

WORK FOR THE LORD.

Now, as to work for the Lord. The simple inquiry, and recorded as the first utterances of Paul to our Lord, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" is the duty and expression of every one distinctly awakened to the claim Christ has on him. This inquiry cannot be too earnestly instituted, or the reply to it too rigidly attended to. The inquiry is the offspring of a soul sensible that the Lord has entire and full claim on me, without the knowledge which authorises it. The soul feels "I am taken out of the world, and I am given to Christ, and hence I look to Him for my place and occupation *in future in it.*" If we are given to Christ "out of the world," it is evident that it is He *alone* who has right to determine our way and course *in the world.*

I could not say, if I believe that I am given to Him "out of the world," that I have any right to re-occupy any place or engagement which I had previously held in the world. True, He does not require or permit me to infringe on any legal lord under whom I was held before I was given to Him—but, excepting where the rights of others would be compromised, I am Christ's bondsman—vested legal rights are not to be compromised because of my being given to Christ: but I am Christ's bondsman, and necessarily if I am, both from duty and inclination, my inquiry ought to be "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" The more I own and

realize the relationship which now exists through grace between us, the more simply and continuously will this be my whole-hearted cry to Him. Now, if it is, I will, of course, accede to and attend to whatever He may intimate to me, and this only. That is, the heart true to Him, and devotedly making this request, will *wait* on Him for guidance and counsel, and would find no real satisfaction in being anywhere or doing anything which was not according to His mind; our place and our occupation here would be only determined by the pleasure of Him whose we are and whom we serve; any departure from the tie or rule of this relationship would sensibly interfere with the mutual satisfaction therein known, there would be a break in on, and a disturbance of the true order of life, and the blessings connected with it.

Nothing so simple and nothing so important in our walk down here! I belong to Christ, and I find it my happiness and His pleasure to do nothing but as He desires and instructs me. *I live where He likes, and I do what He likes.* If we did this there would be no mistakes one side or the other. But we do make mistakes on both sides; on one side at one time, and on another side at another time. At one we *plan* out work for ourselves, and at another we do none at all. Now the first is the most difficult to deal with, simply because the counterfeit deceives one, and hence, while it is comparatively easy to convict the idle and slothful, it is not so easy to convict the Martha that she is

unwisely occupied. The work seems so right and necessary, that it appears almost impossible that there could be any plan in it. Nothing so deceives and leads astray as the conscience working at a distance from Christ; for instance, if I feel in my conscience that I ought to be Christ's servant (true enough I am His bondsman), but if I am not near Him, if I am not in His confidence, and I begin to do something to satisfy my conscience, there is no doubt I am doing it legally, and not as simply suits Him. It is to make *myself* easy and satisfied. When this is the case I do not consult what *He* would like me to do, but *I* do what *I* think best to be done. It is not His pleasure guides me, it is my own mind, as to what is suitable and proper. It may be quite necessary, as Martha's service, but Martha was evidently thinking of the services which were incumbent on her to render, and not governed by the pleasure of Christ.

Here is where we fail, undertaking to serve where it is in a degree creditable to ourselves, or we get disappointed (if we are true-hearted) because we have not the acknowledgment of His pleasure. How can He acknowledge what we have undertaken and done to satisfy our own conscience and to please ourselves therein? It is evident that when I am occupied with services, however useful and necessary, which I have undertaken of myself, feeling they devolved upon me, that I must lose the sense of His presence. Sitting at His feet, Mary-like, is lost and neglected. There is no growth of

soul in Christ. Self is in the service from beginning to end. It is most blessed to work for Christ, it is fruit-bearing; but if my work engrosses me more than Christ, there is damage to me, and I am not working for Him; "Without Me ye can do nothing." If I am really working for Christ, I am getting from Christ, and growing up into Him. Sitting at His feet is the natural posture of my soul. Whenever you find any one serving without sitting at His feet, you may be assured they are Martha-like. When any are sitting at His feet, hearing His word, they will not be behind in true and pleasing service. If you begin with serving (as many do now-a-days), you will never sit at His feet, whereas if you begin with sitting, you will soon serve wisely, well, and acceptably. The serving quiets the conscience, and the sitting is overlooked and neglected. The enemy gains an advantage, for it is at the sitting the conscience is more enlightened, and the pleasure and mind of the Master are better known; and hence there is damage done, and loss sustained by the soul when service pre-occupies one to the exclusion of sitting at His feet, or where it is *most* prominent.

I never met with any one making service prominent who knew what it was to sit at His feet; but, thank God, I know indefatigable workers who enjoy sitting at His feet above any service, and it is clear that they who sit most at His feet must be most competent to serve, and most in His confidence which, after all, is *the clue* to all efficient service.

FRAGMENTS.

How emphatically Christ is *the truth*. Not His work merely, but *Himself*—His own blessed self. We speak of the preciousness of His blood, and of all He has done for us, [and right, all right to do so Ed.], but after all we must have Himself—we cannot do without Himself. Oh! to be clear of the horrid selfish Christianity which covets the benefit of His work, but has little or no heart for Himself. What would heaven be without Christ? and where would be our happiness if He were not there, the sum, the substance, the crown of it all?

A true affection for Himself will make us true to Him, and bring us on cheerfully, and decidedly, and unflinchingly, in the path of *obedience*. Obedience! that is the thing so much wanted, and so much needed in these degenerate days.

Let us be assured of this, *the time is short*, “He that shall come will come.” Oh! to hear the sweet word: “Well done,” from His own gracious lips, who was ever tender yet *ever faithful* too.

Beloved children of God, let us seek to know Himself—go after, and with purpose of heart, get to know intimately, the One who loved us and gave Himself for us, and to whom the Father has given us, to whom we belong. Him who says “seek and ye shall find,” and who “satisfieth the longing soul.” May God in His infinite grace awaken or

revive, (and sustain where it is) this desire in all our hearts with power.

Be Thou the object bright and fair
 To fill and satisfy the heart :
 My hope to meet Thee in the air
 And nevermore from Thee to part
 That I may undistracted be
 To follow, serve, and wait for Thee.

PART OF A LETTER ON CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD IN DRESS.

We must cordially agree with you in deploring the sad conformity to the world as exhibited in the dress of many professing Christians. It is most sad, and evidences but too plainly the bent of the heart, the tone of the mind, and the moral condition of the soul. We are often deeply pained in looking round at assemblies of Christians gathered for the purpose of showing forth the Lord's death, to mark the style of dress, the fashionable appearance, so unlike what one would expect to find on the persons of those who profess to be dead to the world.

It is not, we may truly say, that we desire to see Christians adopting a certain costume or livery ; or that we should like to see them slovenly in appearance. Far from it ; we love neatness and simplicity—"modest apparel"—moderate, suitable attire. It may perhaps be said that many take their place in the Christian assembly who have been accustomed all their lives to dress elegantly and they never think of such things. This we can quite

understand, and make allowance for; but at the same time, we feel called upon to offer a word of warning to Christians on the subject of *conformity to the world in dress and other things*. It is a subject which demands serious attention. We believe that where the heart is true to the Lord, the word of exhortation will be received and acted upon; the Lord knows we offer it in love. May He act on the hearts and consciences of His people by His word and Spirit, and give them to carry themselves aright in these things, that His name may be glorified in the deportment, walk, and appearance of His people.

“I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God, that ye be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.”—Romans xii. 1, 2.

Oh! the importance of being faithful in the “little,” for he that is faithful in the little is faithful also in much.

Oh! the happiness of “abiding” in Christ, being near to Him! Oh, the misery of distance and estrangement!

The more intimate I become with Him, the more sensitive to anything that comes between Him and my soul, even to a hair's breadth.

The finer the machinery, the more easily is it disturbed in its action: a single hair will suffice to obstruct the action of a watch. So the closer, and

finer, and purer my relations with the Lord, the more intolerable is anything that can interfere with my enjoyment of those relations. But, blessed be His name, He is ever ready to receive, to restore, to "heal" and to "lead;" He is the one magnet of unfailling attraction to which His own ever turn—my own only "refuge and portion."

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MIXED MARRIAGES AND THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

[The following remarks were made on a particularly solemn instance, where a young sister (converted in 1853) fell into the snare of accepting an offer of marriage made by a worldly man.

This she had tried to conceal from the assembly of Christians where she lived; but a delay, which arose out of seemingly accidental circumstances, gave occasion to a brother's discovering her intention and warning her solemnly. She owned the wrong, but persisted; left for a relative's, where she sickened of a violent fever, which from the first she owned to be the chastening of the Lord, and died after three days, His word having penetrated and brought her not only to entire self-judgment, but fulness of joy. The details for various reasons are omitted.]

The preceding history relates, in all Christian simplicity, facts which show how God can interfere in judgment to deliver His children from the sad spiritual consequences which flow from a want of faithfulness. A young Christian allowed herself to be drawn into accepting an offer of marriage with an unconverted man. Her conscience plainly showed her that she was acting against the will of

God. But she did not know how to stop at the first step, and not having at once rejected, as unfaithfulness and sin, the thought of that which was offered to her, she had not afterwards the strength to give it up; and God was forced to take her away from this world to keep her from a sin which she did not desire to commit, but which she had not the strength to resist. Oh, how difficult it is to stop, when once we have set out in such a road!

Anyone who has closely observed the walk of Christians, and who has cared for souls with a heart in any little measure zealous for the glory of the Lord, and desirous for the spiritual welfare of the dear children of God, will not have failed to perceive the fatal influence that the world exercises over them when it gains an entrance into their hearts. God only knows, and the one who has suffered from it, by what subtle means, and under what an amiable guise the world often invades the heart of the Christian. But the manifestation of Christ to the soul, and the power of His presence, are never ways by which the world insinuates itself into the heart. Those therefore, who are found, by grace, near Christ, are shielded from the influence of such feelings, and can judge them and everything that tends to make a way for the world within the heart, or for desires which are connected with the world.

Here we are in warfare with the enemy. He seeks to surprise us when we are not upon our guard; and in order to accomplish this, he knows

even how to transform himself into an angel of light. If we are not near to Christ, and are not clothed with the whole armour of God, it is impossible to resist his devices. To resist the power of Satan is not the principal difficulty, for Christ has conquered for us this terrible enemy, but it is to discover the snares which he lays for us, and, above all to discover that it is himself who is at work.

In our combats with the enemy, it becomes a question of knowing the state of our own hearts. The single eye (that is to say, the heart filled with Christ), discovers the wile, and the soul has recourse to the Saviour for deliverance: or even its affections being fixed upon Christ, the heart presents no prize for the efforts of the enemy. A heart that is simple and occupied with the Lord escapes many things which trouble the peace of those who are not near Him. Thanks be to God the troubled and tormented soul finds a resource and complete restoration in the grace of the One whom it has so foolishly forgotten; but it enjoys the fruits of grace through many sorrows and exercises of heart. Yet let us take courage. He knows how to deliver, as well as to have compassion. Now these are the two principles which regulate the ways of God with regard to us. On the one hand, God keeps the heart to cause it to discern His own purpose; and on the other, Christ intercedes for us with respect to all that may be called infirmity. There are real difficulties along the way, and there is weakness in us, and alas! a will which does not

like to be bridled, and which betrays itself in a thousand forms of thought and deed.

Our weaknesses, like our will, tend to hinder us from reaching the end of our journey; but there is a great difference in the way in which God acts with regard to our weaknesses, and with regard to our will, and the thoughts which flow from it.

“The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” God judges our thoughts and our intentions by His Word. Nothing escapes Him; He is faithful towards us—His word is in the heart like an eye from which nothing is concealed: all is naked and open to the eye of Him with whom we have to do. Do you hear that, foolish soul, that would desire to feed upon the illusions that you love? Nothing is hidden; not one of your thoughts or intentions is hidden from the eyes of Him with whom you have to do. Nor is that all. His word is simple, plain and clear: it speaks to the conscience, do you hear it? Do you know that when God speaks you have to do with Him who speaks, as well as with what He says? Will you resist Him who speaks and provoke Him to jealousy? You cannot escape Him: He has already hold over your conscience, and He will never give it up.

Will you kick against the pricks? But think rather of the end that God has in view. He might

have left you to yourself; He might have left you to fall into things which, if His grace interfere not, may render the whole of the wilderness journey sad and humiliating to you. He might have said to you what He said to His beloved servant, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." (Hosea iv. 17.) Terrible punishment! Harder than the most severe outward chastening! But our God will not deprive us of the light of His countenance and the sweetness of His communion. For God does not chasten willingly; it is a strange work for Him as He says, (Is. xxviii. 21.) But sin is always sin in His eyes and He cannot allow it.

How then does God work in our poor hearts? He reaches them by His word, in order that our conscience may see everything as He sees it Himself. His eye is upon us, upon our hearts, and the eye of our conscience is enlightened as to what is passing in the heart by that word which reveals God to it.

(To be continued, D. V.)

**LETTER TO A YOUNG SISTER IN REPLY
TO ONE FROM HER TELLING OF THE
LORD'S LOVE AND GRACE IN RESTOR-
ING HER TO HIMSELF AFTER TWO
YEARS WANDERING AWAY FROM HIM.**

"Your letter is indeed a living tribute to the efficacy of our Saviour's present grace as an Advocate

with the Father. Sweet, indeed, to our taste is the first sense of that grace in our poor hearts, when we are brought into living touch with a Saviour-God. But with a *deepened sweetness* do we learn what He is to us and for us, even when the heart has, if only for a brief moment, been going along without Him. How beautifully it is told out in the "Song of Songs." In chap. ii. 16, the Bride says, "*My beloved is mine, and I am His,*" the first utterance we may say of the soul, the sense of *her* possession in *Him* being prominently enjoyed. In chap. vi. 3, her language is, "*I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine,*" and here the place she occupies in *His affections* is the prominent feature, the sense of *His* possession in her, and this learnt through failure upon her part. How very precious is this! Having loved *His own* (the same thought here, is it not? *i. e.*, what *we are to Him*, more than what He is as enjoyed by us, although both are unspeakably blessed). But when I say *He is mine*, it brings in the thought that I am enjoying Him as my own, "*I am His,*" strikes a higher note, as you say, "To think that I am a joy to Him!" But one step more, chap. vii. 10, "*I am my beloved's and His desire is towards me.*" We said one step more, but it is a wonderful one, is it not? That is to say, the soul is absorbed in His side of things, and now, instead of "*I am His,*" we read, "*His desire is toward me.*" How precious that little word "*is.*" I can never speak of His desire toward me in the past tense, I may to-morrow act like a Peter,

and practically (if not with the lips) deny Him, but be that as it may, His desire is toward me unalterably and eternally toward me, and not only eternally in the sense of its never ceasing but eternally as never having a beginning. For His love to me and His desire toward me are like His own blessed Person, infinite and date-less.

Do you know as I read your letter I fell to coveting the fresh sense of that grace of His just imparted to you.

You are just like a very thirsty child and He is holding His wondrous draughts of grace to your lips, saying to you the while "whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." While you and I respond to that well known voice in something like this strain, "Ah, Lord, it's but a sip from an ocean tide after all."

"Oh, Christ, Thou art the fountain,
The deep sweet well of love;
The streams on earth I've tasted,
More deep I'll drink above."

But while the heart-yearnings will never be fully met until we are actually spirit, soul and body at the fountain head, yet it is well to remember that there is no limit to our enjoyment of Him, nor to our joy in Him as we pass along. "In Thy presence is fullness of joy," is true, and to that we are speeding onward, but by the way we rejoice, (altho' it may be in heaviness through manifold temptations) "with joy unspeakable and full of glory," and again, "these things write we unto you, that

your joy may be full." And that is really in its way more wonderful even than the joy that shall be ours when we are at home with our Lord Jesus in the Father's house. No marvel *then* that joy in its fullness finds its never-ceasing expression. But *now*, passing through the valley of weeping, making it a well, passing through the valley of the shadow of death, fearing no evil, ah, for "*Thou art with me.*" What a beautiful change in the language takes place in that verse (Ps. xxiii.), up to this point it had been testimony as to what Jehovah was, speaking of Him to others. Now note the change—it is as if it had said, 'if it is a question of walking through the valley of the shadow of death there is nothing but Thyself can suffice me there,' and so it is no longer testimony to others, it is not, "He is with me," but "*Thou art with me.*" How beautiful is this! If we testify of Him to others as those who have learnt what it is "never to hunger, never to thirst," or ever we are aware of it we will be saying "Thou" instead of "He."

See something like this in Paul; his heart was, as he says, filled with "great heaviness and continual sorrow," as he thought of his brethren, the Jews, and he dwells upon their external relationship with God, until he mentions Christ's name, and then what happens? His great heaviness, his continual sorrows do not burden his joy nor interrupt his communion. Weak bodies, daily conflicts, sorrows and troubles do not, nor should they, affect our communion, (our wills do), and so if Paul mention,

that blessed name, at once adoration seizes upon his heavy and sorrowful heart and he says "Christ who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen."

I do pray the Lord Jesus that you may be kept in the freshness His loving truth has imparted, and with increasing appetite feed upon what was His own food down here, even the Word of God. Remember that it is written, "By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer," and again, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." There is truly a great difference between "reading the Bible," and living "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," "the word of Thy lips." These last expressions imply communion with the author, listening for what comes fresh from His mouth,—His lips, for us, and there is our preservative. Our joy isolated from its source will not keep us, and in this the Adversary may try your dear heart, for we are effervescent things at best, and your joy may fluctuate, but remember your joy is not *in* your joy, but the Lord, and does He ever change? Ah no, a thousand times no.

"My love is oftentimes low,
My joy still ebbs and flows."

but "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day and for ever." So that you and I never look within ourselves to see how we are getting along. To learn that we must look at the Glorified One at God's right hand. There are no springs of freshness in ourselves, "all my springs are in Thee."

SINCE I BELONG TO THEE.

Since I belong to Thee, my Saviour God,
All must be well, however rough my road;
However dark my way or prospects be,
All, all is right, since overruled by Thee.

Safely in Thee shall Thy beloved dwell,
Though storms may rage, and angry tempests swell:
All the day long their covering Thou shalt be,
What then can harm those, Lord, kept by Thee?

Feeblest of all Thy flock, Thou know'st me, Lord:
Helpless and weak, I stay upon Thy word:
In all my weakness this is still my plea—
That Thou art mine, and I belong to Thee.

Then come whatever may, I am secure,
Thy love unchanged shall to the end endure;
Frail though I am, thine everlasting arm
Shall shield Thy child from every breath of harm.

Thy longing eye shall guide where'er I roam,
Thy Holy Spirit lead me to my home:
Thou wilt not let Thy feeble, frail one stray:
Though dark temptations oft may crowd my way.

In sorrow's saddest hour, Thy strength my stay,
My darkest night, Lord, Thou canst turn to day,
The most loved here may sometimes changeful be,
Thou changest not, and I belong to Thee:

Then may the life which now on earth I live,
Be spent for HIM who His for me did give,
O make me, Lord, in all I will and do,
Ever to keep Thy glory in my view!

And when my course is run, and fought the fight,
Life's struggles o'er, and faith is changed to sight,
Then all triumphant I shall ever be
Safe in Thy home, for I belong to Thee.

"FULLNESS OF JOY," with all Thy ransomed there
In Thy loved presence I shall ever share,
With them I'll sing the love that made us free,
The grace that taught us we belonged to Thee.

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