

THE 2ND AND 3RD EPISTLES OF JOHN.

Beloved brother or sister, have you ever noticed the teaching in the 2nd and 3rd Epistles of John. So important always, and especially in these last days. Please read both Epistles carefully and prayerfully and then the remarks upon them in this number.—[ED.]

2ND EPISTLE OF JOHN.

- 1 The elder unto the elect lady and her children,
whom I love in the truth, and not I only, but
- 2 also all they that have known the truth, for the
truth's sake which dwelleth in us and shall be
- 3 with us for ever. Grace be with you, mercy, and
peace from God the Father, and from the Lord
Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and
love.
- 4 I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children
walking in truth, as we have received a com-
- 5 mandment from the Father. And now I beseech
thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new com-
mandment unto thee, but that which we had
from the beginning, that we love one another.
- 6 And this is love, that we walk after his com-
mandments. This is the commandment. That,
as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should
- 7 walk in it. For many deceivers are entered into
the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is
come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an

- 8 antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that
 9 we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.
 10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed ("and greet him not," *New Translation of J.N.D.*; "and give him no greeting," *Revised Version*;) for he that biddeth him
 11 God speed ("for he who greets him," *New Trans.*; "for he that giveth him greeting," *Rev. Version*) is a partaker of his evil deeds.
 12 Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink; but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.
 13 The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

3RD EPISTLE OF JOHN.

- 1 The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.
 2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy
 3 soul prospereth. For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.
 4 I have no greater joy than to know that my children walk in truth.

- 5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers:
- 6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do
- 7 well: Because that for his name's sake they
- 8 went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.
- 9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrefes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them,
- 10 receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would,
- 11 and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he
- 12 that doeth evil hath not seen God. Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself; yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.
- 13 I had many things to write, but I will not with
- 14 ink and pen write unto thee: But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

REMARKS.

The house of the elect lady was *the sanctuary* of the truth, and had to *keep outside* all that was not

of it; all those that did not bring the doctrine of Christ with them. The house of Gaius on the contrary, was the *quest chamber* of the truth, and had to open *itself* to the witnesses of it. She was to be the guardian of this mystery—he, the fellow-helper of it.

The atmosphere within God's house should be so full of the fragrance of the name of Christ, that all who are of a contrary part should be forced out, (1 John ii. 19); the door at the entrance should be so closed, that the same should know that they would be kept out (2 John 10); but the welcome should be so clear and fervent, that all who savour and witness of that name, should feel themselves at home in it (3 John 3). Shall we not all join, beloved, in such services as these? Surely all this is Kohathite service—this is business with the ark itself. Oxen and waggons could not aid in it, (See Num. vii.) The material of the service is too delicate for such help. The shoulders of the Levites must do the service, and even their hands must reverently and only reverently handle the sacred deposit committed to them.

NOTE.—“The doctrine of Christ” is the confession of the truth as to His blessed Person—the Christ of God as revealed in Scripture. “This is the true God and eternal life. Little children keep yourselves from idols.”

REMARKS ON LUKE xxii. 14-34.

Continued from No. 10.

God would not allow Jacob to be given over to the hatred of Esau; and at the end of his course Jacob could say, (Gen. xlviii. 15, 16,) "The God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil," &c.

When God trains the heart in this way, He sometimes leaves it in Satan's hands. Judas' conscience was in Satan's hands, and therefore he fell into despair. Peter's heart was in His hands for a time but his conscience never. Therefore, instead of despairing, like Judas, the love of Jesus, expressed in a look, had power to touch his heart.

Directly grace acts in the heart, it gives the consciousness of sin; but, at the same time, the love of Christ reaches the conscience deepening the consciousness of sin; but if this is deep, it is because the consciousness of the love of Christ is deep also.

Perfect as was the pardon of Peter, he could never forget his sin. Not only was he fully forgiven, but his conscience was in the Lord's hand when the Holy Ghost revealed the fulness of the heart of Jesus to him. His conscience had been so fully purified that he could accuse the Jews of the very sin he had himself committed under the most solemn circumstances.

"Ye denied the Holy One and the Just," were his words. The blood of Christ had fully cleansed

his conscience ; but if the question of his strength in the flesh were raised, all he had to say of himself was, I have denied the Lord ; and were it not for His pure grace, I could not open my mouth. Jesus never reproached Peter with his sin in those conversations He had with him. There is never the question, Why hast thou denied me ? No ; on the contrary, He acts according to that expression of love of the Holy Spirit, "I will remember their sins no more." Jesus had forgotten all. But their was one thing He had to show Peter, it was the root of the sin, the point where he had failed, Peter had boasted of more love to Jesus than the rest ; and Peter had failed more than all.

Then Jesus said to him, "Lovest thou Me more than these ?" Where is now Peter's self-confidence ? Jesus repeats three times, "Lovest thou Me ?" Peter's answer is, "Thou knowest all things ; Thou knowest that I love Thee." He appeals to Jesus and to His divine knowledge ; "Thou knowest that I love Thee." This is what Jesus did for Peter, and that after his fall.

Peter seems to say "I confide in Thee, Thou knowest how I have denied Thee, do with me what seemeth Thee good." Then we see Jesus sustaining His disciple's heart. [He had said], "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." What enabled him to strengthen his brethren ? His denial had so taught him what the flesh was, that he would no longer bind himself to anything : he knew that he had nothing to do save to trust God.

Whatever his own incapacity to resist Satan, he could appeal to the grace of Him who knows all things. The knowledge that he could confide in Jesus, was that which made him strong. It was after reminding Peter of the utter incapacity of the flesh, that the Lord confided His sheep to him,—“Feed My lambs,”—and it was not till then that he could strengthen his brethren. The flesh has a certain confidence in the flesh, and this is often the folly into which we fall. It is then necessary to learn ourselves by conflict with Satan; every Christian has to learn what he is through the circumstances in which he is placed. God leaves us there to be sifted by Satan, that we may learn our own hearts. Had we enough humility and faithfulness to say, “I can do nothing without Thee,” God would not leave us to this sad experience of our infirmity. When we are really weak, God never leaves us; but when unconscious of our infirmities, we have to learn them by experience.

If a Christian does not walk under a constant sense of his infirmity, God leaves him in the presence of Satan, that he may there be taught by it. It is then also that he commits faults that are irreparable: and it is this which is the most sorrowful part of all.

Jacob halted all his life. Why was this? It was because he had halted morally during one and twenty years. He wrestled mightily, yet he must have been conscious what a feeble creature he was

in the flesh, although God did not leave him to struggle with Esau.

We need never be surprised if the Lord leaves us in difficulty, it is because there is something in us to be broken down, and which we need to be made sensible of; but grace is always behind all this. Christ is all grace, and if He sometimes appears to leave us to learn our weakness, still He is grace, perfect grace towards us.

It was not when Peter turned his eyes towards the Lord that Jesus shewed Himself to him. As to communion, indeed, this is true, but it was before his fall that Jesus had said, "I have prayed for thee," for it is always grace that anticipates us.

Jesus sees what Satan desires, and leaves us to that desire, but He takes care that we should be kept. It was not when Peter looked at Jesus, but when Jesus looked on Peter, that the latter wept bitterly. The love of Christ always precedes His own, it accompanies us, precedes us in our difficulties, and carries us through all obstacles. While it leaves us in Satan's hands that we may learn experimentally what we are, it is always near to us, and knows how to guard us from the wiles of the enemy. Here we see the perfect goodness and grace of the one who loves us, not only when our hearts are turned towards Him, but who adapts Himself to every fault in our characters, that we may be fully and completely blessed according to the counsels of God. All this should teach us to humble

ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt us in due season.

When I feel cast down and grieved in thinking of myself after a fall, I ought not then forthwith to seek comfort, however natural that may be: no, it is not that which I am to seek, but rather, and first of all, the Christ who is there; I have to learn the lesson which God has traced for me.

If, in the midst of painful circumstances, you say that you cannot understand the teaching, God knows what it is, and He leaves you to be sifted, in order to bring you by this means to a deeper knowledge of Him and yourself. He wishes to shew you all that He has Himself seen in you, so that we ought not to shrink from this sifting, but rather to seek to receive the precious teaching which the Lord offers us through it; and thus we shall obtain a much deeper knowledge of what He is for us.

We must learn to yield ourselves to His mighty hand, till He exalt us. May God give us to know Him alone! If we had only to learn what we are, we should be cast down, and sink into despondency; but His object in giving us a knowledge of ourselves and of His grace, is to give us an expected end.

One can say then, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

Continued from No. 10.

Another awful, dreadful truth had now come out: man would not have the Deliverer. If the Lord was to persevere in interesting Himself in the wretched race, He must be, not a mighty living Deliverer by power, but a dying Redeemer. It was the path of obedience and the path of love. The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me; but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given Me commandment, so I do.

But in both the cases we are now considering, we find Him still with His Father, though occupied with Him about the cup He had to drink, and His obedience only shining out in its perfection. There was no forsaking of God yet, though there was dealing with His Father about that cup which was characterized by His being forsaken of God,—“Father save Me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name.” Here He gets the answer to obedience to death in judgment, of real and complete victory, and the wide-spread opening out of the revelation of love, though the world was judged therein. But in Gethsemane all was closing in. It was the power of darkness, and the deeper agony of the Lord told itself out in few (yet how mighty) words, and sweat as it were drops of blood. But the obedience was perfect. The tempter utterly foiled, the name

of Jesus suffices to make all his agents go backward and fall to the ground. He, as far as they were concerned and Satan's power went, was free. But *the Father* had given Him the cup to drink. He freely offers Himself to drink it, shewing the same unweakened power as ever, that of those given to Him He might lose none.

Wondrous scene of obedience and love! But whatever the suffering may be (and who can tell it?) it was the free moving of a man in grace, but of a man perfect in obedience to God. The cup His Father has given Him to drink, shall He not drink it? How utterly, though indeed there, do the unhappy instruments of this power of evil disappear before the offering up of Christ by Himself in obedience and love! The power of death, as that of the enemy, gone through with His Father, and gone, and He in blessed willing obedience now taking the awful cup itself from His Father's hand! Never can we meditate too much upon the path of Christ here. We may linger around the spot and learn what no other place or scene can tell—a perfectness which is learnt *from* Him alone. But I must turn now to other parts of Christ's sorrow, for I can only touch on its causes and character.

Sin itself must have been a continual source of sorrow to the Lord's mind. If Lot vexed his righteous soul with seeing and hearing, when so practically far from God, what must the Lord have suffered in passing through this world! I doubt not

that, being perfectly in the place God would have Him, He was not only in degree, but in the very nature of His feelings, calmer than the righteous man in Sodom. Still He was distressed by sin. He looked about upon them with anger being grieved at the hardness of their hearts. His perfect love was relief here, but did not hinder the sorrow it relieved. "Oh faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?" was met by, "Bring thy son hither." But the unbelief was not the less felt. This was at the close, doubtless, and had special respect to their unbelief, which His own love instantly rises over. Still He was in a dry and thirsty land, where no water was, and felt it, even if His soul was also filled as with marrow and fatness. The holier and more loving He was, the more dreadful was the sin to Him, where His people wandered too as sheep without a shepherd.

The sorrows too, of men were in His heart. He bore their sicknesses, and carried their infirmities. Not a sorrow nor an affliction He met that He did not bear on His heart, as His own. In all their afflictions He was afflicted. It was no light-hearted remedy that, even as a living man, the Lord applied. He bore in His spirit what He took away in His power, for all was the fruit of sin in man, only it was in gracious love. The sin itself He bore too, but that, as we have seen, was on the cross—obedience, not sympathy. God made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin. All the rest was

the sympathy of love, though it was sorrow. This is a blessed character of the Lord's sorrow. Love brought Him to the cross we well know; but His sorrow there had not the present joy of a ministration of love. He was not dealing with man, but suffering in His place, in obedience, from God, and for man. Hence it was unmingled, unmitigated suffering; the scene, not of active goodness, but of God forsaking; but all His sorrows in His ways with men was the direct fruit of love, sensibly acting on Him—He felt *for* others, about others. That feeling was (oh! how constantly) sorrow in a world of sin; but that feeling was love. This is sweet to our thought. For His love He might have hatred, but the present exercise of love has a sweetness and character of its own which no form of sorrow it may impart ever takes away: and in Him it was perfect. I do not indeed deny that righteous anger filled His soul when occasion called it forth—we know it did—yea, brought out such denouncement of woes, as I believe nothing but perfect love could produce; for what must He have felt of those who took away the key of knowledge, and entered not in themselves, and hindered those that were entering? Righteous indignation is not sorrow, but the love that gives birth to it, where it is *righteous*, stamps its own peculiar character upon it.

Another source of sorrow (for what has not Christ drunk at?) was perhaps more human, but not less true—I mean the violation of every delicacy which a perfectly attuned mind could feel.

“They stand staring and looking upon Me.” Insult, scorn, deceit, efforts to catch Him in His words, brutality and cruel mocking, fell upon no insensible, though a divinely patient, spirit. I say nothing of desertion, betrayal and denial (He *looked* for some to have pity on Him, and there was no one, and for comforters, but found none) but of what broke in upon every delicate feeling of His nature as a man. Reproach broke His heart. He was the song of the drunkards. Doubtless, Jehovah *knew* His shame, His reproach, and His dishonour, all His adversaries were before Him; but He passed through it all. No divine perfection saved Him from sorrow. He passed through it with divine perfection and by it. But I do not believe there was a single human feeling (and every most delicate feeling of a perfect soul was there) that was not violated and trodden on in Christ. Doubtless it was nothing to divine wrath, men and their ways were forgotten there. But the suffering was not the less real when it was there; and even when at least, anticipating that cup of wrath, He would have His too confident disciples watch with Him, He only found them asleep at His return.

All was sorrow but the exercise of love, and that must at last give way for obedience in death, where the judgment of God against sin closed over and obliterated the hatred and wickedness of man. Such was Christ. All sorrow concentrated in His death, where the comfort of active love, and the communion with His Father, could put no allevia-

ting sweetness, or be for a moment mingled with that dreadful cup of wrath. There, promises, royal glory in title, all was given up, to have them infallibly anew, received in glory, from the Father's hand, with a better and higher glory, which He had ever had, indeed, but now would enter into as man.

LUKE XV.

"This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."—Luke xv. 2.

The Pharisee gives Him a feast inside the house, and the multitude give him respect and admiration outside; but He is rather grieved, or at the most unsatisfied. He passes on through all this, till publicans and sinners "draw near to hear Him." Then did He in spirit rejoice; His heart tasted the desired fruit of its journey, and was satisfied. Jesus had now travelled far,—far in spirit I mean. He had gone to, and through and from, the house of the Pharisee, and along the road with admiring crowds, but it was wearisome to Him. He found no rest, till now the poor sinner came to get from Him. For the joy that fills this chapter. The fold that had received the lost sheep, the house that had witnessed the recovered piece of money, and the home of the father that had entertained the returned prodigal, set off as in figures, the Saviour's joy now in the midst of publicans and sinners.

He had been charged by the Pharisees with receiving sinners, as though His ministry did not secure righteousness, but gave liberty to evil. Of

course He might have pleaded various answers to this. He might have defended His grace to sinners, on the ground of the necessity of the case, or on the ground of God's glory. But in this chapter, from beginning to end, in each of the lovely parables, He vindicates it, simply on the ground of the joy that He, and the Father, and all heaven itself, were finding in it. Only think of that, beloved. If the Lord God be asked a reason for His ways of salvation with you and me. He says that *He* takes delight in them—they make Him and His glorious habitation to rejoice.

What assurance, what consolation spring from that. Would his neighbours, think you, murmur at the shepherd's joy over his lost sheep now found by him, or the woman's friends grudge her pleasure, as she swept her piece of money into her lap? And so it is with God. It is *His own joy* in the salvation of sinners, that Jesus proposes as His warrant or vindication.

Let us cherish the thought deeply in our souls—the Gospel of our peace is the spring of joy to Him, who planned and accomplished it; that our God has done nothing less than this, *laid the scene of His own happiness in our salvation*, as these parables testify to us.

Jesus had travelled, as we have seen, through Pharisees, guests, host, and crowds of attendants; and was now sitting with sinners who knew their need of Him and came to get what they wanted. Heaven, in one sense, is but this spot stretched out—the habitation of saved sinners and of a rejoicing Saviour.

"ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED."

Sweetest thought. In Him accepted;
Brought in favor in the Son,
Him whom I so oft neglected,
Him who's God's beloved One.
He in grace did stoop so lowly
As for sin to bleed and die,
Though so spotless, perfect, holy,
And I'm now in Him brought nigh.

Blessed thought. In Him accepted;
Now set free from Satan's hands,
With a living Christ connected,
Owning only His demands;
With my heart and soul desiring
Only to His praise to live,—
Now no more a law requiring
Works, which I had none to give.

Wondrous thought. In Him accepted;
Him who left the throne above,
And as man (all sin excepted),
Came in perfect grace and love;
That He might give us salvation,
Share with us His glory bright,
Though before the world's creation
He was God's supreme delight.

Glorious thought. In Him accepted;
With Him on the cross I died,
With Him living now connected,
With Him shall be glorified;
With Him in the world's rejection,
With Him in the Father's love,
With Him blessed in resurrection,
With Him ever,—such His love.

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