

"WE HAVE A GREAT HIGH PRIEST."

(Exodus xxviii.)

We are told in Hebrews that "we have a great high Priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God;" and again, "we have such an high Priest who is set on the right hand of the majesty in the heavens;" and again, "If He were on earth He would not be a priest." The place of the exercise of the priesthood of Jesus is the heavens; and He has gone there as Priest, "when He had by Himself purged our sins." His priesthood follows redemption for us. He is gone as a priest there to sustain, according to the light and perfections of God's presence, those whom He has redeemed. "We see not yet all things put under Him," says the apostle, "but we see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour." The same words (see lxx.) as those in verse two of our chapter, when speaking of Aaron's garments of "glory and beauty," or "honour;" so we find that what Aaron was typically and officially, when clothed in these garments, Christ is personally. But before we see Him thus as represented in our chapter, let us look on Him in His life down here, before the way into the holiest was made manifest. We read in Exodus xxvi. 31, of a vail which separated the holy place from the most holy, and concealed the glory of God within. A vail composed of "blue and purple and scar-

let, and fine-twined linen of cunning work; with cherubims shall it be made." This vail figured to us the flesh of Christ, as we are told in Hebrews x. 20. The materials which composed the vail tell us of the purity and graces of Christ. We find that the "blue" was the first of these things, the heavenly colour. Heavenly was He in all His ways, walking through the world as "the Son of man: who is in heaven." (John iii.) Truly perfect in His humanity, yet with a savour of heaven in all His ways. The royal colour, the "purple," was there too; born a king as we read from the Gentile mouth, "Where is He that is born king of the Jews?" And then the "scarlet," which conveys to us the human glory of Jesus. (Psalm viii.) "And fine-twined linen," His own perfect personal spotlessness, and inherent righteousness. With the cherubims added, for God the Father had "given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man," as we read in John v. The cherubims are always the companions of the throne, the judicial executive of the throne in government. (See them in Gen. iii., Ex. xxv., 2 Chron. iii., Ezek. i.-xi, Rev. iv., etc.) Thus we have in the vail that which concealed God within, and in it the figure of Christ's flesh. And He was thus presented to man, and He put forth His claims; but one after another they were refused, rejected and set aside. His earthly claims being thus refused, He must die and rise again that He may have a heavenly people, and bring them in divine righteousness before God.

In verse 4 of the chapter before us, we find certain garments which were to be made; a breastplate, an ephod, and a robe, a brodered coat, a mitre, and a girdle. Now the ephod was that which peculiarly characterized the priesthood. In 1 Sam. xxii. we read of Doeg, the Edomite, falling upon and slaying fourscore persons who wore the linen ephod. David when he inquired of the Lord, put on the ephod. (1 Sam. xxiii. 9-12.) The ephod was composed of the same materials as the vail, (without the cherubims), but there was one material *added* to those composing it, which was *gold*. Gold is the figure of divine righteousness in Scripture. The inner part of the tabernacle and the furniture and the vessels were of gold. We learn from this, that while God's Son had come down in divine and perfect love, and "had taken not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham He had taken hold;" He who was "in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him." God took Him up and set Him, in divine righteousness, in His presence. He is "with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And we find Him thus set there in divine righteousness before God, and girded with the girdle of service for His people; to wash their feet and cleanse them

practically according to the purity of what God *is*, not merely according to what they *ought to be*. We find Him thus in John xiii. All His earthly claims had been put forth before this and refused,—as Son of God, Son of David, and Son of man. (See John xi., xii.) He looks beyond it all into the heavenly glory; and, in the washing of the disciples' feet, we learn that which He girded Himself to do in the glory into which He was about to go. He had come from God and went to God. In the end of chapter xiii., He speaks of His work that gives Him a title to be there, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." And in chapter xiv. He enters into the Father's house, now as a glorified man, upon a title that brings others in too, and we find those others in our chapter, His people, associated with Him. (Verses 9-29.) Their names are borne upon His shoulders and His heart; on the "stones of memorial," and the "breast-plate of judgment:" and they *are set in their places in GOLD!* Brought in and set in *divine righteousness* in Him in the presence of God, "who hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. v. 21.) He bears the weight and burden of His people on His shoulders before God Himself; and more, He cannot be there without representing them, for we read in verse 28, "they shall bind the breast-plate by the rings thereof unto the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it may be above the curious girdle of the ephod and that the breast-

plate be *not loosed* from the ephod. And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breast-plate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually." And more than this, He bears their judgment according to the light and perfections (the Urim and Thummim) of God's holy presence. The robe of blue was under all the official garments—the personal, heavenly character of Christ. But when He went into the holy place, to "heaven itself," He left them behind to a "holy Father's" care. As the Father had sent Him into the world, (John xvii.) to bear testimony to Him, and for His name; and to manifest the savour of His life on earth, to bring forth fruit to the praise and glory of God. Thus, as at Pentecost, as our great High Priest went into the holy place, to heaven itself, He sent down the Holy Ghost to His people; and as the golden bells and pomegranates were on Aaron's robe, that "his sound shall be heard when He goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord." So was the sound of Jesus, the testimony and the fruits of the Spirit (the golden bell which made the sound, the testimony; the pomegranates, the fruit,) heard upon earth at Pentecost, when He went into the holy place.

But the precious fruits are often mingled in their purity with something of the flesh and the natural man; and we read that, "Thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, *Holiness to the Lord*; and thou shalt

put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things (the testimony and fruits when mingled with anything of the flesh or the natural man) which the children of Israel shall hallow, in all their holy gifts; and it shall always be upon *his* forehead that *they* may be accepted before the Lord."

Precious and varied and beautiful are the offices He thus sustains for His people—sustains, not merely according to their inconsistencies, but according to the light and perfections and holiness of what God is, to whom they have been brought in Him.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS.

I have just been thinking how the great apostate systems, whether civil or ecclesiastical, are to advance in strength and magnificence just as their day of doom and judgment approaches. Witness the woman in Rev. xviii., and the beast in Rev. xiii. And, I ask, Is not this moment through which we are passing giving pledges of this? Do we not see the great ecclesiastical system advancing to occupy itself of the world with something of giant strength? And is not the world, as a civil or secular thing, spreading itself out in luxuries and attainments and cultivation and magnificence beyond all precedent? And are not all these things the

pledges that all is on the road to the display of the woman and the beast in their greatness and grandeur, which are divinely-destined to precede their judgment?

But again, I ask, Is there any such notice under the hand of the Spirit that the *saints* are to rise to their great or beautiful condition before their translation? The *apostate* things are to be great before their judgment comes, but, I ask, is the true thing to be great in its way before its glory comes? This is an affecting enquiry. What answer does the oracle of God give it? The 2nd Tim. contemplates the *ruin* or *break-up* of the Church. But what condition does it anticipate things to be in afterwards? No restoration to spiritual strength or beauty in the order of the Church, but *the pure in heart* calling on the Lord together outside (the disorder of) the great house, and following the virtues, and cultivating the graces that become them in company.

Jude anticipates the last days. But what then? He promises nothing in the way of restored order and power, but encourages "the beloved" to build themselves up in holy faith, and to be looking for the mercy of God unto eternal life. The 2nd Peter also contemplates the last days, and fearful *unclean* abominations among professors, and the *scorning of promises* in the world. But he gives no hint of restored order and strength in the Church, but tells the saints to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour, in the assurance that the

promise of *His coming and majesty is not a cunningly-devised fable.*

John contemplates the last days also, but it is under one strongly-defined aspect or characteristic—the tampering with, and the denial of, the inestimably precious mystery of the Godhead Persons, and the truth about the Son.

The judgment of the seven churches takes place in Rev. ii. and iii. It is a solemn scene. There is some good and much evil. There are many healthful admonitions for us, both in our individual and gathered condition—but there is no promise of restored order and power. The churches are judged—left under the word of judgment, and we hear no more of them *on earth*—the next sight of the elect is *in heaven*, in chapter iv. All this beloved, is serious and yet happy, for it is strikingly verified by the great moral phenomena around us at this moment. . . . It is well. It is gracious in the Lord to cast up before our eye, in His word, the high-road along which we were destined to travel, and the sights we were appointed to see. And it is happy to know that *our translation does not wait for our regained condition of corporate order and strength.* We might wait *long* if that were so, according to present appearances.

The *wrong* things will be in their *magnificence* just when their *judgment* comes,—the *true* thing will be in *weakness* till its *glory* comes.

“FAINT, YET PURSUING.”

JUDGES VIII. 4.

“And Gideon came to Jordan and passed over, he and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing.” The opening of a campaign, the carrying on of the struggle, with endurance to the end, are all included in Paul’s memorable summary,—“I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a (‘the’ in the original) crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day.” (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.) A ship may be making little progress and yet answer her helm; ready to take advantage of a favourable breeze. Delays unlooked-for may occur: yet her log-book of the course she kept, with the winds that blew, may justify the master and the crew in the eyes of her owners, that all had been done that could be accomplished. In our Christian career unlooked-for difficulties may arise (and necessarily so for the trial of our faith.) We may have to encounter opposition where we looked for assistance. We may have to suffer most from those with whom we once held sweet fellowship. It may be our lot to have bitter experience of the words in Psalm lv. 12: “For it was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him; but it was thou, a man mine equal,

my guide and mine acquaintance, we took sweet counsel together and walked to the house of God in company." How little, after all, have we been prepared for it; how impatient under it! What scope has been given to the exercise of reason; how little for the exercise of faith? We have held truth in the head, and it could not meet the necessities or trials of the heart. And it is gracious of the Lord to show this to us, and to bring us to acknowledge it before him, and to have bowels of sympathy for those who entered into conflict without tried weapons of war. (1 Sam. xvii. 9.)

Yet, let us not be misunderstood. Strength to pursue a course depends upon the course being right. The right object attracts forward, has propelling power in it, because it is right. Hence the immense importance of truth simply as truth. How well does it repay any real regard for it. What provision for necessities, what charges it undertakes! In Proverbs iv.: "Forsake her not and she shall preserve thee; love her, and she shall keep thee. . . . Exalt her and she shall promote thee to excellent honor." And what is here advanced of Wisdom is true also of the Lord Jesus. A due regard to His glory and His honor is the charge of His people's safety. The precept given by Him, "No man goeth a warfare at his own charges," is made good in His service. He amply provides for every emergency. It is true wisdom to apprehend this. And here the simplicity of faith enters. The doctrine of justification by faith

may be peremptorily insisted upon and Scripture ransacked in support of it; yet the very ablest advocates of this truth, and, convinced too, of its being true, may break down in the sister fact, that we must walk by faith, put on faith;—have faith in God, and whatever we enter upon or undertake, perform it in dependence upon God.

What mistakes arise from forgetfulness of this! How men plunge into the Lord's battles with their own weapons; bringing their own artillery to play upon their antagonists, and exposing, in their censure, of other men's motives, the whereabouts of their own. But the Lord hath no need of this. The dignity of the truth is above this. Faith will act the part of a general who makes his observations before entering into the *melée*, and disposes his forces for the attack, and continues his plans unmoved by the din of conflict, or the clouds of smoke and dust. Combatants there will be in the ranks who fight on for fighting's sake, without principle to lead them into action, and having no energy but their self-will to maintain them there; and if this be crossed, and their own importance interfered with, are forward to throw away their weapons in disgust, or discharge them, when retreating, in the faces of those who had been companions in service. Alas! how sorrowful is all this to the heart quickened of Jesus to have sympathy with Him. The triumph of the truth, swallows up in its grandeur, the individual share in promoting the victory. So the fall of an opponent in

such a struggle gives no room for self-exultation, but rather for commiseration. Victory is hallowed by tears of regret for those who, from love of ease, carnal security, carelessness of walk, error in judgment, or weakness of faith, were led into a position where they were sure to be vanquished,

Still, while it is the privilege of faith to anticipate the end, ever assured of blessing from God, yet the way is weary, and often the hands are heavy, the spirits droop, and then the trial of constancy of purpose comes on: and though faint, yet to be found pursuing, is the precursor of blessing and triumph. And this is the turning point of the career. Unbelief sheers off when difficulty threatens. Faith escapes none of these trials, yet holds on her course "though faint yet pursuing." Let us beware of misjudging our condition by our feelings or perceptions; of putting our enjoyment in the service, in place of the service itself: and so, contrariwise, of confounding our trials, which necessarily arise from it, with the end in view. It is easy to do this. How many are the ways by which men delude themselves into supineness. It is the cause of a controversy which justifies one. It is at all times unpleasant in itself, but still it may be imperative duty to engage in it. The plea of the evil of it, as such, may be made an excuse of by some. Its tendency to lead bystanders to mock at the truth, the apology of others. Yet if it comes in the way of duty, we cannot avoid it. To everything there is a season; "a time of war and a time

of peace," (Eccles. iii. 8), but servants have no right to be choosers, much less to refrain from action, when the service is arduous, and attended with difficulty, seeking into the future for excuses for in-ertness, instead of being earnest and zealous in the work of to-day.

The book of Judges gives the history of man's unfaithfulness in the very place of blessing, sinning in the very face of the bounty and grace which had put him there. It also gives the dealings of God with His people, in chastisement, and repeated deliverance. Such was His love and regard, that He pitied them in their sufferings, which their own sin brought upon them. "Yea, many a time He turned His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath." (Psalm lxxviii. 38.) The sixth chapter of Judges opens with a renewed account of Israel's iniquity, and the consequences of it. "The hand of Midian prevailed against Israel, . . . and Israel was greatly impoverished, . . . and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord." How gracious His ways! He sent a prophet unto them, to remind them of His goodness, how He had deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all them that oppressed them, and gave them their land. "And I said unto you, I am the Lord your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but ye have not obeyed my voice." The testimony to their evil is recorded. The bounty of His grace is unfolded to meet it. Gideon is appointed a deliverer. And the

angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, "the Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." And Gideon said unto him, "If the Lord be with us, why then is this befallen us? and where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?" It is hard in the midst of the chastening for departure from God, to realize that it is because relationship had existed that this had befallen them. To recognise His hand, was the germ of faith; to see His deliverance in purpose, the growth of it. "If the Lord be with us, why then has all this befallen us?" When He was grieved with their sins, and insulted by the setting up of false gods, He left them to reap, as they had sown, confusion and strife,—to be scattered and peeled. Yes, He noticed them in chastening, because they were His. And Gideon said, "O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. And the Lord said unto him, **SURELY I WILL BE WITH THEE,** and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." And it is just here that the spring of confidence rises.—"*I will be with thee.*" It was so with Moses of old. If the Lord be not with me, carry us not up hence. The starting point of faith is, "God with us." Without this, all contest is in vain and worthless. He met them as they were, and acted on His faithfulness to His promise to their fathers, passing by in marvellous grace their own sinfulness and unbelief."

But how should Gideon be assured of this? The Lord would accept of his offering; and so little did Gideon apprehend His ways, that the seal of his acceptance was regarded by him as the knell of his death; for he said, "Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face." And the Lord answered him, "Peace be unto thee; fear not; thou shalt not die." And Gideon built an altar there. His soul is awakened for his work. There is struggle for establishment, and the Lord condescends to his weakness, and submits to be proved, that His servant might trust Him, (verses 36 to 40). He has evidence of His favour, and starts on his career. What wretched confusion was around! What prospect of remedy! How hopeless, to reason, the task! Yet faith shrinks not at impossibilities, for they exist not before Him with whom we have to do. Omnipotence sees hills as the plains, and water in the flinty rock. Now Gideon had got hold of a great principle—the Lord with His people in chastening them, and therefore His hand in deliverance. Being *His*, they were sure of the *former*, and equally safe for the latter. Looking at troubles amongst saints apart from the Lord's hand in permitting them, the eye discerns no remedy; the heart is overwhelmed with consternation. Fear enters: and that which in communion would have been the precursor of blessings, becomes to unbelief the harbingers of defeat. But, blessed be God! it is not so, the name of the Lord invoked, the two or three assembled together in that name, the Holy Ghost re-

cognised in the body, surely the Lord will shew He acknowledges us by chastening when needed, that He may bless us the more. "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord and shall not we receive evil." But, as was before stated, this is the trial of faith, it is a step in the right direction to discern the Lord's dealings with His people. "The Lord with them," becomes recovered strength to Gideon; and accordingly as this was discerned, there was blessing in his career. How his faith sought encouragement, and how the Lord dealt graciously towards him, the Scripture records.

"FAINT, YET PURSUING."

(JUDGES viii. 4.)

"Though faint, yet pursuing,
We go on our way,
The Lord is our Leader,
His word is our stay;
Though suffering and sorrow
And trial be near,
The Lord is our Refuge,
And whom can we fear.

"He raiseth the fallen,
He chereth the faint,
If the weak are oppress'd,
He hears their complaint;
The way may be weary,
And thorny the road,
But how can we falter,
Whose help is in God.

"And to His green pastures
Our footsteps He leads;
His flock in the desert
How kindly he feeds!

The lambs in His bosom
He tenderly bears,
And brings back the wanderers
Safe from the snares.

"Though clouds may surround us,
Our God is our Light,
Though storms rage around us,
Our God is our might;
So, 'faint, yet pursuing,'
Still onward we come,
The Lord is our Leader,
And heaven our home.

"And there, all His people
Eternally dwell,
With Him who hath led them
So safely and well;
The toilsome way over,
The wilderness past;
And Canaan the blessed
Is theirs at the last."

(To be continued, D. V.)