

TO A SICK AND DYING ONE.

Dear———

As I hear you are very ill, I come to pay you a visit with this little note, as I had not the advantage of talking with you when at ——; yet I have but few words to say to you, as what God has graciously set before us is very simple; and thankful we ought to be that it is so. And what is deepest is simplest, that is, *the perfect love of God.*

Our difficulty is to reconcile our state, sinners as we are, with His loving us. Now that is exactly what the Gospel shews us. Through that unspeakable fact of the death of the Son of God, His love has been shewn to us in what He did *for our sins.* He commends His love to us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. His love brought quite near to us *where we are.* Hence it is that it is *only when we know where we are,* that we understand this love; that is, when we have learnt by Divine teaching that we are mere sinners in ourselves, that in us (that is in our flesh) dwells no good thing, we find that Jesus in this love has come to us there, and, though the Holy One, has been made sin for us. Oh, what a thought that is! How it opens the heart to guileless confession of what it is, and *all* the sin that is in it, so that it gets rest and peace with God.

I trust you enjoy this rest of heart. The work of Christ is perfect: He knew all our sins and all

we were, when He gave Himself for us, and has put all away, made us, if our sins were as scarlet, *as white as snow.*

Think of your being really white as snow before God, and you are bound to believe that, because it is the sure and revealed value of Christ's blood. Death has put an end to all that we were in God's sight.

And now trusting you have this peace, and assured it belongs to you, let me speak of another thing, the love of Him who has done this work for us. Think of Him, of His love, of His becoming a man for us, of His willingly going to death for us, that we might escape, how He must have loved you to do it! Do you think He loved you so as to do it? What a wonderful thought that the Son of God should love a poor thing like you, and want (He wants nothing) to have you with Himself, for your happiness, and as a part of His own, the fruit of the travail of His soul?

So what a difference this makes of death: it is not dying as some think it, *it is going to Him*, to One we love, to One *we know*, to One who has loved and loves us: it is departing and being with Christ.

If your soul has peace, think much of Him and His love, and may He be very near you. He refreshes the spirit, raises above weakness and pain to think these are but outward things for a little moment, and what we are going to lose is only sickness and what is mental and perishable, to be with One who has loved us in spite of all, and takes us

to be with Himself. Think much on Jesus—I do not mean as if you could think much in your weak state, but looking to Him—and lean on Him as a sick child lies in its mother's arms, because it has no strength, not because it can do much.

Peace be with you, dear—, and much of His presence, the true source of joy and strength. If you go a little before us, to that beloved One, it will surely not be your loss.

Your affectionate servant and brother in Christ.

“IN CHRIST”—THE BELIEVER'S STANDING.

Our place, our standing before God, is no longer in flesh. It is in Christ.

Christ, as man, has taken quite a new place to which neither Adam innocent, nor Adam sinner, had anything to say.

The best robe formed no part of the prodigal's first inheritance at all: it was in the father's possession, quite a new thing.

Christ has taken the place consequent on putting away our sins, on having glorified God as to them, and finishing the work. He has taken in righteousness, and man in Him has got, a new place in righteousness with God.

When quickened, he is quickened with the life in which Christ lives, the Second Adam, and submitting to God's righteousness, knowing that he is

totally lost in the first and old man, and having bowed to this solemn truth, as shewn and learned in the cross, *he is sealed* with the Holy Ghost, livingly united to the Lord, one Spirit. He is a man in Christ, not in the flesh, or in the first Adam. All that is closed for him in the cross, where Christ made Himself responsible for him in respect of it and died unto sin once; and he is alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. He belongs to a new creation, having the life of the Head of it as his life. Where he learnt the utter total condemnation of what he was, he learnt its total and eternal putting away.

THE SPIRIT, NOT OF FEAR BUT OF POWER.

2 Tim. i. 3-8.

Such exhortations are never given unless there are circumstances to require it. They are intended to meet some tendency in the flesh, that we may guard against it in the Spirit. It is well to remember how the Lord deals with us, just as we are; how, in all His ways, He takes into account the circumstances we are in, and does not, like philosophy, take us into other circumstances.

With regard to our cares and trials, Christ does not take us out of them. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world." While He leaves us in the world, He leaves us liable to all

that is incident to man; but, in the new nature, teaches us to lean on God.

The thought with us often is, that, (because we are Christians) we are to get away from trials; or else, if in them, we are not to feel them. This is not God's thought concerning us. The theoretical Christian may be placid and calm; he has fine books and nice sayings; but, when he has something from God to ruffle his placidity, you will find he is a Christian more conscious of the difficulties there are in the world, and of the difficulty of getting over such. The nearer a man walks with God, through grace, the more tender he becomes as to the faults of others; the longer he lives as a saint, the more conscious of the faithfulness and tenderness of God, and of what it has been applied to in himself.

See the life of the Lord Jesus; take Gethsemane, what do we find? Never a cloud over His soul, uniform placidity. You never see Him off His centre. He is always Himself. But take the Psalms, and do we find nothing *within* to break that placidity? The Psalms bring out what was passing within. In the gospels He is presented to man, as the testimony of the power of God, with Him, in these very things that would have vexed man. He walked with God about them; and so we find Him in perfect peace, saying with calmness, "Whom seek ye?"—"I am he." How peaceful. How commanding! (for peace in the midst of difficulties does command.) When by Himself,

in an agony, He sweats as it were great drops of blood; it was not a placidity because He had not heart-feeling within. He felt the full trial in spirit; but God was always with Him in the circumstances, and, therefore, He was uniformly calm before men.

We are not to expect never to be exercised, or troubled, or cast down, as though we were without feeling. "They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." He thoroughly felt it all. The iron entered into His soul. "Reproach," He says, "hath broken my heart." But there is this difference between Christ in suffering and affliction and ourselves: with Him, there was never an instant elapsed between the trial and communion with God. This is not the case with us. We have first to find out that we are weak, and cannot help ourselves; then we turn and look to God. Where was Paul when he said, "All men forsook me?" His confidence in God was not shaken; but looking around him, by the time he got to the end of his ministry, his heart was broken because of the unfaithfulness. He saw the flood of evil coming in (Chaps. iii. and iv.), and the danger of Timothy's being left alone, looking at the evil, and feeling his own weakness; and so (lest Timothy should get into a spirit of fear), he says, "Stir up the gift of God that is in thee, . . . for God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou, therefore ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me

his prisoner; but be thou a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." If we have got the spirit of fear, this is not of God, for God has given us the spirit of power. He has met the whole power of the enemy in the weakness of man, in Christ, and Christ is now set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. "Be thou a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God." What! a partaker of afflictions? Yes. Of deliverance from the sense of them? No; a partaker of afflictions that may be felt as a man, but "according to the power of God!" This is not in not feeling the pressure of sorrow and weakness. Paul had a "thorn in the flesh," (2 Cor. xii.); and did he not feel it think you? Aye, he felt it daily; and as "a messenger of Satan to buffet him" withal. And what did he say? "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities [in those things in which I am sensibly weak], that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

The power of God, coming in on our side, does not lessen the feeling to us; but we "cast all our care upon Him, for He careth for us." Not that at the very moment we refer it to God we shall get an answer. Daniel had to wait three full weeks for an answer from God; but from the first day that he set his heart to understand and to chasten himself before his God, his words were heard. (Dan. x.) With us the first thing often is to think about the thing and begin to work in our own

minds, before we go to God. There was none of this in Christ. "At that time, Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father," &c., (Matt. xi.) We weary ourselves in the greatness of our way.

"Be careful for nothing." (Phil. iv. 6.) That is easily said. But what! not be careful about the state of the Church, or about the pressure of a family? &c. "Be careful for nothing." Whatever produces a care in us, produces God's care for us; therefore "Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." So "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus." Not your hearts keep the peace of God; but the peace that God Himself is in, His peace, the unmoved stability of all God's thoughts, keep your hearts. Further, when not careful, the mind set free, and the peace of God keeping the heart, God sets the soul thinking on happy things. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest,—just—pure—lovely—of good report. If there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard, and seen in me do: and the God of peace shall be with you." God is there the companion of the soul; not merely "the peace of God," but "the God of peace."

When the soul is cast upon God, the Lord is with the soul in the trial, and the mind kept perfectly.

calm. The Spirit of love—the Spirit of Christ is there; if thinking of myself, this is the spirit of selfishness.

WEANING.

“It is grateful to me to write to anyone who feels the raging of the storm, and at the same time seeking to find and finding shelter in the Lord. What can He say? Does He not remember our frames? We think He does not. The time of weaning is one of great suffering to the soul, but a necessary time, no soul learns true independence of infant helps until it is weaned. It is surprising how many nurses we have, and it is just in proportion as we attain strength to get on without any of them, our age or advance in life is determined. I believe (except very few) that each of us is going through a process of weaning, and what is it for? Simply, that in our given strength we might be able to depend on God, without the medium of that which betokens our personal feebleness. The suffering of weaning arises from the deprivation of something with which we connected the blessing of life, and this evidently may occur in many ways. Satan thought Job could not be weaned, for he said, “Take from him all that he hath and he will curse Thee to Thy face,” but Job was weaned. The soul is weaned when it worships God and prays for others. I cannot worship unless my soul is engaged with *God*. I cannot pray for others if I am

occupied with myself and the loss of any channels of comfort. God must wean. Oh! what bitter soul tears are shed while the soul is weaning from some long-enjoyed mercy. Is it that our God would not indulge us? Is it that He who gave His son would deny us anything? No! But *He must wean us*, or we should never know what it is to depend on *Him apart from any* human or natural intervention. Paul, no doubt, often spoke of having no confidence in the flesh, but it was in the prison at Rome that he felt he was entirely weaned. Any soul who has marked his own progress from the moment of deprivation until he was weaned (that is resting in God and independent of his loss) can tell the momentary lulls and rapidly succeeding agonies again, which marked the desperate dark tunnel, until he reached the light and joy of God's presence. Oh! how He pities us in all the anguish! He cannot give in or relax His hand, but He furnishes us with many lamps to modify the chill of our subterranean travel. If I have learned the righteousness on which God's love is based, I should better understand how much it must correct and subdue me, before it can enjoy itself with me. If I judge myself in the light of *His love*, I must see how much I need weaning.

How blessed for God not to let us alone then till we can truthfully say:—"Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child."
—(Psalm cxxxix. 2).

A LOCAL ASSEMBLY.

A LOCAL ASSEMBLY is composed of all the believers in a city or village. Although in this day of ruin only a few of them may meet to express this assembly. The smallest number possible to form it being two. It is viewed by the Holy Ghost, as the Epistle to the Corinthians shews us, as though it were the whole assembly of God on the face of the earth. "Ye are the body of Christ." "Ye are the temple of God." Such an assembly, when gathered to the name of Christ, has Him in its midst, and has His authority for acting in binding or loosing the sins of an offending brother. (Matt. xviii.) Such an act is ratified in heaven. From this decision there is no appeal, save to Christ in glory; as Jesus "committed [His cause] to Him that judgeth righteously." (1 Peter ii. 23.) The assembly is presented in Matthew xviii. as, so to speak, the last court of appeal. "Tell it to the church." "If he refuses to hear the church, let him be," &c. Standing as the local assembly does as an expression of the whole church, all are involved in its acts, so that, for practical effect, what it does, the whole do, though the responsibility is local. Thus a person received or put out by a local assembly stands as received or put out everywhere. Hence the solemnity of such an action, and the deep sense of responsibility which should fill the hearts of those so acting to and for the Lord. The ruin of the church in no way annuls the authority

of the two or three acting in Christ's name, for it depends not on our faithfulness, but upon the presence of the Lord in the midst. It rests on His word, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them."

What if it should act mistakenly? For example, by mistake bind a sin on one not guilty. For conscience, this might be a trouble, for I might be honestly and firmly convinced that the assembly had erred if even it had not. The path seems plain, as painful paths often are, I bow to the authority Christ has set up on earth, and wait on Him to make clear who is right. I may well be mistaken rather than the assembly. It is a difference of judgment simply; serious as this is, as shewing that one at least has not the mind of God. To reject authority because I think it mistaken is lawlessness. To do so would make authority depend on infallibility. Does not heaven own the assembly's act, assuming its correctness, and must not we? It is the divine sanction of the administrative acts of the assembly. If I think the assembly in error, it is manifestly not right to call its act unrighteous, unless I am convinced that it has acted wilfully. As if, for example, it would put out a person it knew to be innocent. To speak so, would be like calling a person untruthful, who had made a mistake—from this all would shrink.

If an assembly should maintain an unrighteous act, not merely a mistaken one, it of course must

cease to be the assembly of God at all. "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?" Can Christ be said to ratify unrighteousness?

One might be tempted to say, How shall we distinguish between a mistaken and an unrighteous judgment? But this question is like saying, "How can I tell between good and evil?" The word and conscience must decide in each particular case. The important thing being not to go on with unrighteousness, while we can bear with what we believe to be a mistake.

It might occur to some, that if a local assembly judged, as they thought, wrongly, an appeal might be made to another local assembly. For example, to restore a person wrongly put out. This has no more scripture for it than any Romish corruption. On the face of it, it denies the practical oneness of the two meetings. To entertain the question refuses that there is one body and one Spirit. If the Lord's table be one, both meetings are bound when one acts, so that appeal is impossible. If they can revise one another's judgments the unity of the Spirit does not exist there, they are but independent meetings.

Suppose a local meeting to be unrighteous, and Christ no longer to be in the midst, the reception of a person put out by that meeting denies its fellowship with the meeting receiving that person. There is no discipline towards a meeting as such. Fellowship with it may be refused, which is a denial of its being the expression of the body of

Christ, but it cannot be excommunicated, or put in ward. Scriptural discipline does not go beyond the individual.

May the Lord help us to cleave to His word, and neither to go beyond, nor deny it; as it is written, "I commend you to God and to the word of His grace."

HUMILITY.

1. There is a difference between being humble before God, and being humbled before God. I am humbled before God, because I have not been humble. I am humbled, because of my sin. If I had been humble, I should have had grace given me to prevent it. For "God resiseth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

2. The only humble place is the presence of God. It is when I get out of His presence that I am in danger of being lifted up. People say it is dangerous to be too often on the mount. Now I do not think that it is when we are on the mount that we are in danger, but when we come off it. It is when we come off the mount that we begin to think that we have been there. Then pride comes in. I do not think that Paul needed a thorn when he was in the heavens. It was after he had come down that he was in danger of being exalted above measure—from thinking that he had been where no one else had been.

3. I do not believe that to think badly of ourselves is true humility. True humility is never to think of ourselves at all—and that is so hard to come to. It is constantly, I, I, I. If you only begin a sentence with I, there is nothing that a person will not put after it.

4. What hearts have we! "I the Lord search the heart." Who but God can know them. Persons who think they search their hearts and are quick in their evil, do not really know their hearts, nor are they truly humble. The fact is, they *must* be talking of *themselves*, and their pride is nourished even by talking of how evil they are.

REVELATION XXII. 3.

"And His servants shall serve Him." We seek to do so now. We disallow in ourselves and other believers, any and everything which we find either contrary to the walk which Christ walked in when He was here below, or which is superfluous to it. For the allowance of such superfluity by us would be practically saying that His walk down here was not a perfect standard of what our walk should be. But how blessed amid all our known and confessed shortcomings is the firm and sure promise, "His servants shall serve Him." I say it not as making any allowance for shortcomings now; but I surely judge that now I must glory in His being the only perfect servant of God, perfection's height secured

by Him every step of the way; and till I see Him and am made like Him, my conscience, my mind, my heart, will, can never be satisfied with my service. May He be able to say of each of us as He did of one, "She hath done what she could."

FRAGMENTS.

There is a sad lack, want of looking after souls, the first confiding commission of Christ, what was on Christ's heart: "*Feed My sheep.*"

What *I* do is nothing. Love for souls will set me to work; it is God working in me.

The Lord be with you and keep you near Himself. Attention to your business is all right, but, *do not let it get between your soul and God.* If you are not as bright with Him, and more and more so, *search out why*, and look to Him, for He giveth more grace.

The word of God recognizes the *natural* man, the *spiritual* man, and the *carnal* christian.—1 Corinthians ii., iii.