

STANDING AND STATE OF SOUL.

IN Ephesians i. we have our standing in Christ; this must not be weakened. There must be no turning aside from our place before God in Him. There I get to know that all I was as the old man, is for faith gone; I see that I am dead, and that my life is hid with Christ in God. (Colossians iii., 3.)

In the flesh there is no good thing; nothing but sin, will, lusts, which lead me away from God. But I believe the testimony of God, and see that Christ died, and that, by death for sins and to sin, the entire evil thing for faith is put an end to. The next step is, that, an end being put to me as the old man, Christ becomes in me the new man, and I am put in the presence of God as in Christ Himself, entitled to consider the old as done away. This is my place and standing before God. It is not only that sin is put away, but my position before Him is in consequence of this.

Nor is this the only thing; for I know that not only am I in Christ, but Christ is in me. These two things cannot be separated. The Lord Himself said, before He left the world, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." He has brought me into the standing; and this we have in

Ephesians i., 2. Christ is looked at as having lain in death, but now raised ; and we are raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Him. There we are ; and such is our position as connected with the " God of our Lord Jesus Christ " (Chap. i., 17, etc.) But in chapter iii., 14, it is " The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Again in chapter i. it is written, " That we should be to the praise of His glory ;" whereas in chapter iii. the prayer is founded on " the riches of His glory." (V. 16.) In the first chapter God is called " the Father of glory." Here the standing is taken as a settled thing ; but we have something further. " That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." We do not ask God to raise us up ; that is an accomplished fact, and is my standing. But here the Apostle prays that something may be accomplished ; that, " According to the riches of His glory," we may be " strengthened with might by His Spirit." *The condition of soul* must answer to the place into which it has been brought. " That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all Saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowl-

edge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

I know that Christ is in me, and I in Him; but I ought not to be satisfied without the consciousness of enjoying Him. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts" is a prayer as to *practical state*, not a declaration of standing. What we have to watch is, not to unsettle the truth of the standing, but to apply the blessedness of the standing to the judgment of the practical state. Thus, if you say you have fellowship with the Father and the Son, I say come, let us see. I saw you laughing just now at foolishness in the street. Is not that having fellowship with a fool? Thus it is one applies the standing to judge of the state. And here it is that the advocacy of Christ comes in, and connects the perfectness of the standing with the state; Can I have a better place and standing than in Christ? I am righteous as He is righteous. My sins are all gone. And what now? I have been brought into the light as God is in the light. But you sinned? Alas! yes. Is this the light? No. But are you going to put me back under law? No! I am going to make you own that you need and have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous. The condition of the soul does not depend on standing, but on present grace. If a person say,

"I am in Christ, and I am satisfied," it is to be feared, and very likely, that he is not in Christ. As to doctrine he may be clear enough; but if he really were in Him he could not be satisfied without communion. "Knowledge puffeth up"; but the effect of being in the light is to make us value not the place only, but fellowship with the Father and with the Son (with one another, too, of course). The way it works is this: the very essence of the condition of soul in a right state is a *conscious dependence*. Now, one may use the fact of completeness in Christ to make one independent. Two things are implied in dependence: first, the sense that we cannot do without God in a single instance; and, secondly, that He is "for us."

In other words, there is confidence in His love and power on our behalf, as well as the consciousness that without Him we can do nothing.

That is the reason why you will find constant reference to mercy when Scripture speaks of or to the individual. When the Church is addressed "grace and peace" only are mentioned. Only in Jude we have "mercy unto you and peace and love be multiplied." And then in verse 21, "Looking for the mercy of Our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life," where the departure of christendom is contemplated, and when things were rapidly going on to judgment. We find, there-

fore, the Saints exhorted to keep themselves "in the love of God." This is state of soul again, and it shows that when the Christian profession is stopping, more personal dependence comes in urgently.

Let us delight in dependence—that a person above us should minister to us, and care for us. What should we think of a child with its father and mother, who yet said "I do not like to have anything to do with them"? Should we not say, "these are not the feelings of a child. You may think yourself a fine man in being independent, but you are not like a father's child"?

When the heart gets this according to Ephesians iii., it is so far, very jealous of itself, and in a lowly condition; in a word, it is with God, instead of without Him. I am perfect, I want nothing—that is as to my standing in Christ; but if I look for fellowship, I want God every day and every moment. But if I think of standing; suppose you have paid my debts, and given me a capital besides, I have got the thing, and want you no more for it. So I do not want God to give the place He has put me in before Himself in Christ, but I do want Him for communion; and if I find an evil thought, I go to Him for grace to get rid of it. Do you want to be perfect in Christ before God, and not have a bit of communion? The best robe is on me. With

me it is all grace, with Him it is His own glory. But are you to be stock! Is there to be no fellowship? Not only there ought to be fellowship, but your joy should be full. Come now. Is your joy full? That is what it ought to be and is what we find in the end of Ephesians iii., "Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith"; not Christ our life, though this last is a blessed truth, but that we may be able to comprehend all the effects of Christ's blessed presence. His being in us thus.

What an unlimited extent of blessing this supposes! (Vv. 18, 19.) When the standing is known, it is but the beginning of Christian life. Then if a person is not kept in a state of soul corresponding to the standing, he may do worse even than the unbeliever. The devil may make him for a time cast off *every thing*.

A THOUGHT ON THE LORD JESUS.

"LET EVERY ONE OF US PLEASE HIS NEIGHBOUR FOR HIS GOOD TO EDIFICATION."—*Rom. xv. 2.*

IT has just struck me that we may continually observe all absence in the Lord to merely please His disciples. He never did that: nay, I am sure that He passed by many little opportunities of gratifying them, as we speak, or of

introducing Himself to their favour. He did not seek to please, and yet He bound them deeply and intimately to Himself.

This was very blessed : and the same thing in any one is always a symptom of moral power.

“ If we seek to please, we shall scarcely fail to please.” That is true, I doubt not ; but nothing can be morally lower. It makes a fellow-creature supreme ; and we deal with him as though his favour was life to us, which God’s is, but His only.

But to bind one in full confidence to us—to draw the heart—to have ourselves in the esteem and affection of others, without ever in one single instance having that as our object—this is morally great, for nothing can account for this, but that constant course of love which by necessity of its own virtue, tells others that their real interests, and prosperity, and blessing are indeed and in truth the purpose and desire of our hearts.

And this was the Lord. Nothing that He did told them that He sought to *please* them, but everything that He did told them that He sought to *bless* them.

And again I say—I believe that He passed by many little opportunities of gratifying them, or of introducing Himself to their favour. And yet He met them graciously and tenderly on

many occasions which *we* might have resented. And both of these, the one as well as the other, came from those springs and sources of moral perfection which took their rise in Him. For if vanity had no part in Him, to put Him to an effort to please, malice had no part in Him to make Him quick to resent. He could not be flattered into graciousness, nor provoked into unkindness. Look at Luke xxii 24—30. They had just betrayed nature, striving through pride, about the highest place. He corrects this; but He does not hold that object long before Him. but allows another to command His heart and His thoughts respecting them—"Ye are they which have continued with me in My temptations."

Was that exactly the moment for remembering this fact? Was it just the time for looking at them so steadily in so favourable a light? No, not for *nature* to do so; but for Jesus it was just the time. And He is our example, that we should follow His steps, and partake of His mind. And after the pattern of this little occasion, we have to remember *that it is not the PRESENT act that has to decide our thoughts and hearts respecting each other*. It may have much of the vileness or working of nature in it, as this strife had, but it may be, as this strife was, the act of those in whom much of the preciousness

of the Spirit dwells, and the precious should be remembered for the commanding of our thoughts *often*, even in the very presence of the vile.

Strange this may appear. Yes, and the ways of Divine unselfish love are strange. Here is our pilgrim part, and the part of a stranger in a scene of multiform selfishness like this. It may not be well to be always understood. Joseph spoke roughly to his brethren in a moment of their sorrow. But Joseph was not to be the servant of the present moment, but of their good. He was seeking to *bless* them, not to *please* them. Jesus told Thomas in a moment of repentance that there was a character of still higher blessing to which he did not belong. But Jesus was true to truth, true to us all, true to Thomas himself, when he might have been flattered into softness. Like Joseph, He was serving Thomas, and not the moment or occasion.

O the perfectness of it all! O the unspottedness of the path of His spirit within, as of His feet abroad! O the beauty of all which LOVE does or says! We shall understand it all by-and-bye, and have pages opened to us which now we have no eyes to read. Through selfishness, we mistake the doings of love, and expect gratifications when we find ourselves passed by; and are sent away with the material of some solid last-

ing benefit, when we hoped for a mere present pleasurable excitement.

O for more of that love that is "in deed and in truth," which EYES the solid good of others and can sacrifice their favour towards ourselves to their own blessing.

CHRIST.

MORE and more I am made to feel that Christ does not have His proper place among the children of God. He is not *the* object. It is either a doctrine, a dogma, a party—my experience, something beside Christ. We seem possessed with very much the same spirit that actuated Peter on the mount, when he said: "Let us make *three* tabernacles." The Father would remedy this. While he yet spake, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold a voice out of the cloud which said: This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him. And when the disciples heard it they fell on their face and were sore afraid; and Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid; and when they had lifted up their eyes they saw no man save *Jesus only*. (Matt. xvii., 1—8.)

Have you ever been in the "cloud," brother?

Have you ever heard the "voice?" Have you been on your "face?" Have you felt the "touch?" Then have you heard another voice, "Arise"? Do your eyes see "no man save *Jesus only*"? Many, perhaps, have reached the top of the mount; but few, very few, have been in the "cloud," have heard the "voice," have been on their "faces," have arisen to see "Jesus only."

"*Christ is all.*" (Col. iii., 11.) O let us know more of that rich blessedness which comes of making "*Christ all,*" of seeing "*Jesus only.*" Our cry should be—"O, to know Him." (Phil. iii., 10.) In our selfishness we cry and beg for blessings. It is the Blesser we need, HIMSELF. He is the joy of our Father's heart. Let us taste with Him the delight He takes in His SON.

Why is it we are not changed more from "glory to glory"? The veil has been rent; the blood has been sprinkled; the spirit is given. The reason is we are occupied with ourselves and the work of the spirit in us, rather than with Christ *alone*. This is the weakness in the wide spread holiness work, so much of which is superficial. Let us look more into that unveiled face from which streams the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God. (2 Cor., 3rd and 4th chaps.) All else will pale, and fade if we but linger here.

A word here. The spirit never occupies me with His work in me.

The Father would direct us to Him. (Matt. xvii., 5.) The Holy Ghost would occupy us with Him. (Acts vii., 55-56., The word of God would speak of Him. (John v., 39.) He is the object of faith; He is the object of love; He is the object of hope; and the faith, or love, or hope, that does not make Him the object is spurious and unreal. He is all for my path; He is all for my service; He is all for my worship; Blessed, Blessed be His Name. He is not on the Cross; He is not in the grave; He is on the throne. Wondrous fact, a *man* in the glory of God, and that man my Head, Priest, Advocate, Bridegroom; the One who died for me; the One who lives for me; the One who is coming for me. It is not surprising that Peter should say, "Unto you therefore which believe *He is precious*. Both the worldly world and the religious *world* seem bent upon shutting Him out. The former is "reserved unto fire," the latter He will vomit out of His mouth. (See 2nd Peter iii., Rev. iii.) Keep clear from them both, dear Brother. If not clear, "Go forth unto Him." (Heb. xiii.) He is enough—glory to the Lamb—and it pleases His heart for us to make *all* of Him.

May it be with us, Christ, Christ, Christ.

You will not get a greater portion or place, than He got. Your portion here will be "food and raiment" your place "*out-side.*" There your portion is "all spiritual blessings," your place "*In Him.*" And now, dear Brother, let every affection, every desire, every thought be gathered in, and centered upon Him.

EXTRACT FROM LETTERS OF J. N. D.

PAGE 333.

DEAR SISTER,—The questions you ask me, make me feel deeply, how sorrowful are subtle questions upon the Person of Jesus; they tend to dry [up and confuse the soul, to cause the Spirit of worship and love to be lost, and in its place to put intricate questions, as if the mind of man could resolve the way in which the humanity and divinity of Jesus are united.

It is in this sense that it is said "No man knoweth the Son save the Father. (I need not say that I do not pretend to do so.) The humanity of Jesus is incomparable; His was a true and real humanity; body and soul, flesh and blood, like mine as far as humanity is concerned, sin excepted.

Now, having said so much, I entreat you with all my heart not to try to define and discuss the person of our precious Saviour; you will lose the savour of Christ in your thoughts, and you will get in its place only the barrenness of the human mind in the things of Christ, and in the affections which belong to them. I have begged brethren to refrain from this, and they are all the better for it. It is a labyrinth for man, because he works from his own resources. It is as if one were to dissect the body of one's friend, instead of delighting in his affections and his character. In the church, it is one of the worst signs I have met with. It is very sad to get into this way, very sad that this should be shown in such a light before the church of God, and before the world. I would add that so deep is my conviction in man's incapacity in this matter, and that it is outside the teaching of the Spirit to wish to define the manner of the union of divinity and humanity in Jesus, that I am quite ready to suppose that even while desiring to avoid it, I may have fallen into it, and thus may have spoken in a mistaken way in something which I have said to you. That He was truly man, Son of man, dependent on God as such, and without sin in that condition of dependence, truly God in all His ineffable perfec-

tion : this I hold, I trust, dearer than life. To define everything this is what I do not presume to do, no man knoweth the Son but the Father, if I find anything which weakens one or other of these truths, or which dishonors Him who is their subject, I shall oppose it with all my might, as God may call me to do so.

May God grant you to believe all which the word teaches with regard to Him—Jesus. It is our food and sustenance to understand all which the Spirit has given us to understand, and not to seek to define that which God does not call upon us to define, but to adore on the one hand and to feed upon on the other, and to love in every way according to the grace of the Holy Spirit.

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BELOVED BROTHER :

We must take care not to pretend to know all that concerns the union of humanity and divinity in the person of the Lord.

This union is inscrutable. "No *Man* knoweth the Son but the Father." Jesus grew in wisdom. What has made some Christians fall into such grave errors is, that they have wished to

distinguish and explain the condition of Christ as man.

We know that He was and that He is God ; we know that He became man, and the witness to His true divinity is maintained, in that state of humiliation, by the inscrutability of the union. One may show that certain views detract from His glory, and from the truth of His person ; but I earnestly desire that brethren should not set to work to dogmatize as to His person, they would assuredly fall into some error. I never saw any one do it without falling into some unintentional heresy. To show that an explanation is false, in order to preserve souls from the evil consequences of the error, and to pretend to explain the person of the Lord, are two different things.
