

PEACE FLOWING FROM CONSCIOUS RELATIONSHIP.

As regards settled peace, the great secret is the full and abiding consciousness that in us there is no good, and looking ever at Christ as our only and own perfect righteousness before God. But there is another kind of peace which we must not confound with this, the peacefulness of heart which flows from conscious relationship with God. When this is in simple exercise, we rest in the sense of His goodness, and enjoy it, and this is very sweet to the soul. If we are not walking in heart or ways in consistency with this relationship, then we have to think of ourselves, and at any rate by God's own discipline, we do not *enjoy* the light of His countenance in the same way. We must not confound this with righteousness. This is ignorance of divine righteousness, and tends to put us back under law and make us doubt. This is not of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost dwelling in us cannot make us doubtful of our relationship with God. He is the Spirit of adoption, "crying Abba, Father," but He does make us sensitive of the approbation of God and what suits His presence. Abel had testimony by his gifts (that is, Christ, the Lamb,) that "he was righteous," but Enoch, before his translation, had this testimony "that he pleased God." You may find the two kinds of rest in John xiv. 27. Our present relationship is a constant

source of joy, and to be carefully cherished. Our righteousness, on which it is founded, is unchangeable in the presence of God. The gracious Lord keep us walking diligently.

PIETY.

PSALM xvi.

This Psalm depicts Christ as the dependent devoted man. Dependent, obedient, taking no place with God, but before Him as responsible as man upon earth, and looking towards the place of perfect blessedness as man with God, by being in His presence, which would be fulness of joy for Him, a place which, when having His nature, we can have with Christ. It is man, partaker of the divine nature, for so only it could be, but having God for His object, His confidence, as alone having authority over Him, entirely dependent on God, and perfect in faith in Him. This could only be in One personally partaker of the divine nature, God Himself in man as Christ was, or derivatively, as in one born of God. The divine presence in Him is viewed here in its effect in His absolute perfection as man. He is walking as man morally in view of God. He had said to Jehovah, "Thou art my Lord," that is "I am subservient to Thee." He had taken a place, while never ceasing to be God, (*and which Godhead alone could fulfil the conditions of,*) outside Godhead, but in which as man to satisfy God, to glorify God in an earth of apostacy and sin.

Jehovah was the portion of His cup. Nearer than all circumstances which otherwise could have pressed upon His heart as man—and which he fully felt. So truly was Jehovah the great circumstance and substance of His life in and through everything, that He could only wish that His joy might be fulfilled in His disciples. But then it was Jehovah only, and therein His perfection; the world a dry and thirsty land, where no water was, but Jehovah's favour was better than life; and was His life, practically, through a world where all was felt, but felt with Jehovah realized, Jehovah and His favour, the life of His soul, between Him and all. So the Christian, forsaken, perhaps, and imprisoned, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice." Nature has circumstances between itself and God; faith has God between the heart and circumstances. And what a difference! No peace like the peace which hiding in the tabernacle from the provokings of all men gives. But this is a divine life passing through the world. "Delight thyself in the Lord, He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Faith leans on Jehovah, on the Father's love and Jesus.

For the securing infallible happiness and peace we need not look to circumstances, save to pass through them with Him. This was perfect in Christ; He had only this, nor looked for aught else. We see it brightly manifested in Paul. In principle it is the path of every Christian, and some time or other he is exercised in it. The life

of faith is this: God Himself the portion of our inheritance and our cup; He maintaineth our lot.

The lines fallen in pleasant places, I believe to be His joy as man in God, and in what was before God. In what follows we have the active expression of this life, in reference to God. "I will bless Jehovah who giveth me counsel." We need in divine life the positive instruction of wisdom, counsel; wisdom, a divine clue and direction in the confusion of evil in this world—to be wise concerning that which is good. "Not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time," "not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Jehovah gives counsel. So "if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to every man liberally and upbraideth not."

There is the immense privilege of the positive direction and guidance of God—the interest He feels in guiding the godly man aright, in the true path suited to God Himself—across the wilderness where there is no way. So Christ walked. So He guides His sheep, going before them; and now we are led of the Spirit of God, as ourselves sons of God. It is the divine path of wisdom, which the vulture's eye hath not seen; the path of man, but of man with the life of God, going towards the presence of God and the incorruptible inheritance. God gives counsel for it. I repeat He is interested in the guidance of the man of God, and the soul blesses Him. In this path Christ trod. The written word is the great means of this, still there is

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the direct action of God in us by His Spirit. But there is also intelligence. "My reins also instruct me in the night seasons." The divine life is intelligent life. We can be "filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Thus, when removed from external influences, the secret workings and thoughts of the heart show what is suited to the path and way of God in the world. In Christ this was perfect, in us in the measure of our spirituality; but that to which the Christian has to give much heed, that he neglect not the holy suggestions and conclusions of the divinely-instructed life when freed from the influence of surrounding circumstances. It may seem folly, but if found in humbly waiting on God, will in the end prove His wisdom. And the controlling judgment of God's word which overrules the whole divine life is there to judge false pretensions. To this the divine life is always absolutely subject. Christ, who was this life, yea, was the Word and Wisdom, yet always wholly honoured the written word as the guidance and authority of God for man.

That guidance by the Lord is not quite all the practical process of the exercise of divine life. It looks entirely to the Lord. "*I have set* (says Christ, walking as man on the earth,) *Jehovah always before me.*" He kept Him *always* in view. How our hearts have to own that this is not always so! How withdrawn from all evil—how powerful morally in the midst of this world should we be

were it always so! There is nothing in this world like the dignity of a man always walking with God. What absence of self, what renouncement of all evil, what singleness of eye, and hence bright and earnest activity of purpose when the Lord is the only object before the soul! I say the Lord, for no other such object can command and sanctify the heart—all would go against duty to Him. He alone can make the whole heart full of light when duty and purpose go together and are but one. Indeed this is what James calls "the perfect law of liberty," perfect obedience, yet perfect purpose of heart. As Jesus says, "that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, so I do." We say, as Christians, Christ is all, and he that loves Him, keeps His commandments. Thus Jesus set Jehovah always before His face. This is man's perfection as man. This is the measure of our spirituality, the constancy and purity with which we do this. But if Jesus did this, surely Jehovah would not fail Him nor us. So walking, He maintains the saint in the path which is His own. I set Jehovah always before my face, He is on my right hand, so that I shall not fall. This is known by faith. He may let us suffer for righteousness' sake—Christ did so—be put to death—Christ was—but not a hair of our head can He let fall to the ground, nor fail in making us enter into life according to the path in which we walk, but here it is confidence in Jehovah Himself. Faith in walking in the path of man according to God's

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will, and towards God solely as the sanctifying end and object, knows that God is at its hand. Jehovah will secure. How or through what, is not the question. What strength this gives in passing through a world where all is against us, and what sanctifying power it has! There is no motive, no resource but Jehovah, which could satisfy any other craving, or by which the heart desires to secure itself, in seeking aught else. Hence, come what would Christ waited patiently for Jehovah, looked for no other deliverer. Nor have we to seek any other, and this makes the way perfect. We turn not aside to make the path easier.

Christ trod this path, only perfectly apart from sin, and only with God, doing His will, showed this path of life in man, then, having died to sin, (in the full result of this life in its own place, where no evil is,) lives to God. He did so, by faith, when down on earth always, but as man, in a world apart from God, and taking the word as His guide, living by every word that came out of the mouth of God, as we have to do. The resurrection demonstrated the perfectness of a life which was always according to the Spirit of holiness; but now He lives in it in its own place, and this is what, though through death, in an undiscontinued life He anticipates. "In thy presence is fulness of joy." This, always His delight, was now His perfect enjoyment, and "at thy right hand." (Divine power had brought Him to this place of power and acceptance—the witness of His being perfectly acceptable to God.) "Are pleasures for evermore."

Such is life as life with God—life shown as man in this world. Life before God, and looking ever at Him. A life which, though free from sin, neither innocent nor sinful man could know; which, in fact, had not to be lived in Paradise, which could not be lived as belonging to the world, but which was lived to God through it; setting Jehovah always before it as its object.

Such is the life we have to live. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

In this world there is no other for a man. A life which has no object but the Lord Himself. This is a wonderful point—not one object in the world at all. For otherwise, it is not faith, but sight, or lust. Innocent man had no object; he enjoyed in peace God's goodness. Man departed from God—had many objects; but all these separate his heart from God and end in death. But the new life which comes down from the Father looks up with desire to its source and becomes the nature in man which tends towards God—has the Son of God for its object. As Paul says, "that I may win Christ." This life has no portion in this world at all; and, as life in man, looks to God, leans on God, and seeks no other assurance or prop, obeys God, and can live only by faith.

This life of man Christ led and filled the whole career of. Out of this Satan wanted Him to come

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in the wilderness, and *have a will*, make the stones bread, distrust, try if the Lord would fulfil His promise or fail Him, have another object—the kingdoms of the world. This last destroyed the very nature of the life, and Satan is openly detected and dismissed. Christ would not come out of man's dependent, obedient place of unquestioning trust in Jehovah. His path here was with the excellent of the earth, perfect in the life which was come down from heaven, but which was lived on earth, looking up to heaven.

Whatever our privileges in union with Christ, it is all important to live in the fear and faith of God, according to the life of Christ. It is not man's responsibility without law, or under law as a child of Adam; it is all over with us on that ground. It is the responsibility of the new life of faith, which is a pilgrim and a stranger here, a life come down from heaven. "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son: he that hath the Son hath life," but a life which man lives in passing through this world, but wholly out of it in its object—a life of faith which finds in God's presence fulness of joy.

We have to remember that the development of this life in us is not, as in the Psalm, in connexion with the name of Jehovah, but with the full revelation of the Father and the Son.

This Psalm gives us the inward spiritual life of Christ, and so ours, ending in the highest joy of God's presence.

HOW TO MANIFEST THE LIFE OF JESUS IN OUR BODY.

2 CORINTHIANS iv. 10.

“Then you come to the way the vessel is dealt with, in Paul, (a man with sin in him like ourselves). A thing with a will is not a vessel: a person is acting for himself if he has a will; he must not *think or will anything for himself*; and therefore it says, ‘Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.’ That is obedience of course. Christ was obedient unto death; that is not a man’s will, and I am always to bear about in my body His dying: that is Christ’s dying, or being put to death, as we have it in Peter, ‘Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind,’ Christ did actually die, and Peter had just been speaking to them not to suffer for evil doing, but if it were God’s will, for well doing; arm yourselves, therefore, with the same mind. This would be carrying about the dying Christ had died; and this dying of Christ I apply to myself, so that the body never stirs, and the will of the body never moves.

We have then these two things: first, Paul, as a faithful man, never allows the vessel to have, for one instant, a will or a thought of its own. Just as much as Christ died, and completely died, so Paul was carrying this about constantly, and says, ‘Now you are as dead as Christ was,’ and though Paul

was very faithful in that, the Lord helped him by sending him through circumstances, so that he despaired of his life. It was not chastening, but he was having the sentence of death written in himself. He held himself practically for a dead man, and the Lord says, 'Well, now I must bring death right on to you, and so you will be a dead man.' In his case it was making it good by the trials he went through, and with this object, that nothing but the life of Christ should come out. The Lord says 'I must make this thorough that he may realise it in himself,' and then Paul sums it up by saying, 'so then death worketh in us, but life in you,' that is, Paul was so entirely a dead man, that nothing but the life of Christ wrought in him towards the Corinthians. Wonderful description! If the vessel thinks or acts, it is spoilt. There is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ to come out, and if the vessel is anything, by so much the light is hindered; but if the vessel *is kept dead*, nothing but the life of Christ is there to come out. It ought to have been the same in them as in himself, but it was not; of them he says, 'life in you.' Death was working in him, and so nothing but Christ's life worked out in them. Death and life are both taken morally in this verse. Read verses 10 to 12. There would be no 'so then,' if it had been death in the Corinthians already. It is a wonderful thing to say for anybody, but it is said of Paul. The treasure was, as we have seen, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It 'shined' into Paul's heart.

But the vessel is in danger of working, and so he applies Christ's death to the vessel and then there is nothing but Christ's life to come out. But it was death to him as a man."

ANSWER TO A LETTER ON THE SUBJECT OF DEBT.

We fully sympathise with you in your feelings as to professing Christians going in debt.

The utter want of conscience on this subject is really dreadful. It must sadly grieve the Spirit of God, and bring in leanness, barrenness and deadness of soul. If I am in debt, I have no right to give money in charity. Were I to do so, there would at least be, as another has said, a measure of honesty in my writing on the back of whatever I bestow, these words, "Borrowed from my creditors without their consent." But, dear friend, we should go very much further than this. We believe that, as a rule, Christians should not go into debt at all. "Owe no man anything," is so plain. Romans xiii. 8. We do not here enter upon the question of how far persons engaged in trade can carry out this holy and happy rule.

There are certain terms upon which the manufacturer sells to the warehouseman, and the warehouseman to the shop-keeper. Such as, for instance, "Cash in a month." We believe that it would be far safer and better in every way, for persons in trade to pay cash, and take the discount.

It is a poor, hollow, wort'less, unprincipled thing, for a man to traffic with fictitious capital, to live by a system of "kite-flying," to make a show at his creditor's expense. We fear there is a deplorable amount of this sort of thing even amongst those who occupy the very highest platform of profession. As to persons living in private life there is no excuse whatever for going into debt. What right have I before God or man, to wear a coat or a hat not paid for? What right have I to order a ton of coals, a pound of tea, or a joint of meat, if I have not the money to pay for it? It may be said, what are we to do? The answer is plain to an upright mind and a tender conscience, *we are to do without* rather than go in debt. It is infinitely better, happier, and holier to sit down to a crust of bread and a cup of water paid for, than to roast meat for which you are in debt.

We do not believe that the word of Christ can be dwelling in a person *who has no conscience as to debt*, and we are disposed to think that faithful personal discipline in all such cases, would have a good effect. We should feel called upon to mark such a person and have no company with him. (2 Thessalonians iii. chap. 6th and 14th verses.

As to persons who have failed in business and compounded with their creditors, we consider them morally bound to the full amount of their liabilities; and they are in debt until that amount is paid. No legal exemption could ever release a really upright person from the righteous obligation of pay-

ing what he owes. We feel called upon to write strongly on this subject, because of the sad laxity which obtains amongst professors with respect to it. All we want is to see some exercise of conscience; some measure of effort, however feeble, to get out of an utterly false position. A man may find himself unavoidably plunged into debt in fifty ways, but if he has an upright mind and a healthfully exercised conscience, he will use every effort, he will curtail his expenses within the narrowest circle possible, he will deny himself in every way, in order to pay off the debt, even by twenty-five cents a week. May the Lord give us to look at this great practical question with that amount of seriousness which it demands! We fear the cause of Christ is sadly damaged, and the testimony of professing Christians marred, through lack of sensibility and rightmindedness as to going into, and being in debt. Oh, for a tender conscience.

LOVE.

2 PETER i. 7.

The heart being in communion with God, affection flows out freely towards those who are dear to Him, and who, sharing the same nature, necessarily draw out the affections of the spiritual heart: brotherly love is developed.

There is another principle which crowns, and governs, and gives character to all others:—it is charity—love, properly so called. This is its root, is the nature of God Himself—the source and

perfection of every other quality that adorns Christian life. The distinction between love and brotherly love, is of deep importance; the former is indeed, as we have just said, the source whence the latter flows; but as this brotherly love exists in mortal men, it may be mingled in its exercise with sentiments that are merely human—with individual affection, with the effect of personal attractions, or that of habit, of suitability in natural character. Nothing is sweeter than brotherly affections; their maintenance is of the highest importance in the Church; but they may degenerate, as they may grow cool; and if love—if God—does not hold the chief place, they may displace Him—set Him aside—shut Him out. Divine love, which is the very nature of God, directs, rules, and gives character to brotherly love; otherwise, it is that which pleases us—*i. e.*, our own heart—that governs us. If divine love governs me, I love all my brethren; I love them because they belong to Christ; there is no partiality. I shall have greater enjoyment in a spiritual brother; but I shall occupy myself about my weak brother, with a love that rises above his weakness, and has tender consideration for it. I shall concern myself with my brother's sin, from love to God, in order to restore my brother, rebuking him, if needful: nor if divine love be in exercise, can brotherly love or its name be associated with disobedience. In a word, God will have His place in all my relationships. To exact brotherly love in such a manner as to shut

out the requirements of that which God is, and of His claims upon us, is to shut out God in the most plausible way, in order to gratify our own hearts. Divine love, then, which acts according to the nature, character, and will of God, is that which ought to direct and characterise our whole Christian walk, and have authority over every movement of our hearts. Without this, all that brotherly love can do is to substitute man for God.

1 JOHN iv. 7, &c.

Here it will be worth our while to notice the order of this remarkable passage (7-20). We possess the nature of God, consequently we love; we are born of Him and we know Him. But the manifestation of love *towards* us in Christ Jesus is the *proof* of that love; it is thus that we know it (11-16); we enjoy it by dwelling in it. It is present life in the love of God, by the presence of His Spirit in us; the enjoyment of that love by communion, in that God dwells in us, and we thus dwell in Him (17); His love is perfected with us; the perfection of that love, viewed in the place that it has given us—we are, in this world, such as Christ is (18, 19); it is thus fully perfected with us—love to sinners, communion, perfection before God, gives us the moral and characteristic elements of that love, what it is in our relationship with God.

In the first passage, where the Apostle speaks of the manifestation of this love, he does not go beyond the fact that one who loves is born of God.

The nature of God, which is love, being in us, he who loves knows Him, for he is born of Him, has His nature and realizes what it is.

It is that which God has been with regard to the sinner, which demonstrates His nature of love. Afterwards, that which we learnt as sinners, we enjoy as saints. The perfect love of God is shed abroad in the heart, and we dwell in Him. Already as He (Jesus) is, in this world, fear has no place in one to whom the love of God is a dwelling-place and rest.

The reality of our love to God, fruit of His love to us, is now tested. If we say that we love God and do not love the brethren, we are liars; for if the divine nature so near us (in them) does not awaken our spiritual affections, how then can He who is afar off do so? Accordingly, this is His commandment, that he who loves God love his brother also. (See also chap. v. 1, 2.)

But a danger exists on the other side. It may be, that we love the brethren because they furnish us with agreeable society, whose conscience is not wounded. A counter-proof is therefore given us. "Hereby we know that we love the children of God, if we love God and keep His commandments." If I walk with the brethren themselves in disobedience to their Father, it is certainly not because they are His children that I love them. If it was because I loved the Father and because they were His children, I should assuredly like them to obey Him. To walk, then, in disobedience with the children of

God, under the pretext of brotherly love, is not to love them as the children of God. If I loved them *as such*, I should love their Father and my Father, and I could not walk in disobedience to Him, and call it a proof that I loved them because they were His.

The universality of this love with regard to all the children of God: its exercise in practical obedience to His will: these are the marks of *true* brotherly love. That which has not these marks is a mere carnal party spirit, clothing itself with the name and the forms of brotherly love. Most certainly I do not love the Father, if I encourage His children in disobedience to Him.

“Moreover the semblance of love which does not maintain the truth, but accommodates itself to that which is not the truth, is not love according to God.

It is the taking advantage of the name of love in order to help on the seductions of Satan.

In the last days the test of true love is the maintenance of the truth. God would have us love one another; but the Holy Ghost, by whose power we receive this divine nature, and who pours the love of God into our hearts, is the Spirit of truth; and His office is to glorify Christ. Therefore it is impossible that a love which can put up with a doctrine that falsifies Christ, and which is indifferent to it, can be of the Holy Ghost—still less so, if such indifference be set up as the proof of that love.”