

CITIZENS OF HEAVEN.

1 COR. XV. 47, 48.

Who are these whose faces are irradiate
 With eternal joy?
 With the calm the tempest may not trouble
 Nor the grave destroy?

Glad as those who hear a glorious singing
 From the golden street,
 Moving to the measure of the music
 That is passing sweet.

They have been within the inner chamber
 None can tread beside,
 Where the Bridegroom radiant in His glory
 Waiteth for the Bride.

He has shown them in those many mansions
 How to Him is given
 That high palace of surpassing beauty,
 Holiest in Heaven.

There it is that they behold His radiance,
 There His love they know,
 Therefore theirs is God's eternal gladness
 Whilst they walk below.

Therefore tread they in Earth's darkest places,
 Through all grief and sin,
 For they know the home that waits the weary,
 Know the love within.

Therefore sad and strange to them the splendours
 Of the world must be,
 "O forgotten and rejected Jesus,
 We have looked on Thee!

"We have seen Thee in the Father's glory,
 Shared the Father's kiss;
 Strange henceforward to the world our sadness,
 Stranger yet our bliss.

"Sadness for the eyes that cannot see Thee,
 Whom to see is Heaven;
 Bliss that flows mysterious as the River
 When the Rock was riven.

" Oh might some sweet song Thy lips have taught us,
 Some glad song and sweet,
 Guide amidst the mists and through the darkness
 Lost ones to Thy feet.

" Not our joy, but Thy Divine rejoicing
 Fills that palace fair,
 For the wonder past our heart's conceiving
 Is the welcome there."

Is it strange that from the golden chamber,
 From the secret place,
 Come they forth with everlasting radiance
 Of His glorious Face ?

Telling mysteries that to babes are simple,
 Hidden from the wise,
 Fragrant with the odours of the lilies
 Of God's Paradise ?

Changed—transformed ; for ever and for ever ;
 Thine alone to be ;
 Knowing none on earth, O Lord, beside Thee,
 None in Heaven but Thee.



THE HEAVENLY DWELLING-PLACE AND THE EARTHLY PILGRIMAGE.

(Psalm lxxxiv.)

In this Psalm we have two different states—the enjoyed and, for us, heavenly privileges of a saint, and the experience of mercies by the way, and thus the lessons of God's faithfulness in them. These may be united, but very often are found separated. For a soul may know the experiences, without deep rest and the consciousness of heavenly joy—the heart's peace in the presence of God and in God Himself. It is evident that this is what our souls would desire, above all things,

if we are now practically with God ; that is, to be with Him according to the height of His own thoughts and goodness, and the display He has given, not only of His grace, but also of the place in which He has put us, apart from all circumstances and experiences, that we may be able to enjoy Him to the uttermost. Now I am persuaded that this kind of enjoyment of God is comparatively rare, even among the beloved ones of His family ; and that the continual tendency of our hearts is to be content with just that measure of knowledge of God which hinders our souls from getting into trouble, anxiety, questions of one kind and another. And this comes of the wretched selfishness of our hearts, and the disposition there is in us to enjoy present things, so far at least as our consciences can in any wise permit without damaging our confidence in God. Need I say that a soul born of God resents such a principle as this, and no soul that is entangled by it thoroughly weighs and judges it—understands it in its real import. For there are many specious pretexts which the enemy uses to hinder souls and keep them back. He does not of course permit, as far as he can, that one should understand what he is seeking ; but his object with the saint is, that in one way and measure or another he may hinder the triumph of our souls and the present glory of God in association with His people.

Let us, then, just look briefly at the two fold picture herein afforded. In an Israelite, the two

things could not be together ; but the Christian's peculiarity is, what was necessarily separated in others, we are entitled to enjoy—knowing what they had to learn in detail here and there. There are two blessings, or two classes of men said to be blessed here. The first are those that abide in Jehovah's house : "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house." Then the effect is immediate and inseparable, and most glorifying to God : "They will be still praising Thee." It is the spirit of worship. You have hearts near enough to God to be above the depression or the elation created by present changes. Around that house there might be bitterness, sorrow, deep dishonour ; for the struggle of the enemy is always most keen in the neighbourhood of God's glory. But they are in His presence ; and what matters it then if Satan rage, and rage ever so near them ? They know that they are near Him to whom Satan, and all that Satan can do, is but a little thing—that they are in the presence of Him who loves them, and controls all things. True moral elevation is theirs and spiritual power ; for God is their measure of judgment and their rest ; and this is only the more appreciated because of the boisterous waves and tempests that Satan may be permitted to excite. And they have the consciousness of this, those that are thus near to Him. They are those dwelling in His house, and they are still praising Him. It could not be otherwise. If I am so near to God that His glory fills my eye

and my heart, I may know all other things outside, but this is the object that attracts my soul and keeps me in peace and gives me power to praise. "They will be still praising Thee." "How amiable ('lovely' or 'beloved') are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts." It is no question now of Israel and of their tabernacles. The soul that has entered into the presence of God regards it less as the tabernacles of the people than of *God*, even Jehovah Himself. "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord." But the courts are not enough, though they might be near, for he adds, "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. "He wanted more than His courts—"the living God, even Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God." So far from being content with the outer circle, when once the desire to be near God is in the soul, the desire rises to "the living God." How near can I get to Him? Thine altars—taking in both golden and brazen altars—intercession and acceptance. My heart, he says, is longing to be there, "even Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God. In the parenthetical word, which comes in so beautifully, the thought is this. The sparrow may be despised. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?" But let them be ever so common and contemned of man, yet are they cared for by our heavenly Father. Yes, the sparrow has found an house; and the swallow,

restless as she may be upon the wing, yet the restless bird has found a nest where she may lay her young. And where is our house and our nest? O how blessed is the answer! In nearness to Himself, where His glory dwells—"Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God." This is true of every saint of God. It is their full, eternal portion before Him. But I am not speaking of it now in the point of view of a fact that grace has given to every Christian, but in a practical way. What I am at is that our souls enter into it and respond to such grace, and find our deep joy in the place which God has given us, in His beloved Son, near to Himself. There are, however, practical trials for each; and hence we find the second part of this Psalm, where the way is looked at, rather than rest and enjoyment in God's presence. People often make their deepest blessings the resource of their souls in sorrow, rather than their present home. Is it not so with many of us? Do we not put aside the thoughts of being so near to God? Do we not wait for it as that which we trust will be our place by and by in heaven? But how is it now? Is it our present pavilion? Is it that to which we turn, as the needle to the pole, habitually? It may be quivering under the pressure of outward circumstances, but there it surely turns. And is it to Christ Jesus that our souls turn habitually? Is it in the consciousness that we are brought into God's presence and seated in heavenly places in Christ

Jesus, put there as our present home, that we walk through this world? Is this the experience of our hearts? But few of God's children could answer with simplicity and assurance of heart, that it is so with them. That there their souls habitually dwell. They may be able to say, "It is my desire;" but what is the actual state of the heart? Though there may be at times some bright gleams, yet is not praise rather the exception than the habit? It may be that we only know what praise is when we meet together on the Lord's day, or when we manifestly bow in worship. But is the tone of thanksgiving, the spirit of adoration, that which characterizes our souls throughout each day? Or is not the power of praise, alas, the rare thing; and the trial of circumstances upon us, and the consciousness of failure, that which prevails? We have, as it were, to put on the garment of praise, instead of standing ever clothed with it. I do desire this for myself as for all the children of God, knowing how blessed it is, though how little entered into. Assuredly it is the sweetest place and the secret of real power. I do not allude now to the power which manifested itself in testifying to others (this is no doubt, important in its place), but there is no power so blessed as the happy, peaceful, calm enjoyment of the presence of God. There is nothing that so wears through all the storms and difficulties and trials of person and things here. The Lord grant that we may know it well. For if we are happy

in our own souls, we make happy—we excite a spirit of praise in others. If our hearts, on the contrary, are always dull, and we are occupied with enemies and evils, disappointment then follows, thence a querulous weakness in ourselves and we become rather the means of enfeebling souls, and filling Christ's members with that which is the reflection of our own weakness, instead of evidencing the strength which is in Christ. The later verses, then, give us the Israelite on his way—he cannot be parted from the land. There are all sorts of difficulties in the way; but if God has called a soul to go there, He does not fail. There is the rain, too, that fills the pools—refreshment ever and anon which God graciously vouchsafes. Therefore, “they go from strength to strength,” God mercifully sustaining and guiding. “Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.”

But the characteristic feature that appears now is prayer, not praise. It is blessed really to pray. It is a true sign of divine life, as we see in the case of Saul of Tarsus, “Behold he prayeth.” The renewed soul cannot but bring its weakness and difficulties before God. But though we must not pray less, we should praise more. Not that we should not feel our weakness and the valley of Baca; but we are called to far, far more, every one of us; and it would be a poor thing to have a title to some blessing, if it were not an enjoyed and appropriated title; if it was like a mere parchment deed, shut up in a strong box, instead

of a flowing and tasted spring of delights. And how deep is then the joy! What we find in the early verses is rather the result of this. It is not the conflict, but the soul's rest in the presence of God, which we must not defer till we get to heaven. May our hearts turn there to the enjoyment of God Himself, even while we are here in this world. We shall feel the difficulties, but it will be as those that are above them. It will not be an easy path to the flesh. But felt as all may be, there is something better than being occupied with the sorrows and hindrances of the way, and this is joying in God Himself. Hence, while the trials are experienced, yet we may and should have such repose in God about them all, that while we feel everything, we should seem as if we felt nothing. That is what was realized by the apostle Paul—"many tears," yet "none of these things move me." Did he know the truth of Rom. v. 3 experimentally as an apostle? Nay, but as a spiritual man. Other apostles may not have known it as he did. The triumph of faith is not connected with any particular place or office, but flows from the soul's appreciation of God's own grace in Christ Jesus. We know that even an apostle will be in hell; and to many who have wrought miracles and cast out devils in His name the Lord will say, "I never knew you." Let us not suppose that the practical power which can give us to know our place with God depends on any state of the Church, or any

special circumstances or position. These things have nothing to do with it, belonging, as it does, to the power of the Holy Ghost, who gives us to enjoy Christ. The soul that enjoys Him thoroughly will be most in God's presence, and most praising Him; and there, too, I am persuaded, will be most power for practical holiness. God makes us happy in Christ: what is the effect? Holiness. The soul is attracted to walk with God above the world; and without this there is no enjoyment, no praising Him. All is vexation of spirit—all is dark, weak and wretched.

These two things, then, should coalesce in the Christian. We are wrong if we take the passage through the valley of Baca now to be so exclusively our place, as to exclude the rest and joy in God which are ours in His own presence. Blessed surely is the man that trusts God in both these conditions. But where the confidence now is simple, intelligent and full, it will not be merely touching the circumstances of trial, but the heart near God, dwelling in God and God in us, and still praising Him.

The Lord grant that if we know the one, we may enter into the still greater blessing of the other, more fully than ever, through Jesus Christ!



“Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.”
(Ps. lxxiii. 25.)

THE RIBBAND OF BLUE.

(Numb. xv. 37-41 ; Col. iii. 1.)

Let me say a word on the Lord's instituting a blue ribband to be worn by the Israelites on the fringe of their garments. No Christian would suppose that this was unmeaning ; or if it conveys a divine lesson, that it is not our business to seek to understand it ; and more than this, to act by the grace of God accordingly.

As to the general meaning of the "blue," which we often find in this book of Numbers, there cannot be any doubt about it. It is the colour of heaven and the appropriate witness of a heavenly character. We have white used commonly for the representation of purity, as crimson or scarlet is the image of the world's glory ; and the ribband of blue being the heavenly colour, the thought connected with it is very simple, though of immense practical importance. The Lord would have His people, even in the commonest things of daily life, to present the constant testimony before their own as well as others' eyes, that they belong to heaven. The effect of this we shall find to be mighty over the soul. It is not enough for us that we should simply abstain from that which is evil, or that we should cultivate godliness. No person born of God could doubt or deny our obligation to holiness, and that the children of God are bound to abstain even from the appearance of evil. But supposing all this, and that

each wore his garment ever so undefiled, would this be the ribband of blue? Does it not mean the reminding our souls from day to day of the place to which we belong? The outward raiment was used to set forth that which is displayed before people—our character and ways. What God, as I think, intended by the blue on the fringe, was the intermingling in the most ordinary ways of daily life the constant token that we are heavenly, and not merely that we shall be there by and by. If we, as it were, put heaven off, making it purely a hope for the future, would not this be for the Israelite, not to wear or look upon this ribband of blue? For if we are merely treating heaven thus, we might be led to say, "We may be earthly now, but we shall be heavenly by and by when we get there." But the effect of our souls taking in the truth which this type teaches is that, while we are on earth surrounded by difficulties, heaven is before our eyes and hearts. Otherwise we shall be in constant danger of acting simply as earthly men—godly, I will suppose, and kind and truthful; but all that is totally short of God's will concerning us. Even to serve Christ, blessed as it is, is not the same thing as being heavenly. All that might have been, and indeed in many cases is, true in beloved saints of God, where the blue ribband is forgotten. What answers to the type, and gives it as far more fully, according to the power of the New Testament—no longer merely the shadow, but the very

image—is the truth we have in Col. iii. We are there addressed as those who belong to heaven ; but, of course, still upon earth, which gives rise to all the difficulties of the path of faith. There will be no difficulty in walking rightly when we are in heaven ; but the fight and victory is by faith now. We are so apt to judge by the feelings of our hearts, so easily led away. And what can strengthen us against ourselves ? Let us hearken to what the Lord says here : “ It shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them.” Is it not remarkable that the blue fringe should be used of God as an incentive to obedience ? The very fact that our souls begin each day with this memorial before us is no small thing. Supposing that we have in our business, or in anything else, to do with men, what is it that will preserve us by the grace of God ? What an encouragement to us ! What a remembrancer that we belong to heaven ! “ If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” Were this before us, there is nothing, small or great, that the Christian would not do according to God ; there would be a felt link with heaven, and not merely a matter of necessity or of character, which is below a Christian. Of course a Christian will be honest and godly, but if I make character or necessity the

reason why I do a thing, I am not walking as a Christian at all, but like many a man who is the enemy of God and His Son. Doing it as a matter of duty does not lift you above self and present things. Nay, supposing I look at the Lord simply as one strengthening me in my daily duty, it is quite true; but it is not the full measure of the truth. I may lower the Lord to be my helper upon earth merely; but that is not the ribband of blue. But if my eyes are raised from the earth, and fixed on Christ in heaven—if I remind myself that my present association is with Christ in heaven, and that God looks for me to walk worthily of Christ now above myself, being one with Him who is there—in this you find, I conceive, the great truth that answers to the figure. And this the Lord here connects with remembering all His commandments and doing them and walking holily. He had brought them out of Egypt that they might thus walk according to Him, and that they might be His people and He their God. How often, alas! we walk merely "as men." But if we do not rise above that standard, we are not walking according to that witness of heavenly things which the Lord set forth in type to Israel. We shall find that the power of being heavenly, is according to the measure in which our souls enter into Christ there. It is not a question of correcting this or that, or of beginning one thing and another, but of heavenly things in Christ separating our hearts from things on earth. When we

look from heaven, as consciously of it, and work from heaven downwards, earthly things soon dwindle, and the praise of their disappearance returns not to ourselves in any way, but to Christ. Thus He Himself has all the glory, whatever good thing there may be wrought by the Spirit among the children of God.

JOSIAH AND JEHOIAKIM.

2 KINGS XXII.; JEREMIAH XXXVI.

It was when Israel mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and misused His prophets, that the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy. Josiah and Jehoiakim reigned over Judah just before the Babylonish captivity. The judgments of God were at the door; and we have, in the history of these two kings, the "important contrast" in the way each received the testimony given to them. In Josiah we have the subjection of heart which God always honours: in Jehoiakim that insubjection which He always judges. The history of man proves, that, whether God speaks in the way of commandment, or in the way of threatening, or in mercy, that His words are despised. There are, indeed, some exceptions, as the case of Josiah, the inhabitants of Nineveh, etc.; but generally rebellion is the course he takes. This has been, from the beginning, continues to be so, and will continue so long as the god of this world blinds the minds of

men. There is something deeply interesting in the whole of Josiah's reign ; but especially so, when the message was conveyed to him that the Book of the Law was found in the House of the Lord. "Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes." His heart was not unmoved ; he trembled at God's word. In that light, what were his circumstances ? That law made manifest Israel's rebellion, brought to light their guilt, revealed the judgment of God against sin, and filled Josiah's heart with sadness. Whither could he flee for help ? Only to God. And blessed it is, that when the heart is thus made truly sensible of its condition by seeing light in God's light, there is a refuge in God. "There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared. . . Let Israel hope in the Lord ; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption." (Psalm cxxx. 4, 7). Josiah sends to inquire of the Lord and receives this answer, "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the Book which the king of Judah hath read But to the king of Judah which sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, as touching the words which thou hast heard ; Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this

place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes and wept before Me ; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord, Behold, therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace ; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place." Such is the grace of our God ! The bruised reed He will not break. He giveth grace to the humble, "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust !" Josiah might use the language of the Psalmist, "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings, and He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God."

Painful, indeed, is the contrast in turning to the history of Josiah's son. Of him it may be said, "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, that trusted in the abundance of his riches and strengthened himself in his wickedness." The 36th chap. of Jeremiah opens with the goodness of God towards His poor rebellious people. He presses upon their attention the solemn condition they were in, causes a roll to be written containing all the words Jeremiah had spoken against Israel, saying, "It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them ; that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin."

This roll of a book reaches the ears of Jehoiakim (21st verse). "So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll: and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber: and Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. Now the king sat in the winter-house in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words."

How solemn is all this, after seeing the tenderness of heart in Josiah. Jehoiakim rushes from the sound of God's word into the darkness of infidelity. He supposes to escape the judgment of God, by disbelieving the testimony concerning it. This is where Satan is fast leading the world into open rejection of the word of God. There may attend it what Jehoiakim realised. He was not afraid, nor rent his garments. "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Jehoiakim had quietness, but it was not that peace which Josiah knew, of condemnation put away, sins forgiven. There is a message for him. "Therefore, thus saith the Lord of Jehoiakim king of Judah, He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to

the frost. And I will punish him, and his seed, and his servants, for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not." Pride and unbelief shut out from all blessing, and leave their victims exposed to the wrath of God. "Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord" (see Jer. xvii. 5-8). The only place of blessing is that Josiah took. There the Lord ceases to have a controversy. He knows the claims of His own truth. He will not relinquish them. "He has magnified His word above all His name." Saul sought to uphold his own integrity when the word of God was against him. His heart bowed not before the truth: the Lord cast him off. It is a vain thing to strive with God. May the Lord guard His children in this day of evil! Give us tenderness of heart to "*all*" His truth, so that we may hold our proper place of testimony for Him.



A WORD FOR THOSE ENGAGED IN THE LORD'S SERVICE.

A few years ago I had the privilege of being present at an interview between an evangelist and a venerable servant of the Lord. Having before me all the fellow-labourers in the vast harvest field who may read these lines, I will relate the last words that passed on this occasion so full of interest.

Before taking leave of the old servant of God, and after having expressed the pleasure that it had been to him to make his acquaintance, the evangelist made a request somewhat in these words: "We have just met for the first

time and perhaps it will be the last. You have worked many years in the Lord's vineyard and are drawing towards the close of your pilgrimage and of your service. You have far more experience than myself, for I have only just started in service. May I venture to ask you for a *Motto* which will be a help to me in my work if the Lord sees fit to lengthen out my term of service down here?"

A Motto! Many who read these words might be disposed to reproach the evangelist for showing so little spirituality in asking a man for a motto when he had the word of God. But I will never forget the answer that came from the lips of the old man—an answer full of grace and going to the heart. I will always remember the unction and power with which he pronounced these words: "In the first place, endeavour to produce in the conscience of your hearers a deep sense of sin and of hatred against it; and then, when they have believed the gospel, endeavour to produce in the hearts of those who have believed a true and sincere affection for the Person of the Saviour."

Let all those to whom God has given in any measure to be engaged in presenting the gospel consider carefully these weighty words.

A true and deep work of conscience is extremely necessary in these days of lightness and indifference. Let us never weaken the sense of the gravity of sin in attempting to make the gospel simple; nor fail in insisting on the necessity of real "repentance toward God." And then let us always cultivate in ourselves as well as in each new convert a sincere affection for the Person of Christ—an affection that will manifest itself in a prompt and unreserved obedience. The Saviour has said, "if you love Me, keep My commandments." To do His will, cost what it may, is the *proof* of our affection for Him, just as love for His Person is the powerful motive and the source of all obedience. "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" The Lord refuses the outward fidelity of a disobedient heart.