

## OH ! LORD, OUR HEARTS ARE WAITING.

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Oh ! Lord, our hearts are waiting,  
 Th' archangel's heaven sent cry,  
 Which wakes the saints now sleeping,  
 And to Thee brings them nigh.  
 When we, with them ascending,  
 Shall meet Thee in the air,  
 To gaze upon Thy glory,  
 And all Thy likeness bear.

Oh ! hour, for which in patience,  
 Thou'st waited through the night,  
 Whilst we, Thy saints, were gather'd,  
 And brought into the light ;  
 Then, then, the Church completed,  
 God makes no more delay.  
 Oh ! Lord, with shouts of triumph,  
 We pass into the day.

Oh ! hour of richest blessing —  
 When brought to Thee so nigh,  
 To be Thy joy for ever,  
 We share Thy throne on high ;  
 To rest in all that brightness,  
 And ever there abide ;  
 To find Thy heart delighting  
 In us Thy ransom'd bride.

Oh ! blessed, coming Saviour,  
 Speak then the joyous word,  
 To which, our hearts responding,  
 " For ever with the Lord."  
 For ever with Thee, Saviour—  
 For evermore shall be—  
 In deepest, fullest blessing  
 For ever *one* with Thee.

**FAITHFULNESS, AND WAITING FOR CHRIST.**

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Let me ask the Christian soul a question. Are the claims of the Lord Jesus on you of deep and paramount importance in your eyes? In proposing such a question, I do so to those who profess to love and own Christ as their *Lord*; who, having taken their true place before God as poor lost sinners, are resting by faith on the work of Him who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification, and so have peace with God, and are standing in His favour (Rom. iv. 24; v. 1). Are these claims of sufficient weight that you would seek to know His mind and will, even if it were to break the most cherished associations of your heart? And, knowing His mind and will, are you seeking for grace to walk therein? I feel this a deeply solemn question in the present day—a day of the highest sounding profession, with so little conscience or life toward God. Religiousness is putting forth her fairest and most seductive forms, seeking the aid of science, and poetry, and art to deck herself withal. Holding in her hand a cup of abominations which stupefies the senses and lulls to sleep the conscience. And even where she is not putting on the outward adorning, she practices other deceits. Those whose senses would not be ensnared by the outward adorning, are ensnared by the specious arguments of expediency, and a round of evangelical activity—works perfect, it may be, before men,

but not before God (Rev. iii. 2). She is suiting herself more and more to natural, unrenewed man ; and under the name of Christ, she turns away her eye from Christ, and boasts that she is " rich and increased with goods, and has need of nothing " (Rev. iii. 17). " The form of godliness without the power " (2 Tim. iii. 5), surely is the condition of things around us. The Lordship of Christ is ignored. The presence of the Holy Ghost is either denied in words, or, what is even worse, professed to be acknowledged in words, and completely denied in practice. This is truly solemn. One of the very vital, central truths of Christianity, and of the church of God—that which marks off, in a clear line, this dispensation from all that went before or which follows, denied ; and the whole merged into a heap of confusion, out of which souls can hardly find a clue, and are " ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth " (2 Tim. iii. 7). However, " the foundation of God stands sure," and whatever man's unfaithfulness has been, God's principles do not alter. And the responsibility of His people never alters. While it is their blessing to know that " The Lord knoweth them that are His," still their responsibility is, " Let every one that nameth the name of Christ (" the Lord " is the correct reading) depart from iniquity ; " iniquity connected with the great house and its corruptions (2 Tim. ii. 19, etc.). The Christian is to purge himself from the vessels to dishonour, that he may be a vessel unto honour,

sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work. He must not, as we have before touched upon, rest satisfied with the corruption, nor need he try to repair the injury that has been done; that will never be repaired till the professing mass meets its end in judgment. His path is a plain one—"Depart from iniquity;" "Purge himself from the vessels to dishonour." And now comes his personal walk of holiness. He is to "flee also youthful lusts," and then in his walk in the company with others, to "follow righteousness, faith, peace, charity ("love") *with them* that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." This is the principle—a plain one—separation *from* evil, and *to* God, in the midst of it. May He who alone can do so, give subjection to His word to those whose eyes fall upon these pages, and a growing separation and deepening subjection, as they go on their pathway, to those who by grace have learned in their measure to walk therein. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me," and "if a man love Me, he will keep my words" (John xiv). This is characteristic of Christianity. It is intelligent obedience rendered to a *Person*, not to a *law*. Of old God was hidden behind the veil, "dwelling in the thick darkness" (1 Kings viii. 12). He sent forth His claims to men in the law; and although He said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might," still it did not reveal a *person* to attract

the heart. That time has passed away. Christ has come, and "by *Him* we believe in God" (1 Pet. i.). Each believer can say with Paul, He "loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii.). And now we owe Him the love of our hearts and the obedience of our lives—One, whose love "constraineth us" to "live henceforth not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us, and rose again" (2 Cor. v.). It is a *Person* we are thus called upon to live for and to love; One who has sanctified us unto obedience such as that which characterized Himself (1 Pet. i. 2); surrendering self, life, all, for those who hated Him. The law proposed that a man should love his neighbour "*as himself.*" The obedience of Christ was the entire *surrendering of self* for His enemies.

The Lord Jesus appealed in His day to the Jews (Luke xii. 54-57) to discern the signs of the times, even by the force of natural conscience, and to judge what was right. His word should find an echo in many a Christian heart now that has sunk down to sleep amongst the dead (Eph. v. 14) Everything around us in the present day—religion, the state of men, nations, powers, kingdoms—are each, gradually and perceptibly, taking their places for the closing scenes of judgment (which introduces the Kingdom).

The Christian, instructed beforehand of these things, can watch them calmly and quietly, awaiting the coming of His Lord. He knows that his calling is a heavenly one, where judgments

cannot come. The coming of the Lord, the Son of God, for His people, is the one boundary or horizon of his hopes. His actions and service and plans and sojourn here are arranged in view of that event; and if called to serve his Lord and Master here, he does so in the sense that he serves as in the last days. May a deepening sense of this fill the souls of His people; and may this their proper hope, ere the day dawn, be formed in their hearts, and serve to direct their ways.

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**“WILT THOU GO WITH THIS MAN?”**

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GENESIS XXII. TO XXIV.

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Few who have read the twenty-second chapter of the book of Genesis with any amount of spiritual intelligence, have failed to see, in the scene described there, a figure of the death and resurrection of Christ. Abraham, at the bidding of God, binding his son Isaac a sacrifice, and preparing to offer him up as a burnt-offering to the Lord. The Lord staying his hand, which grasped the uplifted knife, and pointing to the ram caught in the thicket, the substitute of His own providing. And then Abraham receiving his son as from the dead in a figure (Heb. xi. 19).

All this speaks, to the heart renewed by grace, of the wondrous story of the death and resurrection of God's Lamb, and the complete and perfect settlement of the question of sin which was

wrought thereby. But when we read chapter xxiii., we find something more. We read of the death and burial of Sarah, Isaac's mother ; and of his father Abraham having no portion in the land of Canaan, but must even buy a sepulchre ; and is a stranger and a sojourner there. This sequence of events, interpreted in the light of the New Testament, affords special delight to the soul. The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus is followed by the setting aside, for the time, of His nation Israel, figured in the death of Sarah, the mother of Isaac. And the result of all this, that the Jew, instead of being restored to his land under the Messiah, is a wanderer in the earth, having now no portion in the land promised to the fathers.

But when we open chapter xxiv., a story of wondrous exactitude and beauty unfolds itself to us. Isaac was dead and risen in a figure, and the parent stem is set aside. And now Abraham, Isaac's father, desires to get a bride for his son, a son who cannot return to the land of his people. And Abraham sent his servant, who ruled over his house, charged with this errand, to get a wife for his son Isaac. This wife for his son must be brought to him, for his son cannot return thither again : " Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again " (ver. 6).

So when Christ died and rose, and Israel (to whom the promises would have been fulfilled had they received Him) were set aside, and became

wanderers, without a portion in their land, it was then we find for the first time the wondrous purpose of God, His "eternal purpose," revealed. And His purpose was that His only Son, JESUS, should have a "bride;" one to share with Him His throne of heavenly glory, and to be joint possessor, with and in Him, of all that the Father had bestowed. As long as Israel were the objects of the Lord's dealings, this could not be. *Then* He had an earthly nation, the centre and platform, we may say, of all His dealings with the world. But *now*, once they had refused Him and the kingdom He had prepared, He has an earthly people no more for a time. And so, when Christ is hidden in the heavens, and glorified there, the Holy Ghost has come from heaven, charged by God as it were, with this wondrous mission, to gather out of Jew and Gentile a bride for His Son.

Of this wondrous mission the Lord Jesus speaks to His disciples when He was going away: "Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of [or rather "from"] Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak, and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you. *All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall shew it unto you*" (John xvi. 13 15). Just as Abraham's servant, explaining his errand, says, "And the Lord hath blessed my master greatly,

and he is become great ; and He hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and manservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses. And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old ; *and unto him hath He given all that he hath* " (vs. 35, 36). So we read also in John iii. 35, " The Father loveth the Son, *and hath given all things into His hand.*" Abraham's servant took some of his master's treasures and put them upon this chosen one, tokens of the grace of him for whom she was sought. " The man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold " (ver. 22). Thus the Holy Spirit takes of the treasures of " wisdom and knowledge," and of the " unsearchable riches of Christ," and makes them known to the Church, espousing her as a " chaste virgin to Christ " (2 Cor. xi. 2).

And now, when the espoused one is to begin her long wilderness journey in the charge of him who came for her, the servant " brings forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and *gave* them to Rebekah." And thus we find that when Christ ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, He gave gifts unto men. And the Holy Ghost, the Church's Guide and Companion, takes up these gifts of Christ (Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher), and uses them to strengthen her heart and guide her feet, and train her according to the heart of Him who will at

last, "present her to Himself glorious, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. v. 27).

But now the world tries to prevent her from going on to meet her Lord. Rebekah's family says, "Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go." They would like to have her stay with them, and not separate herself to Isaac, obedient to the call of Abraham's servant. And so does the world. It likes not the thought that the Church is a heavenly bride, "espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ," because, if she walks in the power of her calling, she *cannot* sink down to its level, and, as it were, sanction its ways by her presence in its midst. She knows that her Bridegroom has nothing to do with the world now; that He has been here, and that He tried if it would receive Him, and that it only rejected Him and cast Him out. That her heavenly Guide has told her of His charge, "Beware, thou, that thou bring not my son thither again." She knows in her heart that *He* has no portion here, and therefore *she* can have none but the gifts and graces which He bestows.

She decides the great question herself: "We will call the damsel, and enquire at her mouth." *Wilt thou go with this man?* And she said, "*I will go.*" Thus would the Church, if guided by the Spirit of God, ever reply. There would be no hesitation in her answer if she followed and was led by her heavenly Guide. There would be no indecision, no turning back, thinking of what she

had left behind. There would be no divided heart in her, but where her treasure is there would her heart be also.

“And Rebekah arose, . . . . and followed the man; and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.” She was “forgetting those things that were behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before.” Her heart would ever be saying: “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling [or rather, ‘calling on high’] of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. iii. 13, 14). How sad if, instead of this, she was turning behind her, and longing after that which she had left behind.

But now we have the end of the wilderness journey brought before us in our beautiful Scripture.

“And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi (the well of Him that liveth and seeth me—Gen. xvi.); . . . . and he *lifted up his eyes and saw*. . . . And Rebekah *lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac*”—the journey was over, the wilderness was past, hope was changed to fruition, faith was changed to sight. The toil of the wilderness world, dear fellow-believer, is nearly over. We know not that before you read these pages the Church’s Bridegroom will have come. We know not if, even as the lines are penned, He may not have left His Father’s throne, to descend and meet His people in the air (1 Thes. iv.). The Holy Ghost has, as Christ promised, abode with the Church for ever. He has been with

her all through, though she has been unfaithful to Christ. He has awakened her hopes, and enabled her to *lift up her eyes and see* Him by faith, and has put into her mouth that longing, inviting word, "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come," in response to the voice of Him who has just told her, "I am . . . the bright and morning Star" (Rev. xxii. 16, 17).

And now, dear reader, can you not for yourself realize in some little measure the testimony of the Comforter, the Church's Guide in her wilderness journey? Surely, if ever He leads the heart to look behind, He can only lead it to *one object*, the death of the true Isaac, even Christ. He can point to that and unfold its varied excellencies, and glories, and wondrous efficacy, and its result, which is the believer's portion; as that through which his Lord has gone to the throne of His glory, through which he has redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He can unfold how the glory of God has been established through it. But He never can, never does, lead to a doubting thought, an unbelieving fear. Nor can he ever lead the soul to earthly things, rather to those that are heavenly—to the riches, and glories, and Person of Him with whom He fills the heart.

I ask you then, "*Wilt thou go with this man?*" Will you suffer Him (the blessed Spirit) to lead and guide you with unhindered, ungrieved power? Think on your association with the world if you are not separate from it, and above all, with the

so-called religious world ; and think of your walk and ways, and answer this question, as before Him who sees the heart, "Are you grieving and hindering the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption?" (Eph. iv. 30); or, are you "led of the Spirit?" (Gal. v. 18). Are the accents of your heart even now, "*I will go?*" And remember this, "Our conversation [or 'citizenship'] is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body [or 'body of humiliation'], that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body [or 'body of glory'], according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. iii. 20, 21).



### THE CHURCH CALLED AWAY.

"Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."—Cant. ii. 13.

Bride of the Lamb, rejoice ! rejoice !  
 Thy midnight-watch is past,  
 True to His promise, lo, 'tis He !  
 The Saviour comes at last.

His heart, amid the blest repose  
 And glories of the throne,  
 With love's unwearied care, hath made  
 Thy sorrows all its own.

Through days and nights of suff'ring taught  
 For human woe to feel,

He, only, with unerring skill,  
Thy wounded heart could heal.

And now, at length, behold, **He comes**  
To claim thee from above,  
In answer to the ceaseless call,  
And deep desire of love.

Go, then, thou lov'd and blessed **one**,  
Thou drooping mourner, rise !  
Go—for He calls thee now to share  
His dwelling in the skies.

For thee, His royal bride—for thee,  
His brightest glories shine :  
And, happier still, His changeless heart,  
With all its love, is thine.

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## MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 160.)

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### *Defeat and Restoration.*

(Chapter XVI.)

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We now enter upon a new period in Samson's history, characterized by the loss of his nazarite-ship and by his restoration. Verse 31 of our chapter, compared with verse 20 of chapter xv., marks outwardly this division. In chapter xv., God had preserved His servant in spite of himself, in a definite engagement with a woman who served other gods. But that did not rectify the natural tendency of his heart. And the first verse of this chapter shows us where this tendency led

him. He had courted the idolatrous world, and now he goes after the defiled world, not fearing temporary association with it. A worldly propensity unjudged leads us necessarily to more serious falls. Thus it was, in the history of the church, that Pergamos led to Thyatira. Samson's connection with this woman was but a passing one, and he did not lose his strength there, for the secret between himself and God still continued. Waylaid all night, at the gate of the city, by his mortal enemies, he arose from his slumber, "and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron" (ver. 3). More than once does the history of Samson, remind us of that of Christ; as, for instance, his victory over the lion of Timnath, and again in the achievement of the gates of Gaza. Like Samson, the Lord awaking from the sleep of death, has brought to nought the machinations of the enemy in breaking the gates of his terrible fortress. He has led into captivity that which held us captives; and, ascended on high, He has displayed the trophies of His victory. Death, the citadel of Satan, having no longer doors to hold us, has become for us a passage;\* no bolt could imprison Christ there, no power is able to keep us there. The "hill that is before Hebron," the place of the

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\* "Hebron" means "a passage."

risen Man who passed through death,† is a sure guarantee to us.

We have said more than once, that there is not a man of God who is not called to manifest, and who does not, in fact, manifest some traits of the person of the Saviour. Ah! how beautiful it would have been to have seen Samson a worthy representative of Christ in his victory over death, as he was in his victory over the ravening lion! Whence went forth this strong man with the gates of Gaza on his shoulders? For whom did he fight? Who had placed him in this extremity? In all these things, his history presents the most complete contrast to that of our adorable Saviour.

Let us pay attention to a still more humiliating recital (vs. 4-21). Samson, who had hitherto only formed a passing connection with evil, now went further. The daughter of the Philistines had been pleasing to his eye; the woman of Gaza had ensnared him for a moment; Delilah *took possession of his affections*. "*He loved a woman in the valley of Sorek*" (ver. 4). This is the termination of the path of the child of God who gives way to, instead of judging, the first movements of his natural heart. Samson had hitherto guarded his intimate and secret relationship with God, in spite of everything. He possessed something which the world could not understand, and to the source of which it could not rise. His strength remained an

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†We have remarked elsewhere (Meditations on the Book of Joshua) that Hebron is always in Scripture the place of death.

enigma to his enemies ; no doubt they saw the effect of it, but directed against themselves, and that made them all the more eager to wrest the secret of it from him, in order to find out what weapons to use against this servant of Jehovah. Doubtless, also, his long hair, a garb not common to all, was a public avowal of separation to God. But had his secret not been betrayed, the world would never have imagined that what was typical of dependence and of self-forgetfulness, was for the Nazarite a source of strength.

Samson loved Delilah. His heart was divided, and God could not go on with this. It is impossible for our affections to go out to the world and likewise to God. "No servant can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other" (Luke xvi. 13). In loving Delilah, Samson as much as said that he hated and despised God ; when, in actual fact, he belonged to Him. This woman's influence over him increased more and more. "How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me?" (ver. 15). From that time his *heart* was taken captive, and it was not long ere he surrendered the whole of his secret. Three times—the seven green withs that never were dried, the new ropes that never were occupied, and the seven locks of his head woven with the web—had not been able to quench the power of the Spirit. God still sustained His poor, unfaithful servant. But

when his secret was divulged, the mark of his dependence removed, the bond of communion between his soul and God abolished, what remained for him? All his strength had vanished. The past experiences of God's deliverances, in spite of his moral bondage, only served to deceive him and to lull him into security. Three times he had extricated himself at a critical moment. Why not a fourth? The blinded heart said to itself: "I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself." But, with communion lost, intelligence of the thoughts of God was wholly lacking. "He wist not that Jehovah had departed from him" (ver. 20).

Not that Samson was very happy under the yoke of Delilah. "She pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death" (ver. 16). That was all he got from what had most attracted him! He would gladly have refused but was no longer capable of doing so. A man of the world may find his joy in the world; a believer, never. At bottom, the heart of Samson was in a measure with God and the Israel of God. From that fact sprang all this conflict, struggle, vexation and misery. Our conscience speaks and we have no real rest, our joy is embittered. At last he took the final step, and "told her all his heart" (ver. 17). That was followed by *sleep*: "She made him sleep upon her knees" (ver. 19). The soul loses all sense of its relationship with God, and falls into heavy slum-

ber in the dense atmosphere of corruption. Then the enemy in ambush, watching for this moment, advanced, bound the strong man, put out his eyes, and treated him as one of their most wretched slaves. A condition, alas, worse than sleep! Samson is now only a poor blind slave, the sport of the enemies of Jehovah. Let us not be mistaken as to this, that the enemy was more hostile to God than to Samson, for the vanquished Nazarite became apparently the witness of the victory of the false god Dagon over the true God. The lack of reality in Christians is the world's most powerful weapon against Christ. In despising the unfaithful believer, it is really Him which the world finds the opportunity of despising.

Thank God, the history of the last of the judges does not close with this defeat. God will have the final victory in spite of the unfaithfulness of His witnesses. Samson recovered his nazariteship in this state of bitter humiliation. "Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven" (ver. 22). Samson was not a man of prayer. Only twice in all his history do we hear him addressing God (xv. 18; xi. 28). Here, whilst his enemies were celebrating their triumph, Samson cried to Jehovah. For my own part I appreciate in a man of God an end brighter than the commencement, though, doubtless, this is not what is highest. The path of Christ, the perfect Man, was one of perfect evenness and uniformity in the very many varied circumstances through

which He had to pass, and it is thus that we see Him in Psalm xvi., and in the Gospels. And yet to end like Samson, whose life presented so many contrasts; to end like Jacob, whose course, full of schemes and human devices, closed with the glorious vision of Israel's future and by worship which recognized in Joseph the type of the promised Messiah; to end like that was far better than to terminate his career like Solomon, in idolatry, after a magnificent reign of wisdom and power. Yes, Samson's end was a splendid victory. "The dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life" (ver. 30).

May we profit by this history, and not require such experience of ourselves, either by a bad beginning or a bad ending. Paul, a man subject to like infirmities as ourselves, avoided both, although weakness was manifest in his walk on more than one occasion. Let us learn to regulate our steps by those of our sinless Model; that was the strength of the apostle, and it will be ours. Then will God say of us: "They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God" (Ps. lxxxiv. 7).

*(To be continued, D.V.)*



"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."—Eph. vi. 11.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."—1 Pet. v. 8.