communion if the soul be not at peace. We read here, “By one offering he

hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." There is very frequently the confounding of what faith produces with what faith rests upon. Faith always rests upon God's estimate of the blood of Jesus as He has revealed it in His word; faith rests on no experience. Jesus said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God!"—"by the which will we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." "We are sanctified," it is not that which is proposed for our attainment; it was the good will of God to do it, and the work is done, to bring our souls back unto Himself. Jesus has said "it is finished." But then there must be the knowledge of this also, in order for us to begin to act. You might have a person willing to pay your debts; nay, you might even have them paid; but if you did not know it, you would be just as miserable as before. We are not called upon to believe in a promise that Jesus should come to die and rise again. The work is *done*; He "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high," "when he had by himself purged our sins." But then this is not sufficient for me; I must *know* that the work is done; and therefore He sent down the Holy Ghost to be the witness that God is satisfied.

Knowing perfectly their guilt and amount, God has declared, "your sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Faith rests on this, "God is true;" "he that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." The Lord said to Israel in Egypt concerning the blood of the paschal

lamb, "When I see the blood, I will pass over." Could there be hesitation if we were in a house marked with blood on the door-post? should we not know that He would pass over? Faith is always divine certainty. God has said, "I will remember no more." This is the ground on which we enter into the holiest. "The worshipper once purged" has "no more conscience of sins."

God has found His rest in Jesus; our peace and joy depends upon knowing this. Were anything more necessary, it could not be His rest; God is not seeking for something else when at rest. None else could have afforded this. "God looked down from heaven to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God; they were all gone out of the way; there was none righteous; no, not one." But God bore witness unto Jesus, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." God is well pleased in Christ; God rests in His Son, not merely in His life, though that was holy and acceptable unto Him, but in His work on the cross. Jesus said, "except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit," and that meets our need. When He shews His glory to the angels, He points to what has been done by man. In man was God glorified; as in man, the first Adam, He had been dishonoured. Christ reversed all this—"Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him:" which God recognizes in straightway glorifying Him. Righteousness cannot be looked for

from the creature, but the fruit of righteousness will—the thing itself is only in Christ.

God is not a grudging giver. Did Satan, tempting Eve, question this in the forbidden fruit? He has given His Son; He rests in Him; the sinner likewise rests there. What can man do for me? Nothing. If I were to come to him to deliver me from death, could he help me? No. He might fill my hand with those perishing things which only swell the triumph of death and decorate the tomb, but there his power ends.

In Jesus God has found His rest—this is mine also; I know it from the testimony of God's truth. Have you found rest in God's rest? If you say, I have not, will you say that God has not found His rest there? will you look to your own heart? In that you can never find it—it is only in Jesus; who had said, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." Would that all knew the perfect rest to be found there!

BURNING AND EATING THE SACRIFICES.

HEBREWS xiii. 7-19.

There was twofold character in the offering which has its counterpart for us in Christ; and the want of firm grasp of this, to distinguish and yet maintain them together, lies at the root of much want of enjoyment and of feebleness in the children of God. The first and most fundamental point was

that in the offerings there was that which was consumed. Being identified with the sin of man, it was consumed under the wrath and indignation of God; or it went up a savour of rest, as that which was sweet and acceptable to God, as for instance the burnt-offering. In the sin-offering there was God's judgment of sin, and therefore the greater part was burnt outside the camp. But, besides this, there was another character that entered into the sacrifices. In very many cases men partook of them. In the meat-offering and peace-offering such was the fact; and even in the offering for sin the priest had a portion.

And I believe this is what is referred to here. These Jewish Christians were in great danger of forgetting their privileges. They had abandoned everything that they had once revered as the religion given them by God; they were no longer gazing on things that shadowed His glory. The grandeur, the magnificence, the glory of the Levitical institutions—all was left behind. God was not now as of old thundering from heaven. He had wrought with infinitely greater moral glory. He had sent His Son from heaven; pardon and peace had been brought, and joy and liberty in the Holy Ghost; but all this was unseen. It is, however, one thing to enter into the comfort of the truth when all is bright and fresh, and another thing to hold it fast in time of reproach, shame, derision, and the falling away of some. When the first joy is somewhat lessened, the heart naturally

returns to what it had once rested on. And there is always this danger for us—when evil is felt, the blessing not being so present to the soul. Who among us that has long known Christ—known His ways—has not felt this snare?

And what is the divine remedy? It is just that which the Holy Ghost here uses—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." We must not sever this verse from the succeeding one; "be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines," &c. The Holy Ghost would guard these Jewish believers against that which, compared with our own proper christian blessings, is mere trash, earthly priesthood, holy places, offerings, tithes, &c. These things after all, were but novelties compared with the old thing, which is Jesus.

Looked at historically, Christianity might seem a new thing. He had been but recently manifested; but who was He? and whence had He come? He was "the first-born of every creature"—yea, the Creator! "All things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." He was the One whom God intended to manifest from all eternity. And here we see Him in His complete person—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." Through Him God could bless. With Him He would have us occupied.

We are told a little before to remember them that have the rule over us—to follow their faith, even if themselves were gone. But all these pass out of

the scene, while "Jesus Christ, is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." This is the only thing that abides unchangeably and establishes too. "Meats have not profited those who have been occupied therein." Many might have abstained—it was God's bidding that they should; but if occupied with the thing, it was not their profit. Christ was the substance; all else was shadow. Therefore He goes on to say, "We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." If others have the husk, we are feeding on the kernel. (The "tabernacle" was used to express the Jewish thing.) Everything had passed away in Christ. In Phillipians the apostle could speak contemptuously of circumcision in contrast with having Christ, even though it was of God. To be occupied with it, now that Christ was come, was to be outside, to be of "the circumcision."

"To eat." It was not merely the offering, nor the burning of the offering, but the partaking of it. We have got Christ Himself, and our sins put away—sin, root and branch, dealt with by God. There is not now one question unsettled for us who believe. Has He one question unsettled with Christ? and if not with Christ, He has not with us, for He died and rose for us, and we are one with Him. As in the Jewish system, God and the offerer had their portions in the sacrifices, so now we may say, that God has His own portion in the same Christ on whom we feed. The entrance into this exceedingly blessed thought is one of the things which the chil-

dren of God greatly fail in—that we are seated by God Himself at the same table where He has His own joy and portion. Of course there is that in which we cannot share. In the burnt-offering all went up to God. The sweet fragrance of all that Christ was goes up to Him. We must remember that God has His infinite joy in Christ; and not only for what He is in Himself, but for that which He has done for my sins. When we think of this, all of self is absorbed, and must sink before it. The old nature we have still; but it is in us to be crushed. We have to treat it all, its likings and dislikings, as a hateful thing. But the new life needs sustaining. It grows by feeding. As in natural life, the mere possession of riches will not sustain life, but it has to be nourished; so in spiritual life, it is not only true that Christ is my life in the presence of God, but I must make Christ my own for my food—eating of Him day by day. (John vi.) He is in very deed given to us to be turned by faith into nourishment for us. And the sweet thing is that we are entitled thus to think of Christ, given by God to be this food for us. It is not only that Christ is God's, but He is ours too; our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Let Jesus be praised,
 Praise Him for what He's done,
 And praise Him too for what *He is*,
 He in Himself alone.

Let Jesus Christ be praised,
 O praise His faithful love,
 God only knows the worth of Him,
 Whose constant grace we prove.

JEREMIAH II.

There is an impression arising in the soul from this chapter, and it is this, *first, love never cools in the heart of the Lord towards us.* He never forgets it, though as we know, we may and do towards Him. This chapter opens with the Lord telling Israel this:—"I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals."—Thus Israel was "holiness to the Lord, and the first fruits of His increase." Then all that would dare to devour *them* would offend Him. Such was then the mind of the Lord towards His elect one. She was precious to Him. This is the force of verse 2—His love to her, not hers to Him. He had chosen her for His own. He was a husband to her, and He hung over her in the freshness of the fervour of love. Had He changed? Was any iniquity to be found in Him? Had He become to Israel a wilderness, or a land of darkness? As in another Scripture He says, "Is my ear heavy that it cannot hear, or my hand shortened that it cannot save?" This is not so. He was "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." It was nothing less than a "fountain," and that of "living waters." Israel had been invited to drink of a spring whose waters never failed, but which were as fresh as ever for Israel's use.

This is the reasoning of the Lord in this striking chapter, with His people. They were now a home-born slave, they were now spoiled it is true—but

this is to be accounted for by everything rather than change in the Lord. He at that moment remembered the love of Israel's youth, and was ready to act in all fervency as well as devotedness—but Israel themselves would not. He was ever as a hen ready to gather under His wings—but they would not. This had been His constant way throughout, and at last the life and ministry of Jesus, after so long a time, is the witness of the same fresh, first love of Jehovah towards Israel, the witness of it, may I not say, in more than its earliest fervency. What affection, what self-devotedness, patience of love, what labours of love, what associations of love were expressed in it! Surely many waters could not quench it then. It was stronger than death. And we do not rightly regard the ministry of Jesus through the cities and villages of Israel without seeing this "great love" of her Lord in all its fervency and faithfulness.

Surely again it says, in the words of our Prophet, "I remember *thee*, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals." And again it tells us that there was that love of His ~~heart~~ still burning in the heart of Him who had espoused her to Himself. All this is happy both for poor saint and sinner. And this beautiful chapter from God's mind, gives us to know that the Lord never does, never can, forsake His object. He is "the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever." Love never faileth. If it abated in its ardour it would fail, as it would if it slackened in its toil or service. But love

never faileth, with the Lord it is ever warm and fresh, for He ever remembers the day of espousals. It was Israel that lost the honour of it. It was Israel that changed her God for that which was no God. Blessed to know it to be thus. Blessed to know the prospect of enjoying it for ever and ever. Our God is a "fountain," and that of "living waters." And though Israel has lost the fruit of all this by her departing from Him who had thus espoused her to Himself, because she trusted in her beauty, and went from Him, yet when He returns to her in the day of her repentance, it will be in this way of His first love. As in the kindness of her youth, as in the love of her espousals He will return and still prove that love never faileth to the very end, but holds to its first and blessed intent. All scripture verifies this. It was One that loves her with the love of Him who has chosen her for Himself that the Lord will return and take Jerusalem. Isaiah teaches us this, for speaking of Him he says, "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee."

So says the Lord of Israel by Hosea, "And it shall be at that day that thou shalt call me Ishi, and shall call me no more Baali." And Zephaniah tells Jerusalem "He will rejoice over thee with joy, He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing." Language which sweetly and fervently tells the heart with what affection the Lord will retake Zion to Himself. And Jeremiah is very bold and says, "they say if a man put away his

wife," etc., etc., yet "return again unto Me saith the Lord." This and far more than this which we might gather from Scripture, lets us know that not only up to the day of Jeremiah, not only up to the day of the ministry of Jesus, but even to the last when He takes the daughter of Zion to Him again, He will still be able to say, "I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of espousals." He remembers the affection, the fervour with which He at the first betrothed her to Himself,—and that in its earliest fervency He will win her and claim her and look on her again as His,—re-taking her to Himself in an everlasting covenant.

Happy truth! It is not merely that He is ever faithful to His object, but ever true to that affection in which He first took up His object. "Nothing changeth God's affection." Happy truth indeed! The fruit of it to us eternal and perfect joy.

FRAGMENT.

"And Christ's love rose beyond and above *every littleness and stupidity and failure of His disciples*. Do you seek to love each other *as He did*, in such a way that it will rise above every pettiness, every bitterness every hindrance, 'As Christ loved you?' Divine love is never thrown back and never changed by the unworthiness of its object; it is superior to everything. Like a stream whose banks may for some distance be smooth; but when they become crooked and rocky, the same stream runs on and on, unchanged in its *course* and in its *quality*; such is *His love*. 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, *as I have loved you*.'"

"I'LL HEAR THE TRUMP."

Lines written on hearing that an aged and paralysed Christian, who was afflicted with total deafness, was accustomed to say,
 "I'll hear the trump."—1 Thess. iv. 16.—18.

"I'll hear the trump," thus spake an aged saint,
 Whose ears against the human voice were closed,
 Who on her pilgrim journey, weak and faint,
 In faith upon the Word of God reposed,
 "I'll hear the trump,"—Yes, Sister, thou shalt hear,
 And hearing rise to meet thy Saviour dear.

Blessed assurance! though thy deafened ear
 Can listen to the song of birds no more,
 Though friendly voices can no longer cheer,
 And intercourse with others thus be o'er,
 Though paralyzed and deaf, cut off from all
 The world around, thou'lt hear the trumpet's call.

And, glorious truth! the day is hast'ning on
 When God's redeemed, from sin and suffering free,
 Dwelling in light before the Eternal throne,
 Shall, fully blest, their Lord and Saviour see,
 When at the shout, and voice, and trumpet blast,
 They'll soar aloft and reach their home at last.

Yes, soon that trump will sound—on wings of wind,
 Bearing us onward, time fleets fast away,
 Glory before thee, judgment dread behind,
 How gladly, Sister, wilt thou hail that day
 When thou, and all God's saints, the world around
 Shall hear—extatic thought! God's trumpet sound.

Hark! through the heaven it rings, its potent notes,
 Pierce the dull grave and bid the dead arise.
 Hark! o'er the world the sound mellifluous floats,
 Calling the saints to mansions in the skies.
 Hark! to the thrilling sounds! now shout for home,
 Ye joyful saints—shout, for the Lord is come.