

THE POSITIVENESS OF LIFE IN CHRIST.

(Continued from No. 6.)

"Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not," and whosoever eats His flesh and drinks His blood abides in Christ and Christ in him; that is, if I am eating Christ and occupied with Christ, I do not commit sin, nor is my mind living in the sphere in which it has power.

If you are not abiding in Him, you will get down to the other state I have spoken of, the mere avoiding of positive evil, while living in the sphere of thought in which flesh can find itself at home, while the spiritual affections are dull and inactive.

"He that doeth righteousness is righteous even as He is righteous." I am in Christ, on the same footing of righteousness, as to my walk down here, that He is: as partaker of the same nature and looking forward to a perfect conformity to Him. We have a positive life in itself, which is itself. There is this positive life in connection with Christ who is our life, and this life lives entirely on Him. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," &c. This is the way it lives. It has these two traits—pointed out in this passage—practical righteousness, and love of the brethren.

A word on the way the soul gets into this living

on Christ and with Him. I do not believe you can ever do that until you get free in your conscience. Till then you cannot get beyond this negative conflict with sin, which avoids the evil the new life sees and judges. If I have the new life, I find the sin in me; and if I have not the consciousness of divine righteousness, I cannot delight in Christ as set free; that is, I must think of the sin. Is not God holy? And have I not sins? not merely guilt, but sins in my members? Yes; then "he that committeth sin is of the devil." Well, I commit sin, and am afraid. That is, the workings of flesh come back on my conscience, and I must be occupied with self. The soul is not discharged from self, as the ground of its standing before God, through divinely-wrought and self-humbling conviction of sin, enough to be cast over on divine righteousness in Christ. It has not been brought to see that the case is perfectly hopeless, and then to be cast over entirely on Christ. When brought to this, I am taken out of flesh by this work of redemption in Christ, so that I am made the righteousness of God in Him, and I do not look at myself to know if I am righteous before God.

What a contrast between that kind of negative life, with the head just above water, and which says, "I am alive, so I ought to be thankful," and this positive, joyful life which goes out in active energy after Christ! But in order to this the staff of confidence in self must be snapped.

If our hearts are grovelling on with the world,

this is not living on Christ. *Why have you got these difficulties? Because you are inclined to them, and nourish what is the seat of them by continually letting your heart move in the sphere where Christ is not. Christ Himself is not enough your object.* There is surely grace enough in Him to help us, where through grace He is looked to, and a strength which is made perfect in weakness.

[Italics by Ed.]

GOD FOR US.

ROMANS VIII. 31-39.

In this portion of scripture the apostle sums up the exercise of heart, and the work of grace, first in these exercises of heart, and then in the revelation of real liberty through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, which we enjoy as redeemed from all that we were in the flesh, from sin and Satan and the world, and from law too. But then, having gone through all this, and having shewn the way by which we, having the Spirit, are children of God and heirs, joint-heirs with Christ, and possessing the consciousness of the bondage and corruption which is still around us here, he closes the whole by shewing how, before it, and in it, and above it, and beyond it all, God is for us. He brings out this great truth to shew, not that Christ is in the heavenly places, but that He is in the difficulties. He shews, (and what a blessed thing this is, for by it He gets to God Himself!) though He

goes into the trouble of time, that, before trouble was, and before you ever were, it is Himself that is for you; and if so, no matter what is against you!

After going through the exercise of soul before redemption and shewing redemption accomplished, he takes up the great truth that overrides it all and goes through it all, and this is not what we are for God, for we were condemned, and, as he says in the same chapter, enmity against God—not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be—but, by means of the process by which He discovered to me my misery, He has brought out the revelation of what He is for me. And the conclusion he draws from the whole is, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” And you will find that, in the way in which he looks at it, he takes up every side of the question. He does not content himself with looking at the bare fact, though that is blessed in itself, but he takes up every side.

And it is exceedingly precious, beloved friends, to see the way in which God is for us. Not only nothing can escape Him, but He occupies Himself with everything that concerns us. Just in the same way, if a person were ill, a friend might go to inquire for him to know how he did; but if it were a child whose mother was occupied about it, it would have all her care and all her thoughts, for her heart is there. She is for it, and would give everything she has for it, and would not let you come into the house if you made a noise. Yet that is only a human mother, who may forget her suck-

ling child. At the same time it is the character of that perfect love of God in its condescending character. Nothing can escape Him, and He neglects nothing. Surely we may say, "If God be for us, who can be against us"?

"He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all," First, I find here that God is a Giver. Well, I say, He has given His well-beloved Son. I have God as a giver in the highest possible way, so that nothing is to be named after this. Observe the reasoning too, the Apostle reasons from what God is and does, to the effects on us, and not from the effects on us, or from what it is in us to God. If I reason from what I find in myself, I say, I am a sinner. God will not have me. He must condemn me, though there may be a little hope. Still I draw conclusions from what I find in myself, and then, though there may be some true thoughts of God, it is partly truth and partly mistakes. That is not faith, beloved friends. It is so far true the soul knows that God is a ho'y judge; but then the real conviction of sin makes us feel that God cannot have us.

Take the prodigal son. He was converted: he came to himself; he knew his father's goodness; but he immediately begins to draw conclusions from what he was. So he resolves to say, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." He thought this was a more proper condition to be in at his father's house. His confession of sin was all right, but the conclu-

sions he drew were all wrong. This is what persons are doing now. It is perfectly natural and true also if this were all that were to be known. But they mix up the truth with human notions, just as the prodigal mixed up his sense of sin, which was all right, with thoughts of his father, which were all wrong. When we thus reason, we have not met God; for when the prodigal met his father, he was on his neck, and the best robe was put on him. Till then he never got the father's own testimony to his dealings from what he was in himself.

Just so is the way the Spirit reasons when drawing conclusions for God. The soul may be thinking that it is humble, when reasoning otherwise; but it is only proving that it is not cast upon grace by an adequate conviction of sin. The Apostle had gone through it all; and he says, God has given His Son, and I should like to know what He will not give after that. If I have got hold of this—God has not spared the very best and brightest thing in heaven—I must say, What will He not give with Him? If I have debts, I do not like to look at my books (if I am not honest); for I know what I shall find there. What is there presses hard upon me; but if some one comes and pays my debts, I am not afraid (when they are paid) to let my creditors see my books. I open them up; and if I find the great amount of them, the more I see of them the more I think of the man who paid them. So it is in redemption. The effect in me,

when I see the greatness of what has been done, is to make me think more of Him who is for me; and so repentance goes on growing all a man's life. For the more I know God the more I see the evil of sin.

But first I said it is God giving. If He gave His Son, glory comes in as a kind of natural consequence. If I really feel and know what Christ is, the more I see this. Our being in glory with Him is His seeing the fruit of the travail of His soul; and if we are not in glory with Him, He is not seeing the fruit of His travail—that *does* follow.

But, further, the Apostle says, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" He is for me both about the sins, in putting them away, and about righteousness. It does not only say, he is justified of God, but God justifies. So what matter if Satan accuse? as he did in Zechariah. This is "a brand plucked out of the fire," says the Lord. Are you going to cast it in again? We can triumphantly ask, Who can condemn us? He cannot of course; it is absurd to think of it. That which is justification here is that Christ is my righteousness. I am in Christ who has glorified God, and is standing before God. As He said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; and if God be glorified in Him, He will glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him." The work on the cross has glorified all that God is; and now Christ is in the glory, and I am a righteous man in Him. Not only have I got what

I was in Adam put away, but "as He is, so are we in this world."

Then comes another thing; for we can expect everything after the gift of His own Son. Nevertheless in fact there are difficulties in the path: still it is the same thing, "God is for us." But mark here how He changes the term, "It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Why does he change to Christ? Of course it does mean the love of God in Christ. But why not say the love of God? Because we have to do with the One who has taken the place at the right hand of God, after being down here in the difficulties. We have difficulties on all sides: persecution in the family, not open perhaps, but which is as hard to bear: Christ had it too. You say, "They think me mad;" Christ's friends wanted to take Him, they thought Him mad too. And so the apostle brings home to us this very love of Him who came down; "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Here I have found the divine love coming down to get the experience of what we are passing through. I want to know the sympathy of Christ. I do not get this when God is forgiving me. God has no sympathy with my sins; but in trials I do want to know that Christ suffered, being tempted. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Principalities and powers? Christ was tempted by them and overcame them for me: so

they are no stoppage in the way. Life? He went through it too. He had plenty of sorrow in it; and so much the more sorrow we have, the better for us. But still he has said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." Life cannot separate me from Christ, for "to me to live is Christ."—Death? This cannot separate me; yea, it will bring me to Him—"to die is gain." Persecutions? I not only triumph in them, but Christ is with me in them.

In all these things I learn to know myself as an unprofitable thing, and the faithfulness of Christ. I may know a man to be kind; but if I go on knowing him for thirty years, I get the experience of it; not that he is changed, but I know him better. I find One who got me out of the grand difficulty; He intercedes for me now. He does not repeat what He did at the first, but a kind of confidence grows with every day's experience; not that I ever learn that faith is not faith, but that I find Him unchangeably the same. I am ashamed of myself for my want of confidence in Him, and the communication of His grace gives me a familiarity of knowledge of Him (speaking most reverently) and a confidence, a happy confiding feeling. We are "more than conquerors," for we are learning Him our everlasting portion, and ourselves, that we want to get rid of. Creatures are all against us, but then they are but "creatures."

God is for me—not here in the love of a sovereign who thought good for me when I thought not of

Him, but it is the love of God in Christ, in Him who passed through all difficulties for us, life, death, &c., and for us met outrage, oppression, resistance, and persecution. Now I see that the very thing which would try me is that through which He passed for me, and it is a witness of the love which passed through everything for me—whatever concerns the person God loves and Christ cares for. In this way we have to pass on to the glory, to Christ if you please, in the consciousness that Christ has brought us into it. Else we are like the children of Israel in Egypt. When they passed the Red Sea, that was quite over. They had left Egypt. Redemption brought them out. Speaking of the work as done, redemption is behind us; in another sense it is not: the forgiveness of sins is, but that is not all of redemption, though included in it.

But we are taken out of the condition in which we were into another, just as Israel was. Though still in Egypt, they were not touched when the judgment came. But this was not all. He took their bodies out too. And so He takes us out of the flesh (I do not mean physically yet, though Christ is out of it in every sense). So the Lord brought the Israelites into a new condition altogether, into the wilderness. There they had the cloud all the way through and the manna. There their garments did not grow old and their feet did not swell; everything was provided by God. They had to gather the manna, it is true; just as dilig-

ence is required by us in divine things. Next they crossed the Jordan where conflict begins, and then it is we find that the Lord comes to Joshua as Captain of the Lord's host. When He thus comes as Captain, the command is: "Take off thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

This is the character of the ways of God. It is not a question of redemption here. He has brought us to Himself; but, having come, that which weighs with us must be according to the holiness of God. Because we are called to fellowship with God, and fellowship means common happiness, common thoughts, common feelings. The Father's delight is in His Son; and we have fellowship with Him in that. Christ's delight is in the Father; and we have fellowship with Him in that. So our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Christ Jesus. "If we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." The apostle at once brings the character of God to bear on the person.

Thus the effect of redemption is to bring us to God. Being brought to Him, we can say, "Search me, O God." For He does search, not that He should impute, but that He may cleanse; and therefore we desire that He should. And then it is a blessed thought, beloved friends, that while He has gone through all my difficulties here, He is suiting me for my place there. In every sense this is true, that, if the soul is not sufficiently

brought to a sense of sin and to find Christ everything as regards righteousness, it does not understand grace. The Lord only give us to know (I am not speaking of mere knowledge now, but) in our hearts and consciences, that we have to do with God. Not as Israel had; for now the veil is rent from top to bottom, and we ought to walk according to the light because we have been brought into it. This is what I do earnestly desire for us all that we may know perfect redemption, and have the consciousness that the effect is to bring us into fellowship with the Father and the Son, so that everything contrary to His holiness may be judged and put away.

A PARTING WORD.

1 COR. XV. 58.

I have one word to press on you before going away "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable." If our hearts are not close to Christ, we are apt to get weary in the way. All is a vain show around us; but that which is *inside* abides, is true, is the life of Christ. All else goes! When the heart gets hold of this fact, it becomes (as to things around) like one taken into a house to work *for the day*, performs the duties well, but *passes through*, instead of living in the circumstances.

To Israel, the cloud came down, they stayed; it lifted up, on they went, it was all the same to them, why? because had they stayed when the cloud went

on, they would not have had the Lord with them—
 one may be daily at the desk for fifty years, yet
 with Christ,—doing God's will it is a great thing.
 Whether I go or you go, I stay or you stay, may
 that one word be realized in each of us. "Steadfast,
 unmoveable." In whatever sphere as matter of
 Providence we are found, let the divine life be mani-
 fested—*Christ* manifested—that *abides*, all else
 changes, but that life remains and abides for ever,
aye for ever.

There is not a single thing in which we have
 served Christ which shall be forgotten—lazy, alas!
 we all are in service, but all shall come out that is
real and what is *real* in us is *Christ* and *Christ only*.
 The *appearance* now may be very little, not much
 even in a religious view, but what is *real abides* and
 our hearts clinging closely to Christ, we shall sus-
 tain one another in the Body of Christ, the love of
 Christ shall hold the whole together—Christ being
 everything, and we content to be nothing, helping
 one another, praying one for the other. I ask not
 the prayers of saints, I *reckon* on them.

The Lord keep us going on in simplicity, fulfilling
 as an hireling our day, till Christ shall come, and
then shall every man have praise of God—"Praise
 of God!" Be that our object; and may God knit
 all our hearts together thoroughly and eternally.

A LETTER ON GIVING UP ONESELF ENTIRELY TO THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD.

VERY DEAR BROTHER,—G., who told me that you are now settled in ———, begged me to write you a few lines, which I do very willingly: indeed, it was on my asking him for news of you that he spoke to me of you, and told me that you had some thought of applying yourself more directly to the work of the Lord. Nothing is more desirable, dear brother; there is the greatest need of labourers, and when our blessed Saviour raises them up, it is a sign that He would do a work Himself in this world of darkness. The gathering together of His own, and the sanctification and joy of those who are manifested, are always the thoughts predominant in my soul. There is every appearance that the Lord is hastening the time; for the rest, our duty is certain. It is for you, dear brother, before God to determine whether the Lord calls you certainly to this work of faith. The more devotedness there is the more trials there will be, but a hundred times more will there be of happiness and of joy, and when the Lord returns, the crown of glory that fadeth not away. From the circumstances in which you are placed, it is difficult for me to speak, and probably those in which you will be placed would occupy your thoughts. This is a matter of faith. G. committed himself to the Lord, and the

Lord has sustained him, and he has always been maintained without difficulty, and has even provided for the wants of those who had trusted men. In any case, such a step is always an act of faith, and *one ought never to induce any one to follow it.*

For example, it will be always my delight to help the brethren whether in England or abroad, as our brethren do according to their power; but if I undertook to do such or such a thing, all that I have might fail me, through the providence of God, or a more pressing need might present itself, and I, already bound, should fail, either as to the will of God or my engagements; and further, I have a very strong objection—I am, in fact, entirely opposed—to sending anyone into the Lord's field with a salary of so much per annum. I can only say that it will be my joy, by the grace of God, to relieve the needs of my brethren according to my power, but to engage anyone to work is, it seems to me, to take the place of faith at least, if there were not some special direction. I wish to make you understand all the interest I should take in helping you if God call you to the work, on one side, and on the other, to prevent you from counting on me or any man whatever.

That the Lord may raise up many workmen, and send them out into His harvest—this is the earnest desire of my heart. May God grant me to devote myself to it with all my strength, and may He strengthen the faith of all His servants, so that they may not distrust His goodness.

For myself, I can bear witness that He has never failed me, feeble and faithless as I have found myself to be, but always sustained beyond my expectation by His goodness.

You will find it the same, dear brother, if you feel yourself called to work for the Lord. My faith has been feeble, and the Lord has been good to me; if your faith is stronger, you will gather a more abundant harvest. May God bless you and keep you, and direct your thoughts and your steps. May He ever increase your faith, and make you feel His abundant love. May the Lord reveal Himself more and more to your soul.

Yours affectionately in Jesus,

FRAGMENTS.

What is the mark of the action of the Holy Ghost on the soul? The Lord Jesus gets a place which He had not before, and if you are full of the Holy Ghost, you will have no object but Christ, no thought but Christ, no end but Christ, no will but Christ.

Whatever enfeebles attachment to Christ destroys power—It is not gross sin that does it, which of course will be met and judged; but *it is the little things of every day life, which are apt to be chosen before Christ.* When the world creeps in, the salt has lost its savour, and we shew that a rejected Christ has little power in our eyes. The Lord keep us in the path with Christ, where all is bright and blessed. If the film of this world has been drawn over our spiritual vision, hiding Christ from us, He alone can remove it.

"UPON THY HEART, LORD JESUS."

Upon Thy heart, Lord Jesus,
Thou bearest me above,
There's naught to me down-flowing,
But a mighty stream of love.

Upon Thy breast, Lord Jesus,
My every care I tell,
And leaving *Thee* to order,
I know it will be well.

Between thy shoulders, Saviour,
I'm carried day by day,
I need not look before me,
For the Shepherd knows the way.

Before Thy face, Lord Jesus,
For ever I shall rest,
Beholding there Thy beauty,
And be for ever blest.

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