

THE CHRISTIAN MARINER.

“ And so He bringeth them to the haven where they would be.”

Yes, billow after billow—see they come
 Faster and rougher, as his little boat
 Nears evermore the haven. Oftentimes
 It seems to sink and fall adown the wave,
 As if borne backward by the struggling tide;
 Yet mounting billow after billow, wave
 On wave o'er riding, tempest-tossed and shattered,
 Still, still it nears the haven evermore.
 “ Poor mariner ! art not thou sadly weary ?”
 Dear brother, rest is sweeter after toil,
 “ Grows not thine eye confused and dim with sight
 Of nothing but the wintry waters ?” True ;
 But then my Pole-Star, constant and serene,
 Above the changing waters, changes not.
 “ But what if clouds, as often, veil the sky ?”
 Oh, then an unseen eye hath ever ta'en
 The rudder from my feeble hands the while ;
 And I cling to it. “ Answer me once more,
 Mariner ; what thinkest thou when the waters beat
 Thy frail boat backward from the longed-for harbour ?”
 Oh, brother, though innumerable waves
 Still seem to rise betwixt me and my home,
I know that they are numbered ; not one less
 Should bear me homeward, if I had my will ;
 For One who knows what tempests are to weather,
 O'er whom there broke the wildest billows once,
He bids these waters swell. In His good time
 The *last* rough wave shall bear me on its bosom,
 Into the haven of eternal peace.
 No billows after ! They *are* numbered, brother.
 “ Oh, gentle mariner, steer on, steer on ;
 My tears still flow for thee ; but they are tears
 In which faith strives with grief, and overcomes.”

THE HOPE OF HIS CALLING.

(EPHES. i. 15—ii. 10.)

“That ye may know what is the hope of His calling.” God has called you; what is the hope of His calling? What future is there in this call? We get it in chap. i. 5: “Having been predestinated unto the adoption of children.” I know “Abba’s” heart now; I am to know “Abba’s” house then. If God says, “How beautiful My house will be with My Son in it, surrounded by those associated with him,” is it nothing to my heart that God already has joy in the thought? It will have a separating effect on the soul from evil to God. “And what the riches of the glory,” etc? Glory is not the same as the Father’s house. There is rest in the thought of the house, whereas in the glory we get the public expression of it. What a contrast to this beggarly world down here! Here it is all toil; but what is it all leading to? To a bright, brilliant, glorious future, now made little of by people here; then made much of by God up there. So far there is no question of life; He takes them as it were and shows them the corpse they were, the pit they were in. God loves to be Centre, to have round Him a circumference of blessing. What was the pit you came from? What good was there in it? God could find none; so you cannot. Everything in it is bad, though it need not come out. As the pit was

down there, and nothing but evil working in it, so the blessing came from quite a different place--from the Man up there upon the throne. Had we taken a few steps towards Him? No! it is even when we were "dead in sins." It is not a question of bad fruits—"dead in sins" (not alive in sins, as in Romans), all entirely wrong, all dead; not a correct notion of God, nor of Christ, nor the Holy Ghost, nor of ourselves.

There are three things: life-giving, separation from the grave, and a place of permanent rest. Satan cannot rob me of blessing, because I am within Christ. The bringing into a place of blessing is a thing to be known individually; knowing it, and knowing the existence of it, are very different things. You say you believe it. Have you got it yourself? Can you say, "I have gone up from the tomb by a power that associates me with all that is dear to God? God looks upon me, and says, 'There is an individual who has life together with My Son.'" Can *you* say it? Is the life that you live in the flesh by faith of the Son of God?

God promised a son to Abraham; circumstances said, "Impossible: you cannot have any children." But Abraham, as it were, said, "Let God alone, He must see to His promise." Difficulties to believers now come in exactly the same way. Things inconsistent are brought up by conscience: if you say, "That is inconsistent with the Man up there in the glory, I am ashamed of myself," you judge it in faith; but if you say, "I have failed, I am no

Christian," you play into Satan's hands ; you do not judge yourself, but slur over the evil. We get here three things : Abba's heart, Abba's house, and that the Man, the perfect Servant of God, who was obedient even unto death, has won His place up there. He went in not only as One who had a right to go in, but because He had humbled Himself. These things just mark the place that you and I are in as Christians. God wanted to show what a God He was, and the resources He had in His Son.

If God has raised us up together, etc., it is that we may have communion with Himself through this Christ dwelling in us by faith. We cannot get steadiness of works, unless with a soul abiding in communion with God. If I am in communion with God, what do I get? If a heart be right with God, there is talking about Christ always—Christ at home in the heart. I look up and say, "There is a Man on the throne of God, and He has all power in His hand : " the Son of the virgin, the Seed of the woman ; and God says, "That i . My beloved Son, the fulness of Godhead." If you know Him, you may get all the fulness of God. I never shall know Him ; but I know Himself. God presents in that Man, seen there by faith, what can fill the humblest mind.

God has formed in my soul such an estimate of Christ that I could not do without Him ; and more than that, He cannot do without me (1 Cor. xii. 21). Nothing is good without Christ, and the

presence of Christ in anything makes it a home-scene to the heart.

The valley of Baca is a precious place if Christ be there. Oh, what a height and depth in the truth that makes us one with Him! What an expression of love! What an expression of light!

THE PATH AND CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN.

(1 PETER i. 1-7.)

The Spirit of God in the Epistles of Peter does not contemplate the Christian as united to Christ in heaven, but as running the course through the trials of this world toward heaven. Both things are true, and we need both. We are running through the wilderness towards it, and at the same time we can say, through the Spirit, that we are one with Christ in heaven. It is in the former of these two ways that the Christian is looked at here. The inheritance is reserved for him, and then we have the application of the truth and grace of God to the condition we are in. It is exceedingly precious to know that, no matter what the trials may be or the difficulties, we are to expect that down here. It is merely a passage through the trials and difficulties (which are useful to us after all), and there is "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled," kept safe in heaven for us; and, as he adds then, we are kept for it by the power of God through

faith. This is the position in which he sets the Christian. We are "begotten again into a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." It is not exactly that we are risen with Him; but he looks at Christ as risen and gone in, and therefore that He has begotten us again to a living hope, and that "an inheritance incorruptible, and that fadeth not away." There it is, kept safe in heaven for us. As Paul said, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." All his happiness was safe in heaven, and the Lord could keep it safe for him; and then we have the blessed truth that we are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

There is the character and the path of the Christian—both these things; the blessed faithfulness of the Lord in keepiug it for us and us for it, and at the same time the character of the Christian as passing onwards towards it, and a little of the trials of the way. We first see that here. You will find it in the striking contrast with the law and the position that Israel had under it. Indeed this runs through the whole—constantly in the New Testament.

The apostle says, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." He rests them on this blessed truth—their being "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." Not merely a people chosen out as a nation, but it was that foreknowledge of God the Father through which

they had this place : and then the Spirit of God comes and sanctifies them or sets them apart. We find, next, what they are set apart to practically, as a present thing ; and that is, the obedience of Jesus Christ, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. These are just the two essential points of the life and path of Jesus, one running into the other ; and, in this case, if I may so speak, the one completing the other. For us the great thought is the obedience of Jesus Christ and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. " Jesus Christ " applies to the obedience as well as to the sprinkling of the blood ; and both are in contrast with the law, whether as regards what the law required, or as regards the sacrifices of the law ; the obedience and sacrifice of Jesus Christ are in contrast with both.

As regards our obedience, it is essential for the true character of our path as Christians that we should lay hold of what this obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ was. Legal obedience in us is a different thing. We have got a will of our own ; this was not true of Christ. He had a will in one sense, as a man, but he said, " Not my will, but thine, be done." But we have got a will of our own ; it may be checked and broken down. But if the law is applied to us, it is as stopping this will, but it finds it here, and such is our notion of obedience constantly. Take a child ! there is a will of its own ; but when the parents' will comes in, and the child yields instantly without a struggle, and

either does what it is bid or ceases to do what it is forbidden, you say, This is an obedient child, and it is delightful to see such an obedient spirit. But Christ never obeyed in that way. He never had a will to do things of His own will in which God had to stop Him. It was not the character of His obedience. It is needed with us, and we all know it, if we know anything of ourselves; but it was not the character of His obedience. He could not wish for the wrath of God in the judgment of sin, and He prayed that this cup might pass from Him. But the obedience of Christ had quite another character from legal obedience. His Father's will was His motive for doing everything; "Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God."

This is the true character of the obedience of Jesus Christ, and of ours as Christians. The other may be needed for us—the stopping us in our own will; but the true character of our obedience, and that which characterizes the whole life of the Christian is this—that the will of God, of our Father we can say, is with us, as it was with Christ, our reason, our motive, for doing a thing. When Satan came and said to Him, "command that these stones be made bread," He answers "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." His actual life as carried out in conduct flowed from the word of God, which was His motive for doing it; and if He had not that, He had no motive. You will find that it alters the whole tenor and spirit of a man's life. We have to be stopped in

our own will, that is true, because we have the old nature in us ; but it alters the whole spirit and tenor of a man's life. If I have no motive but my Father's will, how astonishingly it simplifies everything ! If you never thought of doing a thing except because it was God's positive will that you should do it, how three-quarters of your life would at once disappear ! This is the truth practically as to ourselves ; yet we clearly see that such was the obedience of Christ.

This, too, is the principle of real piety, because it keeps us in constant dependence upon God, and constant reference to God. It is an amazing comfort for my soul to think that there is not a single thing all through my life which God as my Father has not a positive will about me to direct me ; that there is not a step from the moment I am born (though while we are unconverted we understand nothing about it) in which there is not a positive path or will of God to direct me here (cf. Rom. xii. 2 ; Ephes. v. 17 ; Matt. vi. 22 ; John vii. 17). I may forget it and fail, but we have in the word and will of God what keeps the soul, not in a constant struggle against one thing and another, but in the quiet consciousness, that the grace of God has provided for everything—that I do not take a step but what His love has provided for. It keeps the soul in the sweet sense of divine favour and in dependence upon God, so that like David we can say, "Thy right hand upholdeth me." Moses does not say, "Show me a way through the wilderness,"

but "Show me now *thy* way" (Ex. xxxiii. 13). A man's ways are what he is: God's way shows what He is.

The heart gets separated in its path more and more intelligently to God, and gets to understand what God is. If I know that God likes this and likes that along my path, it is because I know what He is; and besides its being the right path and causing us thus to grow in intelligent holiness of life, there is piety in it too. The constant reference of the heart affectionately to God is real piety, and we have to look for that. We have it perfectly in our Lord; "I know," He says, "that thou hearest me always." There is the confidence of power and reference to God with confiding affection. If I know that it is His path of goodness, His will that is the source of everything to me, there is the cultivation of piety with God, communion is uninterrupted, because the Spirit is not grieved. This is the obedience of Jesus Christ, to which we are set apart.

Then there is the other blessed truth. We are set apart through the Spirit to the value and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. We know that when the priests were consecrated (Lev. viii.) the blood was put upon their right ear and upon the hand and foot, as a token that all the mind and work and walk should be according to the preciousness of this blood. In God's sight there is not a single spot upon us because of the blood that has been shed (1 John i. 7), and we

have to walk according to the value of that blood before God. In the case of the leper the blood was to be sprinkled upon him seven times (Lev. xiv). He was set apart to God (in type) under the whole perfect efficacy of what the work and blood of Jesus are in God's sight.

Such was the double character of Jesus, whether throughout His life or in death. Even in dying His obedience was His life in that sense. And this is what characterizes the Christian. This introduces us at once into the unclouded apprehension of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, reserved in heaven for us. He has begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. I see His path down here; He has gone up there; death has no power over Him. And now through Him nothing stands in the way between me and the incorruptible inheritance. Death itself is totally overcome—so entirely, that when the Lord Jesus comes the believers then living will never die at all. In any case, we shall be changed and glorified; but I speak now as showing the way in which the power of death is set aside, so that instead of our belonging to death now, death belongs to us. "All things," the apostle says, "are yours, whether life or death, or things present or things to come." Christ having come in and having gone down to the full depth of everything for us, He has gone through it all, and has left no trace of it in the resurrection. It is not merely that the blood has been sprinkled,

but He has left no trace of anything. Therefore, though we may die, it is gain if we do. It is to an inheritance incorruptible.

Then we come to a third point in the chapter, that is, the being kept along the way. There are difficulties, and trials, and temptations: it is well that we should look them in the face. Everybody is not passing smoothly through this life, though some may be more so than others. There are plenty of difficulties and trials, and we have to make straight paths for our feet. Still, we are "kept by the power of God," but, mark this, it is "through faith." We have to remember that, and this is why the trials come in. We can count upon the whole power of God, but it is exercised in sustaining our faith in God, as the Lord says to Peter, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." He does not take us out of trial; on the contrary, it is said, "Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." There may be this heaviness through trial; no such thing as doubting God's goodness, but the pressure, whether of sorrow or of that which might tend to make our feet slip, may produce heaviness of spirit. But after all it is "only for a season," and "if need be." Do not make yourselves uneasy: the One who holds the reins of the need-be is God. He does not take pleasure in afflicting. If there is the need-be for it, we go through the trial, but it is only for a moment. It is a process that is going on, and do you fancy that you do not want it?

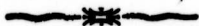
The great secret is to have entire confidence in the love of God, in the certainty that He is the doer of it—not looking at circumstances or at second causes, but seeing the hand of the Lord in it, that it is the trial [testing] of our faith, and that it is only on the way. When the day comes in which God has things His own way (He does His own work now, of course, but when He has things His own way,) these very trials will be found to praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. It is a process that He is carrying on now; it may be even the putting into the furnace to bring out the preciousness of the faith. It is not a question of being cleansed, but He does cause us to pass through all that which He sees needed for discipline. He uses the things that are in the world: the evil, the sin, the ill-will of others, all the things that are in the world, He uses simply as an instrument to break down and exercise our heart, so that our obedience may be simple, and that our faith may be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

We see thus what a strengthening it is to wait for Christ. It is not spoken of here in the highest way, but it is the same general principle. I am waiting. I do not think much of an uncomfortable inn if I know that I am only there for a short time on the way. I might perhaps wish it were better, but I do not trouble myself much about it, because I am not living there. I am not living in this world, I am dying here; if there is a bit of the old.

life, it has to be put to death. My life is hid with Christ in God. I am waiting for the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ—waiting for God's Son from Heaven, who is going to take us there, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away; and all that we pass through here is merely this exercise of heart, which God sees to be needed whilst on the way to where the Lord Himself will have us with Himself, and that for ever. And there is nothing more practically important for everyday work and service, than our waiting for God's Son from heaven. If I am living as belonging to the world, I cannot have comfort. The apostle says, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." And if we are getting into ease in it, we shall find His discipline. But the moment I am waiting for God's Son from heaven, my life is but the dealings of God with me with an object, and the object is that it should be to praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Let me ask you, dear reader, What would be the effect of Christ's coming on your soul? Would it be this? Here I am passing through in heaviness because of manifold temptations, but He will come and take me out of it to Himself. Or would it surprise you? Would it find you with a number of things which you would have to leave behind? As to your heart, where is your heart with respect to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? Young or old (there may be more to learn if you are young; but), would the

coming of the Lord Jesus Christ find you with plenty of things that you would have to throw overboard? or with this feeling, Here is an end of all the exercises of heart; He for whom I have been waiting is coming to take me to Himself. There is the difference between Christians. If my whole life is founded upon this, that His will is the motive and spring of it, I shall find the exercises and the needed trial; but the coming of the Lord would be simply this to my soul—He is coming to take me away to Himself.

The Lord give us to be of a true heart, and to remember that, if we are Christians, Christ is our life, and Christ could not have a portion down here. Joy and peace and quietness of spirit to go with it, and real happiness: only faith must be in exercise. Abraham found in the mountain a place where he could intercede with God; whilst Lot was saying, "I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die." Unbelief always looks at the place of faith as the most awful thing possible—all darkness. The Lord give us to know what it is to live the life which we live "by the faith of the Son of God!"



"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God: set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

THE LAST WATCH OF THE NIGHT.

REV. XIX. 7.

It ends—the vigil of high festival,
 The solemn night of song ;
 For lo ! the crimson day has lit the hills,
 The day desired so long.

From peak to peak there spreads the jasper glow,
 The morning star grows dim ;
 How passing strange the joy that now we know—
 So soon to look on Him.

Oh, deeper than our longing and our love,
 More wondrous than our bliss,
His love that waited while the ages rolled
 To welcome us as *His* !

And now, the watching and the waiting o'er,
 The sin and sadness passed,
 Behold, within the palaces of gold,
 The harps are strung at last !

“The Bridegroom from His chamber goeth forth,
 Resplendent as the sun ;
 O Bride, arise, and put thy jewels on,
 The desert journey done.”

Thus do the morning stars together sing,
 Our shout of joy replies ;
 For lo ! He cometh as the solemn dawn
 Awakes the silent skies.

The joy of God's high city peals afar,
 Through portals open wide ;
 All Heaven awaits the shining marriage train,
 The Bridegroom and the Bride.



“SURELY I COME QUICKLY. AMEN. EVEN SO
 COME, LORD JESUS.”