

IF THINE EYE BE SINGLE, THY WHOLE
BODY SHALL BE FULL OF LIGHT.

IF a child has been habitually heedless of its father, and taken no pains to get acquainted with his thoughts and wishes, one can readily foresee that that child, in the presence of a difficulty, would be in no position to understand what would please its father. There are things God leaves in *generalities* for testing of *individual* condition of soul. Suppose, instead of the child thus referred to, the question to be one of a wife in relation to her husband; would not a wife, with the feelings and mind of a wife, be able in all probability, without a moment's hesitancy, to know what her husband would desire, and that even though he had never expressed a will on the subject?

Now you cannot escape this testing, and God, moreover, will not let his children escape it. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." As for an easy and comfortable way of knowing God's will, as one might have a receipt for this or that, there is no such thing; of knowing it I mean, without reference to our own state of soul.

Again, we are frequently of vastly too great importance in our own eyes, and deceive ourselves in supposing that there is a "will of God"

at all, in such or such a case. He may have nothing to say to us about it. The evil is in our having set ourselves to work. God's will may be that we should quietly take a less prominent place. Again, we are searching at times after "the will of God," desiring to know how to act in circumstances, when, *that we should not be found in them at all*, is His will; and when, were conscience in exercise, its first effect would be to make us *get out of them*. Our own will has placed us there; and yet we would enjoy the comfort of God's guidance in a *self-chosen path*. This is a very common case. We may rest assured that, if near enough to God, we shall not be at a loss to know His will.

"If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Hence it is certain, when the whole body is not full of light, the eye is not single. You will say, "a poor consolation that." I reply, "a rich one to those whose soul desire it is to have the eye single and to walk with God." Not, so to speak, to avoid the trouble of learning His will in an objective way, but whose desire it is *to walk with God*.

"If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." (John xi, 9-10.) We cannot get from under this moral

law of Christianity. "For this cause we also, since we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."

As to *circumstances*, I believe that a person may be led by them. Scripture has settled that but this is what it calls "being held by bit and bridle." (Ps. xxxii, 9.) "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eye." Such is the promise to, such the privilege of, him who has faith. He warns us against being "as the horse, or the mule" which have no understanding of the will, the thoughts, the desires of their master. They must be "kept in by bit and bridle." Without doubt, that even is better than stumbling, or falling, or jostling against Him who has us in charge, but it is a sorry condition to be in. And there we see what it is to be *directed by circumstances*. It is merciful on God's part to do it; but it is sad on ours to require it. There is absolutely nothing moral in it—that which influences is from without.

A person acting without the knowledge of God's mind is a case that ought to have no exist-

ence. The only rule that could be given is, never to act when we do not know the will of the Lord. Acting in ignorance of it, we are at the mercy of *circumstances*; God making all turn, nevertheless, to the good of His children. But why act when we do not know God's will? Is there at all times such an exceedingly pressing necessity for action?

In a word, the question is wholly moral. If a question presents itself, which, on first looking at, we are unable to determine, we shall very often find that there would be no such question at all, were our position not a false one, had we been previously in a good state of soul, had a genuine spirituality kept and preserved us. All we have to do in such a case is to *humble ourselves about the whole matter*. Then let us examine if *scripture* does not furnish us with some principle suited for our direction, and there it is evident, spirituality is the essential thing, is all.

If a thought is from God, and not of the flesh, we have only to look to God as to the manner and means of putting it in practice and we shall soon get guidance.

Let us remember that the *wisdom of God leads us in the path of the will of God*. If our wills are at work, God cannot accommodate himself to that. *This is the essential thing to*

discover. It is the secret of the life of Christ. I know not of any other principle on which God could act, though he pardons, and makes all turn to our good.

He guides the new man which has no other will than Christ. He mortifies the old, and in this way purges us that we may bear fruit. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O my God: I delight to do it."

It is the place of a doorkeeper to wait at the door, but in doing that he is doing his master's will.

LUKE 11, 49.

"**W**IST ye not that I must be about my Father's business."

Which of us could have said these words when we were twelve years old? His ways had been such that He would appeal to them as though they ought to have known from the tenor of His life what He was occupied with. Phil. iii shows how a man of like passions with ourselves may tread the same path, seeing and estimating the beauty of Christ. The effect was first, that he counted all else dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord; and secondly, having the death of the Lord as his substitute, and the resurrection of Christ as his

righteousness, he found that everything was against him. His position, like that of Christ Himself, he could say "Father." As a child his thought becomes, "I want to be like Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings." He had no bag with holes, like Judas, into which he could put the things of earth. They were but dung, and the whole world to him was a place savouring of the murder of Christ, and it produced in him a sort of nauseous disgust of the things in it.

The power of Nazariteship comes from the knowledge of association with Christ. Being crucified with Him, and raised up together with Him I would like to walk as He did in this world, to have the life he had when raised from the dead, manifested in my ways. How few have this as their aim and object! How few seek to track out Christ! What will produce it! If you and I could say "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" we should soon find ourselves in the fellowship of His sufferings. If I am a son, the Father has His business still to be done down here. Does it enter into our souls sitting round the table, when we commemorate the death of our Lord, that our Father has business to be done? By His spirit we can find out *what part of that business He puts on us*, and *let us do that*, letting self and the world clean go. The extent to which the simple faith

of that truth would bring our hearts into treading the same path as Christ trod, and give power to be occupied with the Father's business, is greater than we know. Christ has brought me—put me in the right place—I in one, you in another—where there is suffering or no suffering, but as he likes, and where there is his Father's business to be done.

Standing in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, conscious that His Father is our Father His God our God, and that we have the spirit of that blessed one at the right hand of God, the purpose of our hearts must be to mind the Father's business.

Have you purpose of heart? What is purpose of heart? The needle quivers restlessly till it has turned to the north; there is purpose there. "Whose service is perfect freedom" should be our word. What am I doing? Minding the Father's business for one thing. What is my confidence as to what lies before me? What would it be if I sought but the Father's will, if I had confidence in his wisdom, and desired nothing but His will? How could I fear, if I had no business but the Father's will?

**“YEA, HATH GOD SAID, YE SHALL NOT
EAT OF EVERY TREE OF THE
GARDEN” (GENESIS 3, 1.)**

This was Satan's crafty enquiry, and had the word of God been dwelling richly in Eve's heart, her answer might have been direct, simple and conclusive. The true way in which to meet Satan's questions and suggestions, is to treat them as his, and repel them by the word. To admit the question, "hath God said?" when I know God has spoken, is positive inidelity, and the very fact of my admitting it, proves my total incapacity to meet it. Hence in Eve's case, the form of her reply evidenced the fact that she admitted to her heart the serpent's crafty enquiry. Instead of adhering strictly to the exact words of God, she, in her reply, actually adds thereto.

Now either to add to or take from God's word proves, very clearly, that His word is not dwelling in my heart, or governing my conscience. If a man is finding his enjoyment in obedience, if it is his meat and his drink, if he is living by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of Jehovah, he will, assuredly, be acquainted with, and fully alive to, his word. He could not be indifferent to it. The Lord Jesus, in His conflict with Satan, accurately applied the word, because He lived upon it, and esteemed it more than His

necessary food. He could not misquote or misapply the word, neither could He be indifferent about it. Not so Eve. She added to the word of God. His command was simple enough, "Thou shalt not eat of it." To this Eve adds her own words, "Neither shall ye touch it." He had said nothing about touching, so that whether her misquotation was from ignorance or indifference, or a desire to represent God in an arbitrary light, or all three together, it is plain that she was entirely off the true ground of simple confidence in and subjection to God's Holy Word. "By the words of thy mouth I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer."

There is blessing in every act of obedience; but the moment the soul hesitates, the enemy has the advantage, and he will, assuredly, use it to thrust the soul further and further from God. Thus in the chapter before us, the question "Hath God said?" was followed by "Ye shall not surely die." That is to say, there is first the question raised, as to whether God had spoken, and then followed the open contradiction of what God had said. This solemn fact is abundantly sufficient to show how dangerous it is to admit near the heart a question as to divine revelation in its fulness and integrity. A refined rationalism is very near akin to bold infidelity; and the infidelity that dares to judge God's

word, is not far from the atheism that denies His existence. Eve never would have stood by to hear God contradicted, if she had not previously fallen into looseness and indifference as to His word. She too had her "Phases of Faith," or to speak more correctly, her phases of infidelity; she suffered God to be contradicted by a creature simply because His word had lost its proper authority over her heart, and her understanding.

But it is important to observe the mode in which the serpent sought to shake Eve's confidence in God's truth, and thus bring her under the power of infidel "reason." It was by shaking her confidence in God's love. He sought to shake her confidence in what God had said by showing that the testimony was not founded in love. "For," said he, "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, that your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil." In other words, "There is positive advantage connected with eating of that fruit of which God is seeking to deprive you, why, therefore, should you believe God's testimony? You cannot place confidence in one, who, manifestly, does not love you, for, if He loved you, why should He prohibit your enjoying a positive privilege?" Eve's security against the influence of all this reasoning would have been simple repose in the infinite goodness of God. She should

have said to the serpent, "I have the fullest confidence in God's goodness, and therefore I deem it impossible that He could withhold any real good from me. "Get thee behind me Satan." But this was not given. Her confidence in truth and love gave way and all was lost, and so we find that there is just as little place in the heart of fallen man for God's love, as there is for God's truth.

Now it is deeply interesting to turn from Satan's lie in reference to the truth and love of God, to the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, who came from the bosom of the Father in order to reveal what He really is. "Grace and truth"—the very things which man lost in the fall—came by Jesus Christ. (John i, 17.) "He was the faithful witness of what God was. (Rev. i, 5.) Truth reveals God as He is, but this truth is connected with the revelation of perfect grace; and thus the sinner finds to his unspeakable joy, that the revelation of what God is, instead of becoming his destruction becomes the basis of his eternal salvation. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." (John xvii, 3.) I cannot know God and not have life. The loss of the knowledge of God was death; but the knowledge of God is life. Let me arrive at what amount of self-

knowledge I may have, it is not said that "this is life eternal, to know ourselves"; though no doubt the knowledge of God and the knowledge of self will go together; still eternal life is connected with the former and not the latter.

Need we wonder, therefore, that Satan's grand design is to rob the creature of the true knowledge of God? He misrepresented the blessed God? He said He was not kind. This was the secret spring of all the mischief. The most refined and cultivated moralist, the most devout religionist, the most benevolent philanthropist, if ignorant of God, is as far from life and true holiness, as the publican and the harlot. The prodigal was just as much a sinner, and as positively away from the Father when he had crossed the threshold as when feeding swine in the far off country.

So in Eve's case. The moment she took herself out of the hands of God—out of the position of absolute dependence upon, and subjection to, His word, she abandoned herself to the government of sense, as used of Satan for her entire overthrow.

The sixth verse presents three things, namely, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," which three, as the apostle states, comprehend "all that is in the world." (1 John ii, 16.) These things necessarily take the

lead when God is shut out. If I do not abide in the happy assurance of God's love and truth, His grace and faithfulness, I shall surrender myself to the government of some one, or it may be all, of the above principles; and this is only another name for the government of Satan. There is strictly speaking no such thing as free will. If man be self-governed, he is really governed by Satan; and if not, he is governed by God.

Now the three great agencies by which Satan works are, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." These were the things presented by Satan to the Lord Jesus in the temptation. He began by tempting the second man to take himself out of the position of absolute dependence on God and subjection to His will. But all in vain. "It is written," was the unvarying reply of the only dependent, self-emptied, perfect man. Others might undertake to manage for themselves; none but God should manage for Him.

What an example to the faithful, under all their circumstances! Jesus kept close to the scriptures and thus conquered; without any other weapon, save the sword of the Spirit, He stood in the conflict and gained a glorious triumph. Blessed for ever be the God of all grace,

who has laid help on one so mighty to conquer—mighty to save!

May we learn, fellow-believer, to overcome in the same way.

THE COMING OF THE LORD.

IT will be a marvellous scene when Christ presents the church to Himself, when the last Adam takes that Bride of His to share His glory. Ah! not only that, but the oneness with Himself that characterizes us. What the heart feels is our being looked at as belonging to Himself—taken out of Himself—that the Father sees us not only in the relationship that links us up with the Son of His love in the glory, but in such a relationship that He could not do without us. He the Bridegroom, must have the Bride up there. And we know we shall be for His own self in the glory. One may see the earthly side now, but when we see Christ Himself it will be the heavenly side, it will be in the full unhindered energy of the Holy Ghost, having hearts responding to that blessed grace that brought us there. The first Adam was not alone, and the last Adam will not be so. He also will have His Bride. "The Spirit and the Bride say come." "Surely I come quickly." Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus.

An important thing comes out here, that not only should we have communion with His mind in all that meets us in the wilderness, but there is another sort of communion to be enjoyed—communion responsive to the desire of His heart. ‘Even so come Lord Jesus.’ The effect of the bright light shining down has been, that we have found that this earth would not do for our future course, and we know because we have it revealed, that He means to come and take us to heaven. This thought has given joy in persecution. But what is the thought of being in heaven compared with the thought of His coming to take us there? At times our hearts are drooping and we are “hardly bestead;” but what is anything we have to pass through here, if one has the consciousness of being able to respond to Him “Even so come Lord Jesus.” “Thou dost desire, Lord, to take up thy people, and most blessed it will to be up there.” Is the desire of the Lord Jesus to come which is put forth here, burning in my heart? If I know his desire to come, am I able to say, “Even so, come?” It is really having communion with that heart of His, where every thought is the Father’s will, and who has been waiting eighteen hundred years to come and take up the people given by the Father—He the Bridegroom, they the Bride.

It is an immense help to remember that the

Lord Jesus never forgets His coming. There is a fixedness of heart in Him to come and fetch the Bride home to the Father's house, and I can have sympathy with Him in that.

PHILIPPIANS.

IT has been often pointed out that in this Epistle there is more about "joy" and "rejoicing" than perhaps in any other. And yet the Apostle is in circumstances that would naturally produce care and anxiety instead of joy, when writing it. But if we look carefully into the four chapters that compose this letter, we shall find that there are *four great and important points* that tell the secret of this Christian man being not only happy himself in spite of circumstances, but able to exhort others to "rejoice in the Lord always." And yet Paul was a *man* of like passions as ourselves. The four points are these: In the 1st chap., verse 21, Paul says that "for me to live is Christ." In the 2nd chap., verses 5 to 9, he has what he exhorts others to have, "This mind that was in Christ Jesus. In the 3rd chap., verses 13, 14, 20 and 21, he had the coming of the Lord before his soul continually. In the 4th chap., verse 13, he had Christ before him as his strength.

A Christian who has thus Christ as his *object*, Christ as his *example*, Christ's coming as his *hope*, and Christ Himself as his *strength*, is and must be a happy soul. Reader, how is it with you and I?