

## OBEDIENCE AND MANIFESTATION.

John xiv. 18-28.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS:

It is striking here the way you get the settled knowledge of our place and position, and yet the ways of God with us are put conditionally on our love to Him. I get known life and perfect peace—"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." He also says, "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." That is not, "We love Him because He first loved us"—the work of grace; but here it is, "If a man love Me, My Father will love him." It is dealing with children; not a question of whether they are *children*, but *obedient* children; the Father's love dealing with His child, and chastening it if need be. A parent does not scourge his child when it is doing well, nor is he pleased with it when it is doing ill. We are under this fatherly government of God which depends on the conduct of the child. Jesus has committed us to Him. He said, "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me" (John xvii. 11). He keeps us as Father; but as "holy," He must have a walk that suits Him. We know we are in Christ, and Christ in us; then we ought to be manifesting Him in everything, and reckoning ourselves dead. We are in Him in the power of life before God, and at peace with the peace He gives and which He made

"through the blood of His cross." We are loved too as He was loved (John xvii. 23). Then come the dealings of the Father with one in this state. The proof of love is obedience; just as a child that loves his father obeys his father.

It is of all importance (if we know peace—the peace He has made—and what it is to be in Christ, and Christ in us), how far our souls are walking in this present enjoyment of the manifestation of Christ. When we are walking in obedience, the Holy Ghost is not grieved; if not, He occupies me with myself. The effect of His presence is to make me find I have gone wrong. "Your feet are dirty," He says. Of course anything gross comes to us at once, unless we have become hardened; but I mean carelessness. If I am not grieving Him, He reveals the unsearchable riches of Christ to me, and that is the manifestation of Him. "Now ye are clean," He says, "abide in Me," and that in order to bear much fruit. The Father deals with us with respect to our walk. What a blessing to know He takes notice of everything about us. "He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous." There is not a moment that He is not taking cognizance of our state! Such a perfect settlement of our place with God, that the question is one wholly of walk and communion.

The question of acceptance should never arise; it is settled. "Because I live, ye shall live also." He must die before I can die. The question you have to occupy yourself with is, Am I joying in

God? Is Christ manifested to my soul? or, Is there anything in your soul, in your ways, that hinders His manifesting Himself to you? "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you." He comes to be with you spiritually, that you may enjoy His presence. Are you walking in such a way that you are enjoying His presence? Would the effect of His presence be to bring to light something in my soul that hinders the joy, or simply to enjoy the blessedness of it? Have we that character of obedience—the power of Christ's word—in our habits, ways, our dress, our houses, so that if Christ comes in we have only to sit down and enjoy Him? It is a very solemn question, if our hearts are not dulled to His love, whether our doings or our state are a hindrance to our enjoyment of Christ. Strength is wanting, of course, and discernment, to do His will; but these manifestations give a sense of the interest He has in us; and it is that by which all the things of this world—things that were all gain to us—are dung and dross, by the sense we get of what Christ is, and His blessedness. They have more than lost their power, they are offensive to the Spirit—*it is not Christ.*

The manifestation of Christ gives the consciousness too of what we shall have for ever. If Christ was everything to the disciples, and they felt they could not do without Him, what comfort they got from, "I will come to you"! The thing is, we get accustomed to live without Christ.

Look into your own heart and see if there is not, more or less, the habit of living without that full communion with Christ. It is *that* we have to watch against, if we desire to glorify Him, and live in the consciousness of the blessedness He has brought us to. It is what will be our everlasting joy. We have now the double joy of communion "with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." Just think what the force of that expression is!

I would desire for your hearts to have activity and diligence to get into this atmosphere. What is fellowship? Common thoughts and feelings and joys. If we have that with the Father, what a thing it is! His thoughts and feelings and joys will be the spring of ours. That is Christian blessedness; the Father and the Son, thus revealing Themselves in grace, bring in Their own thoughts and joys—and holiness to delight in them too—so that Their thoughts and ways become the spring of our feelings and actions.

If we get to enjoy this real manifestation of the Father and the Son, you will find—I do—that there is very little *power to keep* it. You who believe and trust and reckon on His love, do you find you can look up *steadfastly* into heaven? Stephen looked up *steadfastly*, He was full of the Holy Ghost. But it does not last long with us. I find I cannot look up *steadfastly*, it dies out, some thought or other comes in. There is not the positive living in that place where all else is judged. The Son is the revealer of these heavenly

things on which our affections are to be set ; but if I let my thoughts go to that which is not of God, He must judge it. If I am keeping Christ's word, the effect is this blessed revelation of the Father's thoughts and mind and joys, and that strengthens the heart and spirit, and gives us discernment of all that is in this poor world.

I would speak of the means of being sustained in the condition to enable us to enjoy these things ; and then a word on the occasion of our losing it.

Hebrews speaks of maintaining us in it. We are in a world where the tendency is to distract us from it. What we have to do is to deliver the testimony of Christ in the world. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the *Father*, but of the world" (1 John ii. 16). It does not say it is not of *God*. God made the world—not as it is *morally*—but He did not make sin. He made the trees ; but He did not create them for man to make money of. When I see these heavenly things we have spoken of, all this is dross and dung to me ; but it is a constant solicitation to our thoughts and senses, and tends to shut out the Father's world, where the Son is, and that in things where there is no outward harm. Then I get the constant service of Christ. It is a question of communion, and there is grace constantly in exercise toward us. "We obtain mercy"—which we all need every moment—"and find grace to help in time of need." "He was in all points tempted like as we

are, apart from sin" (Heb. iv. 15, 16). But you cannot walk through the streets of London without the devil having something in every shop window to draw the heart from Christ, and *on purpose*. Christ was tempted; that was not lust. Satan tries to turn us aside from the way, and tests the fidelity of our inward hearts, if we will follow Christ. "One thing I do" (Phil. iii. 13). But Christ is always up there for us; and when temptation or difficulty comes, there is mercy, knowing our weakness and infirmities, and that there are trials in the path of faith. He understands all that; He was thoroughly put to the test; more than we can ever be; and He is perfectly cognizant of it all, not as a Jewish high priest who could not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but He was tempted in all points—sin apart, that He might understand it all and sympathize.

It is not a question of sins here. I have "no more conscience of sins," they are gone; nor of failure—if I make an idol of my child it is sin, though perfectly right to have the affection for it, and woe to him who has it not. The word of God comes as a sword and detects sin; but here it is access to God. (Heb. iv.) We come "boldly to the throne of grace." That I do not get in John, there it is fellowship with the Father and the Son; but then the moment I have an idle or an uncharitable thought, fellowship is gone; I have sinned, and if that goes on long, there comes

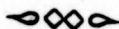
hardness of conscience. Then he says, "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father." Not a question of imputation, but of fellowship. "God is light," and in every detail, if any thought of that which is darkness is let into my mind, there can be no communion; but Christ is in activity to restore the communion. There is neither allowance nor imputation of sin; but I have not been obedient, I have let my old nature act, distractions have come in. If I have not kept His commandments, the effect of His presence is to awaken my conscience to whatever is not of God. I have not the abiding of the Father and the Son—the comfort of it in my soul—and then the effect of Their presence is to make me uncomfortable. Grace is there, not to prevent sins being known, or that righteousness fails; but in virtue of the righteousness of that propitiation, not to let this breach continue in the state of communion of my soul. Advocacy comes in; for there is nothing more dangerous than to get to do without communion. Supposing a child is in the delight of fellowship with his father, and sees a cloud on his father's face, he says directly, "What is the matter?" What would you think if he saw the cloud and did not trouble about it? If you get hardened, you are away from God, without finding it out! Do you find out if you lose the light of God's countenance on your soul? Are you so walking with God that you get the consciousness of it if you are not walking in the light of His countenance?—

or have you something creeping in that makes you go half a day—a whole day perhaps—without having His presence? Are you content with living without any communications from Christ? Why does He speak of coming to us and not leaving us comfortless? Because He loved us and knew what would be the joy of our souls!

Has that an echo in your soul? Has this fellowship with Him such an echo in your souls that the joy of your path down here is, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come again to you"? If the love of Christ has power in our souls, it will be so. Is it the *need* of our souls, because we have tasted His love? How can we manifest Christ, or be really effectual epistles of Christ, if our souls are not thus in communication with Him, and the flesh judged, enabling us to "bear about in our bodies the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal bodies"? (2 Cor. iv. 10.)

Only remember this, beloved friends, that "we are not our own, we are bought with a price" (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). He has taken us up for eternal salvation; but He has taken our hearts up to be for *Christ*. Then it creates a want in our hearts, and He says, "I will manifest Myself unto him."

The Lord gave us to be so near Him, that the affections of Christ, which He has declared so abundantly to us, may have an echo in our hearts!





**"THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED."**

JOHN XIII. 23; XIX. 26; XX. 2; XXI. 7, 20.

"I have been just feeling that I can fully enjoy the truth which these words convey. And I would cherish such an experience and ask the Lord to fix and enlarge it.

It is far from intimating that one is more interested than another in the grace or salvation of God, or loved with a more faithful or enduring love. But it does intimate that there may be a more personal attachment between the Master and some of His disciples, than between Him and others. All, I may say, sat at supper with Him, while only one leaned on His bosom. All continued with Him in His temptations, and are to receive the kingdom together, but only three were in the garden, or on the holy hill with Him. For there is more personal oneness of thought and feeling in some than in others, more of that which, as among ourselves, draws the willing heart along.

If I look at a brother whose way savours much of that which I know Jesus must delight in, being weak and self-renouncing and unaffectedly humble, and withal devoted and unworldly, I may remember John, and see that disciple whom Jesus loved reflected in my brother. But then, how happy is it to remember that John himself was but one of a company whom the same Jesus had chosen and called and bound to Himself for ever. Did John exclude Thomas or Bartholomew? Thomas or

Bartholomew, in the great evangelic sense, were as much to Christ as John. The one was not a whit a more accepted man than the others.

This is sure and blessed, as well as plain and simple. I may rejoice in it with all certainty. And if I have any love to Him who has called me to such assured and eternal blessedness, will I not rejoice in this, that He has an object in which He can take more delight than I must well know I and my way can afford Him?

Thus do I find reasons for enjoying that sentence, again and again repeated, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and for delighting also in the thought that such a truth finds its illustration among the saints now, as it did in the midst of the apostles in earlier days.

The love with which we have to do is too perfect to be *partial*. It does not act irregularly or carelessly. We are all the objects of it. Thomas is not neglected because John is thus loved. But because this love is *real*, it is moved in this way by a John. But when I see a John leaning on Jesus while I myself am at a distance, let me have grace to look still and to say, "It is good for me to be here." If I am not in the same experience, still it is blessed to enjoy the thought that another is there. Peter was gladdened by the vision of a glory in Moses and Elias, though it was all beyond him. So is my happy and thankful spirit to entertain the thought of my more heavenly brother pressing the bosom of our common Lord."

## MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 40.)

### *Jephthah and his Daughter.*

(Chap. xi.)

In verses 1-11 the deliverer comes on the scene. He bears the stamp of infirmity, so often found throughout this book. Jephthah, the Gileadite, was "a mighty man of valour," but of impure origin, the son of an harlot, the remembrance of which could not fail to fill him with shame. Nevertheless God used him, yea much more than this, presents to us, through him, some of the characteristics of Christ. Let us remember that the history of believers is only of value in the measure in which a reflection of the Saviour is reproduced in them. There would be much to perplex and little to edify in the history of Jephthah, did we not seek therein what manifested God's character. The word of God which shows, on the one hand, the natural man, wholly estranged from God, describes to us, also, all the weaknesses and failures of men of faith such as Jephthah; but God gives us more than that in their history. He presents Christ to us, and it is this which makes them so interesting. We readily discover the faults of our brethren, but we should be more interested in the way God forms and fashions them, in order, spite of all, to raise up witnesses for Christ. Jephthah, whose origin was some-

what similar to that of Abimelech, presents a marked contrast to that ungodly man. Abimelech sought, from the outset, to exalt himself, and usurped the place of the legitimate family of Gideon. Jephthah, who—apart from his origin—was the eldest of the family, was rejected by his brethren: "Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of a strange woman" (ver. 2). Does that not remind us of the words: "We will not have this man to reign over us!" (Luke xix. 14). "Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob" (ver. 3). Jephthah allowed himself to be despoiled, humbled himself instead of lifting up his head among the wicked, gave up all his rights and went away to a strange country. But God knew how to find him and to bring him to the front again. The moment came, when those who had driven their deliverer away, were compelled to cast themselves as suppliants at his feet. "Did not ye hate me," said Jephthah to the elders of Gilead, "and expel me from my father's house?" (ver. 7). This very saviour whom they had derided, they were forced, as formerly were Joseph's brethren, to acknowledge in the far country; and, appealing to him in their distress, besought him to become their captain. Jephthah did not consent to take this title before victory (ver. 9). And so will it be with Christ, who will be publicly recognized as the Head of Israel by His triumph over their enemies. It is interesting to see in this man, despised by

the world yet enduring its scorn, a faint representation of the Messiah ; for we may say, that it was in representing Christ, that he was considered worthy to lead the people of God.

The children of Ammon were at that time, the sworn enemies of Israel. The worst adversaries of the people of God are always the descendants, according to the flesh, of believers. Midian, against whom Gideon fought, proceeded from Ishmael, the seed of Abraham according to the flesh ; Moab and the children of Ammon sprang from Lot ; Edom was the son of Isaac after the flesh. There were others, no doubt, such as Jabin under Barak, and the Philistines under Samson, but we maintain that our most determined enemies are the outcome of our failures or of the flesh in us. The bitterest opposition to the testimony and spiritual life of the church, springs from her own unfaithfulness under cover of the name of Christ. Her idolatrous ways, so foreign to divine life, in all their hatred and craft, will prove to be for the humiliation, chastisement and snare of God's people, to the very end.

The children of Ammon, taking advantage of the low condition of Israel to rise up against them, sought to despoil them of their lawful territory and privileges and to appropriate them to themselves. What had the people gained by bowing down before the idols of Ammon ? They had fallen under the judgment of God, and into the hands of the enemies of Jehovah. If we step on to the

world's platform, it robs us, causes us to lose the reality of our privileges, and takes them away. Dreadful confusion is the result. The world then says to us : My rights are as great as yours, I am as good a Christian as you are, for you show as much activity for the things of the world as I do. "Israel took away my land . . . now therefore restore those lands again peaceably" (ver. 13). Such are the consequences of our unfaithfulness.

Under these circumstances a revival produces remarkable effects. Jephthah did not deny the low condition of the people, but, when he addressed the children of Ammon, he went back to the beginning of Israel's blessings (vs. 15-27). Far from agreeing to this state of things, in accepting the yoke which Ammon for eighteen years had placed upon the people, he took his stand upon Israel's original blessings, in the day when they went out of Egypt for the purpose of entering Canaan. He maintained the blessings, as the ones upon which the people had been established. We will proceed, said he, in accordance with the principles which God gave us at the beginning, and which are ours for ever. He saw the people, the family of God, as God had looked at them at the first, and said : "Our conflict is not with the children of Ammon, but with the Amorites." It is the same for the church. Her warfare is with the spiritual powers in heavenly places (Ephes. vi), just as Israel's was with the Canaanites. Our controversy is not with the religious mixtures, which are

the outcome of the flesh and which we neither recognize as friends or enemies, nor do we combat them unless they compel us to do so. Our language should be that of Jephthah: "We will keep the land which Jehovah hath given us" (ver. 24).

Jephthah having spoken thus, a fresh blessing was granted him: "Then the Spirit of Jehovah came upon Jephthah" (ver. 29). The power of God was found in the path which he was on. Not to conform to the ruin as though God could accept it, and to act on the principles which God committed to us at the beginning, is the path of power even when we are reduced to the number of two or three gathered together in His name.

"The Spirit of Jehovah came upon Jephthah." Alas! how often it happens that the flesh manifests itself in us, as it did in him. He was not content with divine grace and power. Ignorant of the true character of God, he "vowed a vow unto Jehovah" (ver. 30), made an arrangement with God, on the footing of a mutual agreement; and, binding himself before Him in a legal way, fell into Israel's error in the wilderness of Sinai. "If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be Jehovah's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering" (vs. 30, 31).

God, leaving Jephthah to the responsibility and consequences of his vow, did not manifest either

approval or disapproval of it. Heaven seemed closed to the voice of the leader of Israel. Nevertheless the Spirit of Jehovah accorded to him the victory.

Jephthah returned to Mizpeh, unto his house, and, behold his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances. "She was his only child" (ver. 34). These words remind us of more than one passage of Scripture. God said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest" (Gen. xxii. 2). But Abraham offered up his son "by faith" at God's command, Jephthah offered his daughter by an act of his own will, which was simply a want of faith. The words "only," "only begotten," remind us again of a greater than Isaac. Like Jephthah in his earlier history, his daughter reproduced in a touching manner some traits of the character of Christ. When faith was lacking in the father, it shone out brightly in his poor child. This only daughter, devoted beforehand to the sacrifice by a rash vow (Christ, on the contrary, was that by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God), is seen submitting herself, instead of rebelling or blaming her father. "My father," said she, "if thou hast opened thy mouth unto Jehovah, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as Jehovah hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon" (ver. 36). She submitted on account of Jehovah, a faint reflection, doubtless, of

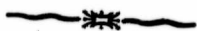


Him who said : " I come to do Thy will, O God." She counted her life as nothing, in view of the victory ; " forasmuch as Jehovah hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies," and for that consented to be sacrificed. No thought of herself detained her. Beautiful self-renunciation by faith which looked only to God ! She suffered besides in another way deeply painful for every woman of faith in Israel, whose desire was to be mother of a posterity which might become the lineage of the Messiah. But this only daughter consented to be cut off from the scene as a barren woman. " Let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows " (ver. 37). However beautiful this devotedness was, how infinitely did that of the Lord Jesus surpass it ! In view of salvation, He to whom everything belonged consented to be " cut off and have nothing " (Dan. ix. 26, margin). Abandoning all His prerogatives as Messiah, all His rights as Son of God and Son of man, he renounced His posterity in order to obtain a better victory which only He could achieve. He gave up His life, but " He shall see His seed " (Is. liii. 10), and Jehovah " will make His seed to endure for ever " (Ps. lxxxix. 29).

Truly, in this daughter of Israel was reproduced, very feebly no doubt, some of the perfection of Christ. Her simple faith shone out and she submitted to the will of God. She consented to be offered up for a burnt offering, like Him who was

sacrificed later on, not as she did to confirm the victory, but to obtain a better deliverance. Let us follow the example of Jephthah's daughter; let us learn to forget ourselves in offering ourselves up to Him who was sacrificed for us, to die in faith not having received the promises," without obtaining any apparent result for our labour, but satisfied to have been the epistle of Christ among men, and His representatives, to the glory and honour of God!

(To be continued, D. V.)



EXTRACT.—The nearness to Himself to which the Lord invites the soul—the intimacy with which He invests the heart of a believing sinner, it is most blessed for us to know. He does not deal with us in the style of a patron or benefactor: the world is full of that principle. "*They that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.*" Luke xxii. 25. Man will be ready enough to confer benefits in the character of a benefactor or patron, occupying all the while the distant place of both conscious and confessed superiority, but this is not Jesus—He can say, "*Not as the world giveth give I unto you.*"—He brings His dependant one very near to Him, He lets him know and feel that He is dealing with him as a kinsman rather than as a patron. But that makes all the difference in the world. I am bold to say that heaven depends upon this difference. The expected heaven of the

soul, and which in spirit it tastes now, depends on the Lord Jesus not acting with us on the principle of a patron, heaven would then be only a well-ordered world of human principles and benevolences, and what a thing that would be! Is it the condescendings of a great one that we see in Christ?—"I am among you as one that serveth," says He. Is it the distant and courtly benevolence of a superior that we receive from Him? "*The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them,*" is not of that kind. He is, it is eternally true "*Master and Lord,*" and He would have us know Him such, but He sits at our table with us; as of old He could command Moses to take off his shoes in His presence, but speak to him face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend.

And was it not thus to perfection in the days of His flesh on earth? Every case, I may say, tells us so—it was never the style of a mere benefactor, the distance and elevation of a patron, "*He bore our sicknesses, and carried our sorrows.*" Just look at Him at Jacob's well. A woman was there who had the most exalted thoughts of Him. "I know that Messiah cometh, who is called Christ; when He is come, He will tell us all things."—This was her high and just sense of the Messiah, not knowing that He to whom she was thus speaking face to face, could say immediately in answer to her, "*I that speak unto thee am He.*" But where was He, the exalted Christ all this time? Sitting on one stone with her, talking with her as

they had met together by the side of a well, and where (in order to give her entire ease in His presence) He had asked her for a drink of water—was this patronage after the manner of men? Was this the distance and condescension of a superior? Was this heaven or the world, man or God? Condescension, or the world, will confer what favour you please, but will have the elevation of a superior, and the reserve of a dependant kept and honoured. But heaven, or love, acts not, thus. Blessed, blessed, be God, Jesus, God manifest in the flesh, was kinsman to them He befriended, and as a kinsman He acted, and not as a patron. He seeks to bring us near—to invest our hearts with ease and confidence. He visits us, nay, He comes to us upon our invitation, as He went and dwelt two days with the Samaritans who came out and sought His company at the report of the woman of the well. He asks a favour from our hand, that we may take a favour from His without reserve—He will drink out of our pitcher while opening His eternal fountains for us, and eat of our kid at the tent door, while revealing eternal secrets to us. (Gen. xviii. John iv.)

And so it was (as another once observed) after He rose from the dead—He meets His disciples at the table again, gets the dinner ready for them, but tells them to help him to load the board. All this being still the way of love, and of heaven. He has now done with His sorrow and His humiliation in the world, it is true, but He has not done with this essential way of love—He is still the *kinsman* and not the *patron*. (John xxi. 8-14.)