

HIS BEAUTY.

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”—
1 John v. 21.

“The love of Christ constraineth us.”—2 Cor. v. 14.

Dost thou know the love of JESUS?

Then is thine a raptur'd heart ;

“Chief among ten thousand” own HIM,
Joyful choose the better part.

What has stripp'd the seeming beauty,
From the idols of the earth ?

Not the sense of right or duty,
But the sight of *peerless worth*.

Not the crushing of those idols,
With its bitter void and smart,
But the *beaming* of His *beauty*,
The *unveiling* of His *heart*.

'Tis that look that melted Peter,
'Tis that face that Stephen saw,
'Tis that heart that wept with Mary,
Can alone from idols draw.

Draw, and win, and *fill completely*,
Till the cup o'erflow the brim ;
What have we to do with idols,
Who have companied with HIM ?

“One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will
I seek after ; that I may dwell in the house of the
Lord all the days of my life, *to behold the beauty of
the Lord*, and to enquire in His temple.”—Ps.
xxvii. 4.

THE FULL IMPORT OF CONVERSION.

I THESSALONIANS I. 9, 10.

It should ever be borne in mind that the Lord Himself must be the centre in testimony, however blessed it is to put forth the gospel of God's grace. Here, in Thessalonica, these souls were brought out to serve the living and true God. The whole man turned to God—a totally new state from beginning to end; not merely getting relief to conscience, but God Himself in Christ become the object before the soul. This is the full import of conversion, as we get it in I Thessalonians i. 9, 10—a man being turned round to God; there is repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

When you believe, you get an entirely new life and you judge the past—you repent because you believe; it all comes together, like the prodigal when he turned to his father's house, there is a totally new life, state, and object. "They who are after the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit," etc. (Rom. viii. 5); and "Our conversation is in heaven," etc. (Phil. iii. 20), is the doctrinal statement of this. You must get such a knowledge of self as to get rid of it. If you faithfully said, "I am dead," Satan could not tempt you. You may not always be able to do this, but it is yours to say, as one "born of water and of the Spirit." The water cleanses, but being born of the Spirit gives a new position and a new life.

We know we are born of God—that eternal life that was with the Father is my life, and that is Christ ; He has become my life. The Lord breathing on the disciples was not the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. When Christ ascended to heaven, He received the Holy Ghost afresh for us. He had it before, but He received it for us when He went up on high. It is through the second Man, gone into glory, after having put away our sins, that we get the Spirit. God comes down to us in our sins as Man, and as Man He goes up, and receives the Holy Ghost for us. Man in Christ takes a new place in resurrection. The work of Christ on the cross clears the conscience ; then Christ Himself becomes our life. This is a totally new state—a new creation.

The first thing needed, is to have the question of sin settled, and to know that all our sins were borne by Christ, and put away. If you charge me with my sins, God declares that the blood that cleansed me is always under His eye ; He *cannot* impute my sins to me, their imputation was to Christ. It is what God sees that clears me, not that I have accepted Christ, but that God has. What gives *peace* is, that the work of Christ has perfectly settled the question of sin.

Practically, if I sin, not only am I miserably failing, but I am doing the thing that caused Christ's agony, but if it did that, it cannot be imputed to me. We have the teaching connected with our practical state in the type of the red

heifer (Num. xix.) The ashes—sin consumed on the cross—with the running water, were sprinkled on the unclean person. The ashes are applied to the soul in testimony of the whole thing having been consumed—sin put away. If I indulge a foolish thought even, the Holy Spirit is grieved, and I am uncomfortable ; but I cannot judge myself for sin, unless I am certain that it is not imputed. The answer to everything is the work done on the cross. That work sets us in the presence of God, in the light, without a stain, our sin having been laid on Christ, according to God's knowledge of it.

Nothing tests the heart so much as realizing that "the worshipper once purged, has no more conscience of sins" (Heb. x. 2.) There can be no real or right sanctification till a man is clear about sin. Until I know my perfect acceptance, and am perfectly assured of salvation, through all sin being gone, I am mingling up my state with my standing. The holy nature is there, but there can be no proper sanctification till I see that Christ has not borne my sins up to such a day, but that *all* my sins are gone ; and, besides that, I have a perfect acceptance in Christ.

There are three things : peace as to sins ; present grace ; and glory to come (Rom. v. 1, 2). Not merely no condemnation as in Christ Jesus, all sin having been cleared away, but a position—a new place in Christ Himself—is ours. All, as to the first Adam, was settled on the cross, and I have a new place

in Christ, and I am called to walk now as Christ walked (1 John ii. 6), but, also, I am to be conformed to God's Son in glory (Rom. viii. 29; see also 1 Cor. xv. 49). I am to walk as Christ walked, not to be as Christ was. He was without sin in Him, we have sin *in* us, but sin in our *walk* is never to be allowed. (1 John ii. 1.)

"We all, with open face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. iii. 18). Not only are my sins cleared away, but I see a Man gone into glory, and now, not only I would not sin, but I want to be like that Christ in glory—I press on towards the mark. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself even as He is pure" (1 John iii. 2, 3). I see Christ in glory, by faith, now; I know I am to be like Him by-and-by, and I want to be as like Him as ever I can be, even now. It is like a light at the end of a tunnel, the nearer I get, the brighter the light. I see the flesh in me never changes, only appears worse and worse; but if my eye is fixed on Christ, and my mind is occupied with, and full of, Him, I shall get more like Him at every step—"changed into the same image from glory to glory."

There must be nothing in the heart or walk not like Christ—all must be given up to Him; and, as

to walk, I am to walk as Christ did. The account we get of the flesh is lawlessness, before the flood; then, under law it makes a golden calf; then, Christ, come in grace, is rejected and crucified; then, the Holy Ghost is rejected through Stephen; and lastly, if a man goes into the third heaven, as soon as he comes down, the flesh must have a thorn (2 Cor. xii). There is no changing it, but that is no reason why we should let it act; there is no present consciousness that the flesh is acting at all, if the soul is full of Christ. I am not thinking of it if I am thinking of Christ, I reckon the flesh dead. If a man is dead, you cannot charge him with a wicked will and lusts. Not only Christ was crucified, but I have been crucified with Him. (Rom. vi. 6; Gal. ii. 20.) I have always that death of the cross to bring in, and I have Christ as my life—"If we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with Him." I get the power of Christ acting in me with this new life. The sin I find in my flesh was put to death in Christ, and I have done with it. But another point, I get Christ as the object of my life—"The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

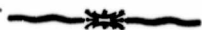
You find many who know their sins are forgiven, yet who do not know what it is to have been crucified with Christ. You can never get rid of self till you know this. In Romans vii. the soul is quickened, but not delivered; it is under the first husband, renewed, because of knowing the spiritu-

ality of the law, but it is learning that it has no strength. It is harder to learn that you have no strength, than that you are ungodly. The last stage is, "I thank my God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." This is deliverance. The moment Christ comes in there is power, but I must learn my weakness; not a balance between flesh and Spirit. God, having condemned sin in the flesh, on the cross (Rom. viii. 3), I am dead to it. If I am told of a fine concert, or anything else, I say, "I am dead to it." A gardener has no idea of pruning a crab-apple tree; he cuts it down, and grafts with a new thing altogether.

People do not recognize the fact of their having died with Christ (Rom. vi. 8; Col. ii. 20), as well as of Christ having died for them. Many a quickened soul does not know the full value of the work of Christ, and that "as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John iv. 17). When the blood was on the lintels and door-posts the Israelites were safe, but when they came to the Red Sea, and were told to stand still, and see "the salvation of God" (Ex. xiv. 13; read also vs. 30, 31), there was positive deliverance—they were taken out of one place and put into another.

My standing is, that I am not in the flesh, but in the Spirit: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom viii. 9)—is not in a right standing at all. "Ye in me, and I in you" (John xiv. 20), that is where I get my standing in Christ before God.

The way the Thessalonians lived, as to testimony, was most blessed. One can never present it by *trying* to do it. If my heart be full of Christ, I shall not merely be avoiding evil, but, as Paul prays in connection with the Philippians, desiring to be filled with the fruits of righteousness; and, having got God's mind, I shall yield my body as a living sacrifice to Him. Paul did but one thing; he ran after Christ in glory. This is what conversion really is—Christ *everything* to the soul.



FRAGMENT ON SERVICE.—“Those who fight the Lord's battles must be contented to be in no respect accounted of; they must expect to be in no respect encouraged by the prospect of *human* praise. And if you make an exception, ‘that the children of God will praise you, whatever the world may say,’ beware of this, for you may turn them into a world, and find in them a world, and may sow to the flesh in sowing to their approbation; and you neither will be benefited by them nor they by you, so long as respect for them is your motive. All such motives are a poison and a taking away from you the strength in which you are to give glory to God. It is not the fact, that all that see the face of the Lord do see each other. It is not the fact, that the misapprehension of the world is the only misapprehension the Christian must be contented to labour under. He must expect even his brethren to see him

through a mist, and to be disappointed of their sympathy and their cheers of approbation ; *the man of God must walk alone with God, he must be contented that the Lord knoweth.* And it is such a relief, yea, it is such a relief to the natural man with us, to fall back upon human countenances, and human thoughts and sympathy, that we often deceive ourselves, and think it 'brotherly love,' when we are just resting in the early sympathy of some fellow-worm. You are to be followers of Him who was left alone, and you are, like Him, to rejoice you are not alone, *because the Father is with you*, that you may give glory to God. Oh ! I cannot but speak of it. It is such a glory to God to see a soul that has been accessible to the praise of men, surrounded by hundreds and thousands of his fellow-creatures, every one of whom he knows how to please, and yet that he should be contented, yea, pleased and happy, in doing, with a single reference to God, that which he knows they will all misunderstand. Here was the victory of Jesus—there was not a single heart that beat in sympathy with His heart, or entered into His bitter sorrow, or bore His grief in the hour of His bitter grief ; but His way was with the Lord—His judgment was with His God—His Father—who said, 'There is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' This was the perfect glory given to the Father by the Son, that *in flesh and blood* such a trust in God was manifested ; and that is what you are called to, and you are

not called to it as He was, but you are called to see God in Him. God has come near to you in Christ, and here you have a human heart—a perfect sympathy—the heart of God in your nature, and to this you are ever carried. And if there be any other sympathy with you in the wide universe, whether on the sea of glass, or still on this earth, it is only as the *pulsation of the blood that flows from Christ—to His members—that it is to you of any account*. Feed upon it, and remember you are thus to walk in the world not hanging one upon another.”



“No direction to leave any of the Seven Churches,” says some one. There is no individual direction to do anything in them but to “listen,” I reply. What we get in them is what *Christ* will do, not what *I* am to do; that I get elsewhere. I don’t want to be spued out of Christ’s mouth. Do you?



MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 154.)

Gideon.

(Chap. vi-viii.)

The word of God reaching the conscience.

(vi. 1-10.)

In spite of all the blessings enumerated in chap. v, Israel very soon relapsed into evil ways and for-

sook Jehovah. By way of chastisement for this unfaithfulness, God delivered them into the hands of the Midianites. The people passed through all the phases of misery (material for them—moral for the church) which invariably follow going after the world and forsaking God. Under Jabin, Israel was without arms (chap. v. 8) ; under the yoke of Midian he was famished—the consequence of our unfaithfulness, from which we always suffer when we seek our portion with the world. It drags us down and takes away our arms, our strength leaves us, and we lose every means of withstanding ; not only so, but the very sources of existence are also lacking, for the world never affords nourishment to any one, and we perceive it by the barrenness which invades the soul, when, in our folly, we leave the marrow and fatness of the house of God for the harvests which are merely a mirage of the desert. This was the experience of Israel ; Midian “ left no sustenance ” for him (ver. 4).

Then in his misery Israel cried unto Jehovah. He responded, and wrought a fresh revival, in which He sought to probe, more deeply than in the past, the conscience of this poor people. It is interesting to see the way the Lord took to bring about this result. “ Jehovah sent a prophet unto the children of Israel.” His name is not given, nor does it matter, for this man was simply the bearer of the word of God, in order to bring the people into His presence. God has a means by

which to bless us : His word, which meets every requirement and ought to be quite sufficient for us. Ps. 119 shows us the marvellous part the word plays in the life of the faithful. This psalm exceeds all the others in length. The word of God ought to occupy a corresponding place in our lives. Do we appreciate its value ? Does it fill up our days and nights—our thoughts, more or less, when we have not time to sit down and meditate upon it ?

God applied, in a way full of grace (vs. 8-10), this word to the conscience of the Israelites, telling them all that He had done for them ; how He had led them out, given them deliverance and victory, and brought them in ; and, having unfolded before them all His goodness, He adds one word : " But ye have not obeyed My voice." Not a word as to *how* they might be delivered ; He did not yet open the way for their return to Him. The prophet disappeared, leaving them under the weight of their responsibility in the presence of grace. God had borne them in His arms and upon His heart ; He had been to them a cloud of fire and of darkness (Ex. xiii. 21, 22 ; xiv. 20) ; He had fought for them. Have I failed, said He, in any respect towards you ; but what have you done ? This silence was calculated to touch their conscience far more than any reproaches. They were impressed, if not convicted ; but the word of grace did not yet give to the unfaithful people what they needed. Israel continued powerless before the enemy.

Gideon prepared for service.

(vi. 11-40.)

The remainder of this chapter shows us how God wrought in order to raise up a servant in those times of ruin, and to fit a powerful instrument for carrying out His work of deliverance.

Before entering upon our subject, we would press a truth of general application. When the people of God, as such, have lost all power, it can still be found by the soul individually in quite as great and marvellous a measure as in the times of Israel's greatest prosperity. If this is true, how ardently should our hearts desire to possess this power! Are we among those who, settled down in their weakness, put themselves on a level with their surroundings, and accept the worldliness of the family of God as an inevitable or necessary state of things? Or, have we rather the ears of Gideon when God says to us: There is unlimited power at thy disposal.

We will now go on to the history of this man of God. Personally, he was even weaker than his people; without confidence before the enemy, for he "threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites" (ver. 11); without resources among his relations, for his family was the poorest in Manasseh; without power in himself, for he was the least in his father's house (ver. 15). Such was the man that God visited and chose as servant—a man who realized his utter weakness, and who said: "O, my Lord, where-

with shall I save Israel?" When it is a question of the work of God in this world, we then find a first great principle, it is, that God does not ask in any case what man can offer Him. The instruments He takes up to glorify Himself by, are those that are weak, and who are conscious of their weakness (1 Cor. i. 27-29; 2 Cor. .xii. 9, 10).

But there is another principle of the greatest importance: this work requires that all be of God. Gideon was already a believer, before the angel of Jehovah sat under the oak. Whatever he had yet to learn, he believed the word of God, which had been transmitted to him by his forefathers (ver. 13). Moreover, he identified himself with the people of God: "If Jehovah be with us"—"Jehovah hath forsaken us," he says. He did not follow the course of Heber, he endured with the Israelites the consequences of their wrong-doing. Respect for His word and affection for His people are two signs of divine life at all times, and appertain to all the faithful. Gideon had, however, much to learn. His faith was very feeble, for he did not count on the goodness of God. Humble, doubtless, but looking at himself, he formed a conclusion what God ought to be to him, from what he was. "Now," said he, "Jehovah has forsaken us." The situation is hopeless, for it is the consequence of our unfaithfulness. Thus reasoned Gideon, but did God reason thus? "Jehovah is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." Ah! how little did he know what was in the heart of God, and

how many there are that reason like Gideon. Moreover, notwithstanding his humility, there had not yet been true judgment of self. He wished to offer something, to "bring forth his present" to Jehovah (ver. 18). It was, doubtless, not with the intention of doing some great thing for God, but with the thought that all would be well if God accepted his present. We will see the answer of Jehovah, but first let us go back to the principle enunciated above; that, in the work of the deliverance of His people, God is alone upon the scene (see Ex. xiv. 13, 14; 2 Chron. xx. 12-18). In the first place, "the angel of Jehovah appeared unto him." Like Saul on the way to Damascus—it is God who commences by revealing Himself to the soul of every one of His servants, in the person of Jesus. Secondly, Jehovah revealed Himself to Gideon as associated with him: "Jehovah is with thee." Thirdly, it was He who gave Gideon a character—"thou mighty man of valour"—a character which Gideon himself, in his weakness, would never have dreamed of obtaining. Fourthly, "Jehovah looked upon him" in grace, in order to reveal Himself, not only *to Him* but *in Him*, as the God of power. If Gideon had no strength, Jehovah had it for him; it is the secret which He made known to him, for He said: "this *thy* might." Fifthly, it was He who sent him: "*Go* in this thy might." So was Paul, the servant of God, sent: "not of men, neither by man" (Gal. i. 1).

Finally, God gave him the proof of the interest

He had in him. We have already seen that Gideon wished to offer something to Jehovah, but He can accept nothing from man *as such*. "Take," said he, "the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth" (ver. 20). The only offering which God can accept, is Christ. If He did not receive what Gideon offered Him, He accepted that which represented Christ in it. This man of God had a very imperfect understanding of the value of the sacrifices, which Jehovah had commanded to the children of Israel; "the broth in the pot" was a witness of his ignorance. But God discerned what was real, underlying this feeble faith, and accepted the offering when Gideon laid it "upon the rock." The fire of judgment rose up out of the rock, consuming the flesh and the unleavened cakes. The proof of the interest which God had for him was, in figure, the judgment fallen upon Christ.

It was still necessary that the servant should learn the value of this work for himself. At first he was filled with fear. "Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of Jehovah face to face." But "Jehovah said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not; thou shalt not die." The consequence of the fire of judgment having consumed the offering, was *peace* for Gideon. To be a servant of God, one must have received for oneself the knowledge of the work of Christ, and the peace which flows therefrom; the assurance of peace having been made, by virtue of what has passed

between God and Christ; the assurance of what God and not Gideon thought of the sacrifice. Such is the foundation of all Christian service (alas! how much it has been forgotten), for, if we have not peace ourselves, how can we proclaim it to others?

The first result of what Gideon had just learned was not to press him into service (another fact completely lost sight of by Christians of our day), but to make him a worshipper. "Then Gideon built an altar there unto Jehovah, and called it Jehovah-shalom" (the God of Peace). The believer should enter the presence of God as a worshipper, before engaging in service. The word illustrates this fact in a multitude of cases—that of Abraham, and the man born blind, among others. Gideon praised the God of peace, and could thenceforth offer upon the altar of worship a sacrifice which Jehovah accepted.

It was only *after the altar of worship* was set up that God called Gideon as a servant to bear public testimony, and this began in his father's house. It consisted in destroying "the altar of Baal, and the grove that is by it," and substituting for these the *altar of testimony*—the altar of the God whom Gideon knew. The positive duty of one who would be a testimony for God is, before all else, to cast down his idols. Why is it that there are so few true servants among Christians, walking in the power of a testimony for Christ? It is because they have not the *two* altars. And why have

they not the second? Because they have not provided themselves wood for the sacrifice. *The idols are the wood* (ver. 26). Let us overthrow them, let nothing of them remain. Let us begin in the innermost circle of the family. If we do not do this, where will our testimony be? The overthrowing of the idols is the secret of power; the Spirit of Jehovah only came upon Gideon when he had accomplished this act. We have not now, as he, Baals of stone, and groves of wood, but we have many other idols; and, little like him, we often prefer them to the power of a faithful walk with God. Gideon obeyed unhesitatingly, without compromise or reservation. For him the idols were nothing compared with the God he knew. This "mighty man of valour" had been wanting in courage. Fear of the enemy (ver. 11), afraid of God (ver. 23), fear of his father's house (ver. 27), were some of his characteristics. He did his work at night, fearing to do it by day; he did it, nevertheless, for God had so commanded him. It was only in the morning that the people of the city saw what had been done. He who knew the character of Gideon had not said to him: Do this work by day. Let us, too, feeble as we are, destroy our idols in silence, when no eye observes us. Let us not speak too loudly of the matter; let us accomplish this difficult work with fear and trembling, looking to God only, in the silence of the night. The world will soon perceive that we have a new altar which it knows

not, and that the grove has no value for us except as wood to be burned. Then the world, which has hitherto sustained us, will hate us. It was the altar of testimony which drew upon Gideon the animosity of all. Hated, but what did it matter, for he received the name of Jerubbaal (let Baal plead), and became in presence of all, the personal witness of the worthlessness of the things he had formerly worshipped.

The effect of Gideon's testimony was to convince his father of the nothingness of Baal. The faith of the father was less than that of the son. Gideon destroyed Baal because he knew God; Joash received God because he no longer acknowledged Baal. It was very little, but it was something.

Brethren, are we witnesses before the world of the folly of all that it finds its interest in? If we have not maintained the altar of Baal, possibly we have not destroyed "the grove that is by it." Unqualified obedience to the word of God, is the path of power. At certain periods of our lives power has characterized our service, at others it has been lacking. Let us then ask ourselves if we have not rebuilt some idol that we had destroyed. All public service for the Christian must begin by faithfulness in the little circle in which he is called to move.

Gideon proved at first the hostility of those who bore the name of people of God, a hostility which was restrained for the time by the sincerity of his

testimony. Midian and Amalek (ver. 33), however, were not thus restrained. If, in their folly, the people of the city sought to hinder their own deliverance, the world made a determined effort to suppress the revival which was to release Israel from bondage.

Up to this time Gideon had only performed an act of obedience; now the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him. His first act of power was to sound the trumpet, assembling the tribes together after him. The strength of Israel was in their gathering together, it was that which Satan and the world most feared.

Gideon, notwithstanding his strength, did not manifest much confidence in God. He asked for signs to know if Jehovah would save the people by his hand. All God's orders to Gideon were clear and simple, but when Gideon asked for signs of God, all became obscure and complicated. We can hardly understand what his thought was. It may be that the fleece represented Israel, blessed of God, when dryness rested upon the nations, and *vice versa*, for having proved God, Gideon put Him to a counterproof. What poor faith! What feeble confidence in Him! But the God of grace patiently did what His servant required. He wished to deliver His people. He wished, by all means, to sustain the feeble heart of His witness, in order to enlist him in His service and to make him an instrument for His glory.

(To be continued, D, V.)