

BELOVED!

Beloved!—a fine ascription, is it not, my readers? To whom is it given? To those who were once hateful, about whom and in whom there was nothing that could awaken love. And who gives it? The God of heaven and earth, the Almighty and All-wise Creator and Preserver of all mankind, yea, of the whole universe! What a thought, to be beloved by the great, eternal God! Not only objects of His care and preservation, but objects of His love! Poor, weak, miserable creatures in ourselves, lost by nature, sinners worthy of damnation, and notwithstanding, beloved children of God! Beloved before the foundation of the world, beloved now, amidst our weakness and on the way through an evil world, beloved through all eternity! And why beloved? Beloved for Christ's sake, "taken into favour in the Beloved."

Beloved! What does each of our hearts give to the great fact of the love of God, to all the love that He has lavished upon us and now lavishes upon us each day? Do our hearts beat for Him?

Are they full of praise, thanks and worship, and of yearning longing to see Him who has first loved us? Do we rejoice over every opportunity of showing Him our love, even though it be in so meagre a measure? Do we love God? Do we

love all those who are born of Him? Do we seek in self-denying love to serve them? Do we follow the weak ones with patient love? Do we visit the sick and suffering? Do we assist the troubled, and cast down, the sorely tried, with sympathy and help? Have we an open hand for the wants of the poor, the widow and the orphan? Do we rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep? Do we in love and humility "esteem others as more excellent than ourselves."

Beloved! is not the contrary of these things often found among us? Does there not exist much indifference, want of feeling, want of forbearance, and—what is so opposed to the mind of Christ, and the heart of our God and Father—much self-will and self-seeking in our midst? Where is that precious "labour of love" which so greatly rejoiced the heart of the Apostle Paul? (1 Thess. i. 3.) Oh! let us cast one look into the depths of our hearts, and another into what we daily do and leave undone! We shall find much to judge, much to condemn. Let us go with it to the Lord and bring it to Him in honest self-judgment; and then let us be much occupied with Him, consider Him, learn of Him, and let His love overflow into our hearts! May we never forget that "love of self" is the first-named of the characteristic marks of the last difficult times. (2 Tim. iii. 2.)

— "To all that be in Rome, BELOVED OF GOD, called saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."—*Romans* i. 7.

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WHAT GOD IS TO US IN CHRIST.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." &c., &c.

EPHESIANS I.

There are two ways in which we may look at our relationship to God. First, our coming to Him; and secondly, our souls looking at the dealings of God towards us.

Of Abel, it is said, by the Holy Spirit, God had respect unto his gifts—he came with the needed offering. We are looked at in Hebrews as drawing near to God. Who could draw near unless he could bring Christ as an offering? We must have that sacrifice in order to bring us near, consequently in that case our relationship to God is measured by our need. We come near because we find we cannot do without it, and we accept that offering as needed to accomplish it.

In another way, the measure of God's blessing we never know *until we look on our relationship as measured by God's thoughts of us—by all that which He loves to display, when He satisfies His own heart of grace with His ways of showing it out.* We never enjoy our true blessing unless we see how He thus feels and acts. *My mind must rise above what I am, to what God is:* then it is my mind is formed by

the revelation of what God is. To this we are called.

We must come in by our need as the prodigal did. The way a sinner must come in, must be by his need, in that way he learns grace, learns love. But when I have got to God it is another thing. Then, He would form our minds and hearts *by what He is Himself*. I come as a sinner because I need it—just as a hungry man needs food; but when brought, I have fellowship with the God who has brought me to Himself. The measure is given in this epistle “growing up into Christ in all things.”

It is a wonderful thing that God has called us into fellowship with Himself—to have the same thoughts, the same feelings as God, and to have them together. All flows down from Him, and we are brought into it by grace, and we enjoy it just so far as we are emptied of self.

First, He makes us partakers of the divine nature—the same nature as Himself. This gives the capacity—I do not say the power. The new nature is capacity, the Holy Ghost is power. The new nature is entirely dependent and obedient. The Holy Ghost being there gives me power. In the first Epistle of John this capacity is brought out in a remarkable manner. (Chap. iv.) Every one that loveth is born of God—has this nature; and “he that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.” Then being partakers of His nature, we, by virtue of the blood being sprinkled upon us, have received the Holy Ghost which gives power.

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In order to communion, there must be perfect peace as regards the conscience. There is no communion in conscience. I am alone as to conscience, and so are you. In order to communion, I must have nothing to settle with conscience: a perfectly purged conscience is the basis of communion. We must know that God has settled the whole question of sin. The moment a child of God fails, communion ceases. The Spirit then becomes a *Reprover* to bring him back; but there is no communion. Communion is the full enjoyment of God and divine things; *when there is nothing to think of as regards oneself*. God can now let flow into his heart, that has a purged conscience, all that He delights in. He loves to communicate what He Himself has joy in. All that Christ is, is for us to enjoy. You are called into this place of Christ Himself—He, the Head of the body; and that the delight God has in Christ should flow down into your heart. How rich then the saint must be? But he is entirely dependent on the Spirit of God for power. There is no power to enjoy anything without Him. There must be an emptying of self to enjoy what He gives. The Spirit of God has no place to act where *self* and *imagination* are in exercise. It is not the glory at the end that is so much the object of a believer's thoughts, as the source of it—God Himself. There is more happiness in the fact of being in communion with Him than in the things He communicates: and I say again, because of its importance, a soul cannot have the enjoyment

of the things of God without having peace, which is connected with the conscience.

The beginning of this chapter shows how we are presented to God. It is a test to see whether the judgment-seat brings any terror to your minds. Does it give you any uneasiness? How does the saint get there? Christ comes to fetch him. He said, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself." Do you ever think of your coming before the judgment-seat being the effect of His having come to fetch you? Not send for you, but coming Himself for you, because of His desire to have you with Him where He is, to be fashioned into the same image. You are to bear the image of the heavenly, as you have borne the image of the earthly. When you are there at the judgment-seat, you will be with Him, and like Him: every trace of God's unwearied hand, all His patience, there brought out. We shall be like the One who is the Judge. You will never (I speak of course to saints now) be before the judgment-seat of Christ without His coming to fetch you into the same glory in which you are to be. It is the knowledge of grace, or redemption, that leaves me at perfect liberty; and all my life should be a witness to the enjoyment of this blessedness into which we are being brought. The whole of this is through looking at Christ. He is the Firstborn among many brethren in the Father's house. We shall be with Christ and like Christ before God the Father. There will be the blessedness of being with Christ, in the

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presence of the Father, loved as He is loved. This is what we have in this chapter—(how we are) set in the presence of God. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ.” We are blessed in Christ, and God is the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is “my God and your God.” There is no measure of any relationship out of Christ—nothing but condemnation out of Christ. If I have known what sin is, what it is to be condemned, and how God hates sin, I know there can be no hope for me out of Christ. But God has put away sin, God does not look at my sin, but on Christ. Just as I know my condition in Adam as *ruined* and *condemned*, so I know my place in Christ—*accepted*. How it throws us out of self-importance, self-dependence, self-glorying! We enter into the presence of God *in Him who has perfectly glorified God*. He is the God as well as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is *that* wrought in Christ which was hidden from ages and from generations, and He has gone back, in virtue of what He has done to vindicate the character of God. We enter into the blessing, in Him who has done all. We shall know God in virtue of what (as) the Father, He bestows upon us. The Father brings many sons to glory, and brings them back perfect through the work of Christ. “Blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ:” none can be wanting; not an affection of God’s delight is wanting. He brings us into His presence without one

reserve of the affection that Christ has. We are brought back in Christ. Therefore all that Christ has we have! And how He goes on to unfold it, "That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." He brings it out so that we may know it. Suppose I saw a person with an excellent character, and I felt I could never be like that person, I should not be happy. The fact of the excellency of the person without the possibility of being like him, would make me miserable; and to have him always before me would be all the worse. But in heaven, I shall be with Christ and see Him, *without the possibility of being UNLIKE Him!* What divine inventiveness of love to make us happy, infinitely happy! What God does, and is, is infinite; and it is so much the better that He will be always above us. [And we learn from the vision on the Mount] that we shall have perfect freedom of intercourse with Him. Moses and Elias were speaking with Him of His death, (it may not be then so much of His death) but there will be communion with Him of all that He has.

"*Without blame.*" Released from all that which would hinder my loving Him; therefore I am made "holy and without blame." [Then] there is the proper joy of the heart "*before Him in love,*" but no thought of equality, "wherein He hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence." Then there is another fact—"Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world." Thus we have His heart set upon us in eternity. The soul knows there is

a personal love from God towards himself, and the heart delights in that. So with Christ. In Revelation ii. there is the white stone He will give—proof of personal delight. There is the individual rejoicing in the love of Christ.

How the Spirit seeks to draw out our affections by all this! He tells it all, and would have us know and enjoy it. He would have us know that we are going to heaven, and why. He would form our hearts by what He is doing, while bringing us in, "having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ unto Himself"—still in Christ and by Christ—it is through Him, and in Him, and with Him I find it. It is having my heart fixed on God and the Father [thus known] that my affections may be drawn out to Him, and all is [as] "accepted in the Beloved." God has not blessed angels like this. We are not servants only, (we should be servants, to be sure) but we are brought into the [place and] confidence of children. Ought not a child to have confidence? We have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." Our heart should answer to God's outgoings of heart in grace, and reflect this grace, "to the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." He has done it all.

Remark here, that there is not as yet a word about the inheritance. I dwell on that, as showing how the affections of the saint are formed. If I speak of the inheritance it is something *below* me.

But I am looking at what is *above* me, and my own blessedness is in what is above me. Subjects connected with the Church, blessed as they are, as prophecy, &c., are below. He will exercise us about these things, but first let me get my relationship with my Father known. My soul must enjoy the love that has given it all. The love that has saved, is more than the things given. It is of importance to the saints to feel this in the presence of God. It is not mental power, but the heart right—a single eye—that is the great thing. Unless a soul gets its intelligence and direction from God, it never understands the ways and affections of God. His own affections must be known and valued. If I have not known my place in the affections of my Father, I am not in a position to have the communion of His thoughts and purposes. When we were dead in sins, His heart was exercised for us. The sinner is here looked at as dead, not a movement of life, when God comes and creates the blessing according to His own will! When we have known the value of Christ's sacrifice bringing us to God, we are seen not in ourselves at all, but only in Christ. Then there is perfect rest. But afterwards he can tell us of the inheritance. He has called us to be "before Him in love," (verses 3, 6), then verse 11 begins about the inheritance. The end of the matter is that we are brought in to share the inheritance.

How far is your confidence and delight in God, for [what He is in] Himself? The heart of the

child will delight in the affections of the father. •

Do your thoughts of God flow from what God has revealed to you of Himself? or are you reasoning about God—will He, or will He not do? [*&c., &c.*] When it is a settled thing with me that I am a sinner, what have I to reason about? We want to be brought to this simple conviction: I am a sinner; and if I am a sinner, what am I to do? Can I look for anything from God on the ground of righteousness? No. When brought to God, I am brought to Grace. *What He is* is the spring and source of the whole matter. We are in Christ. It could not be otherwise. We stand there now by virtue of the atonement, in that position. Christ died for my sins, and God is “faithful and just to forgive us our sins.”

God is going to take us to heaven, to be happy with Christ there; but He makes me happy out of heaven too. It is a difficult thing, but He does: and He would have the saints living up there where God is, and where we are going, and free from this present evil world.

EPHESIANS VI. 10-18.

The very blessings of the Church (as in Eph. i. 3) set us in a sort of conflict, which without such blessings we should not have. So the Church is subject to more failure than either Jews or Gentiles were, because they were not called to the same blessing. A Jew might do many things that would be monstrous in a Christian, and yet find no defile-

ment in his conscience. The veil that was over the knowledge of God being rent, the light shines out ; and the consequence is that this light which is come out of the holy place cannot tolerate evil. Christians are in a more dangerous position if not walking in the light, than Jews. Satan may draw and entice me with many things, which would have no power against me if I were not so favoured. "Be strong in the Lord;" here is the place of strength. There is no strength but in Christ. I have none at any time, except as my soul is in secret communion with Him, and through Him with God the Father. The direct power of Satan is towards this point, to keep our souls from living on Christ. Put on the whole armour of God : there is no standing against Satan without this. *Strength is always the effect of having to do with God in the spirit of dependence.*

We see in 1 Samuel xiv. the contrast between Saul and Jonathan ; between confidence in God overcoming all obstacles, and self failing with all the resources of royalty. Jonathan clambered up on his hands and feet, confident in God, and the enemies were overcome. Saul, when he saw the work going on, not knowing the Lord's mind, calls for the priest. He had a right intention, but not a simplicity of dependence on God, when inquiring what he should do, and spoils all by his foolish oath. It is said of Jonathan that "he wrought with God." God was with him, and he had strength and liberty because he wrought with God.

When we are walking in dependence on God, there will be always liberty before God. Jonathan knew what he should do, and took some honey, because he went on in liberty, for God was with him, whilst Saul in legality had put himself and the people into bondage.

The word then, after grace in Christ has been fully shown, throughout the epistle, is, "Be strong in the Lord," (ver. 10.) We have here the privilege of individual dependence on God. Everything may be dark, but the Lord tells us to be strong. This is always accompanied with lowliness of heart; come what will, when the Lord is rested on, we are strong.

We are called to put on the panoply of God, to take it to us, (vers. 11, 12.) And no wonder: the conflict is not with men but with evil spirits, (ver. 12.) Who but an unbeliever would overlook or despise them? They are principalities and authorities; they are the universal *lords of this darkness*; they are spiritual wickednesses in heavenly places. Truly to withstand such we need the whole armour of God; which, remember, is not a question of standing, but of practical power, and this is in entire dependence.

If we pray, be it observed, without searching the Word, or read the Word without prayer, we may get no guidance, for Jesus said, "If my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will," &c.; without this I may be asking some foolish thing that would not be given. We are to stand against the wiles of the

devil, not his power. It is not knowing Satan that enables me to discover his wiles, *but the keeping in God's presence*. It was always so with Christ, because He was always dependent on God. "Stand, having your loins girt about with truth." Truth is never really ours, but as the affections are ordered by it. If the soul of the hearer be not in communion with God, in the truth he hears, his loins are not girt with it. The breastplate of righteousness supposes not merely this, but that we have nothing on the conscience, (ver. 14.) *Christ's blood made it good, and walking in the Spirit keeps it so.*

Verse 15. The gospel of peace is ours in Christ; but I must have the Spirit of peace in my heart, and be sanctified by the God of peace, the soul in communion with God, with Him in the Spirit of peace; and without this, how can a saint walk as always having peace? He is then prepared to walk by the gospel.

Verse 16. Whether I look at the sin that made grace necessary, or the power which caused me to enjoy it, I may walk in perfect peace against every source of sorrow. Every fiery dart is quenched *by confidence in God*—the shield of faith. It is as essential for the conflict as for the saving of the soul. *We need to cherish confidence in the grace of God all through.*

Verse 17. I hold up my head because I know I am safe. Salvation is mine. I must first get that which is internal; that which is wrought in me is power, before I use the Sword of the Spirit. I

must first have the loins girded about with truth, the heart covered with righteousness, the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and then (the shield of faith being up, and the helmet of salvation on) I can take the Sword of the Spirit. Nothing is more dangerous than to use the Word if it has not touched my own conscience. I put myself into Satan's hands if I go beyond what I have from God, or what my soul is in possession of. To talk with saints on the things of God, beyond what I hold in communion, is most pernicious; to fight without it is fatal.

Verse 18. The Word must always deal with ourselves before others, but prayer is the expression and the exercise of dependence. If a person asks me a question and I answer without speaking to God about it, going direct, it may be more likely to lead him away from God than to God. When a question or difficulty comes do we turn to God? We may have turned to God before and the thing is answered, and we ought to have such power of prayer, that there would be no difficulty when any circumstance arises. If supplication be thus continual, there would be no occasion to ask Him about particular things when they come before us.

"Supplication in the Spirit." All acceptable prayer is not, I think, prayer in the Spirit. A wish or a desire expressed to God, in all the confidence of a child to his Father, is heard, but this is not necessarily "prayer in the Spirit." It is the power of the Spirit in us looking for blessing as walking

in the Spirit of God—*that is such prayer*; not even a difficulty here, when living really in the power of communion. We have that energy of supplication which looks for answers—for all saints and myself too—watching thereunto with all perseverance. Suppose you begin the day with a sweet spirit of prayer and confidence in God; in the course of the day in this wretched world you find a thousand cares and agitations; but if you are spiritually exercised, alive to see the things of God, everything will be a matter of prayer and intercession, according to the mind of God. Thus humbleness and dependence should mark all the saint's actions.

What a blessed thing to carry everything to God! The word in verse 13 refers to a man walking in the whole armour. The apostle took the love of the saints for granted. We also, if walking in the Spirit, can always count on others being interested in our affairs.

— May we so trust the love of God, and the faithfulness of God, that we may have courage to say, “Shew me *Thy way*?” Faith in the full delight of God to bless us, so that we may do His will, even if it be the loss of everything, our souls so intimate with God, that we may seek His way and nothing else.

