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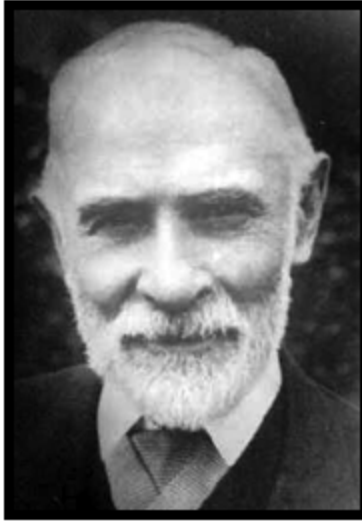
V02 Outline of Exodus

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Produced from GoodTeaching.org
on 24-Feb-2026

PREFATORY NOTE

It is written of the risen Lord that "having begun from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24: 27). Many of those "things concerning himself" are found in the book of Exodus — a part of the Holy Scriptures peculiarly rich in typical teaching — and nothing more is needed to make it attractive to those who love Him.

What is presented in this "Outline" is the substance of a series of readings during the years 1920 - 21, after such revision as seemed desirable in view of publication. It is sent forth with prayer that, at a time when God is doing much to awaken the hearts of His saints to the spiritual value of the Old Testament, it may, by His grace, contribute to edification.

It need be only added that quotations from Scripture are generally, throughout this book, from the New Translation by J. N. Darby.
C. A. C.

EXODUS 1

Exodus 1

The book of Exodus contemplates entirely changed conditions. "There arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph". Instead of being the place where the people of God were preserved and nourished under the bountiful administration of the one who was the "Prince of the power of the life of the world", Egypt became to them the house of bondage. It became the place where every influence was exercised to afflict them, and to bring them under servile bondage that they might not be multiplied. That is, the world is seen here, in type, as the sphere of the power of Satan — the adversary of God and of His people.

The book opens by giving "the names of the sons of Israel" — a title suggestive of their dignity as standing in this relation to the "prince of God". It reminds us of the place of dignity and liberty to which God has called His saints. He "sent forth his Son, come of woman, come under law, that he might redeem those under law, that we might receive sonship". And it is added, "But because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So thou art no longer bondman, but son; but if son, heir also through God"

(Galatians 4: 4 - 7). If this is the place and relationship to which God has called His saints, with the spiritual joy and liberty proper to such a relationship, we can understand how the god and prince of this world would put forth all his power to bring them into bondage or to retain them in that condition.

The prince of this world has realized in all ages that the presence of a divine seed in prosperity constituted a danger to his kingdom in every feature of its strength. We may see in the early days of the church how idolatry, philosophy, selfishness, self-righteousness, and self-gratification all fell before the power of what was of God when His saints were in spiritual prosperity. Hence it has ever been Satan's object to hinder, if possible, the prosperity and multiplication of the divine seed, and to bring the people of God into bondage to the elements of the world, and to make them contributory to that system which is under his authority.

Persecution has been one means he has used to this end, but a more insidious and deadly form of his efforts has been to introduce legal principles such as we see appearing in Acts 15, and amongst the assemblies in Galatia. God would have His people for His pleasure and service, in free and glad response to His known grace and love; but Satan would seek in every way to detain the

divine seed in thralldom to sin, or to the principles of the world in a legal or religious way. And he would add wealth and glory to the world-system by means of the burdens imposed on the people of God, so that instead of being engaged in spiritual service pleasing to God they should be building "store cities for Pharaoh". The world has been adorned and enriched by costly buildings and imposing religious institutions, while those who have laboured in such things have been kept in complete bondage of soul. Men have been kept toiling at the impossible task of improving the flesh and trying to make it acceptable to God. They have been constrained to go about at infinite pains to establish their own righteousness, and to labour to attain peace with God by their own works, prayers, penances, self-mortifications, and so on. Satan would engage people in this hard and unprofitable labour, that their energies might be expended in directions which give God no pleasure, and which only add some kind of embellishment to man in the flesh, and to the world as it is. We shall see in this book that God's intent is to deliver His people from every form of bondage, and to bring them completely outside the world-system, that they may serve Him in relation to a wholly spiritual system of things of which the tabernacle is a type.

The object of all the burdens, afflictions, hard labour, and harshness which Pharaoh put upon the children of Israel was to hinder their multiplication, and the special object of his enmity was the male children. "If it be a son, then ye shall kill him". God's thought is that there shall be a seed for Him, but Satan is set in every way against this; he is set against anything being brought in here for the pleasure of God. We see this in Herod's action in Matthew 2, and also in that of the dragon in Revelation 12. God's object is to bring in Christ, and to give Him a place in the faith and affections of His people, and this the enemy resists to the utmost of his power.

But those who fear God are set to promote spiritual increase; they are set to promote the bringing in of Christ, and the multiplication and strengthening of what is of God in the souls of His people. This is what the midwives did in figure, and God dealt well with them, and made them houses. God will honour that spirit and desire, and give increase, and secure to such an abiding place in His Israel. It is most encouraging to see that the power and favour of God prospered His people even under their afflictions, and the two women who were in accord with His thoughts — though a testimony to weakness in themselves — were preserved and honoured by God in face of all the king's power. We know how Paul travailed in birth for the Galatians that Christ might be formed in them (Galatians 4: 19), and what agony he had about the Colossians, and others whom he had not seen, lest they should be led away by "philosophy and vain deceit, according to the teaching of men, according to

the elements of the world, and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2: 1 - 8). He was set for this one thing — that the Man-child should be brought in, and should have no rival, for no other could be for the pleasure of God.

Do we understand this? That the only accepted Man with God is Christ, and that it is only as Christ is brought in that there is anything for God's pleasure? All divine grace and working is on the line of bringing in Christ, and giving Him an ever-increasing place. If we are in any measure set for this we shall work with God, and be prospered by Him.

EXODUS 2

Exodus 2

It is said of Moses' parents that "they saw the child beautiful" (Hebrews 11: 23), and Stephen told the council that he was "fair to God" (Acts 7: 20). They beheld in him a beauty that was in relation to God, and that must be preserved for God's pleasure and service. What a lovely type of Christ is before us here! The One in whom all moral loveliness came under the eye of God, and in whom was His delight! If we get an apprehension of Christ in His beauty God-ward I think we shall realize at once that He could not have any place in the world under Satan's rule. He could not possibly be tolerated there. The only man who is accounted of in the world is the man after the flesh, who is in every way a grief to God. There is no place there for the new order of Man that is seen in Christ.

Moses' mother felt that such a child must be hidden. "She saw him that he was fair, and hid him three months". We have to face the fact that there is no acceptance in the world for that which has true moral beauty; there is no niche in the world-system where what is lovely in the sight of God can be fitted in. It is under death here. We may connect this with the early chapters of Luke. We see the Child "fair to God" there, but we see it fully recognized that there would be no place for Him in the world. Simeon said to His mother, "Even a sword shall go through thine own soul", and he asked to be let go in peace; he did not wish to remain where no place would be accorded to Christ.

Jochebed realized that Moses' beauty was something which it was her privilege and joy to cherish in secret, but that in the Egypt world it would only be exposed to hatred and death. Do we cherish in our hearts that which has beauty God-ward, and which can never be accepted in Egypt? If we cherish it for ourselves, we surely cherish it in regard of our children also.

Every believing parent to whom Christ is precious recognizes that his children are "holy" (1 Corinthians 7: 14), and that they are to be preserved for God in view of the rights of Christ over them, and in view of Christ being cherished also in their faith and affections. For those who have holy children it is an exercise, as it was with Moses' mother, to hide them from the world.

Then she put him in an ark of reeds, and laid it in the sedge on the bank of the river. She committed him to God in the recognition that he was under death, but with the faith in her heart that God would preserve the beauty she had seen in him. She wanted Moses, not for the Egypt world, but for God and for the brethren. See verse 11 and Acts 7: 23. The flesh is under death with

God, and must go out in death, but, on the other hand, every feature of the moral beauty of Christ which is precious and delightful to God can only have the place of death in a world dominated by Satan. So that faith has no thought of a place in the world either for itself or for those whom it cherishes as "fair to God". It accepts death for them as to the world-system, but looks for God's providential care that, as carrying the features of Christ's moral beauty, they may be preserved for His service and testimony, and for the brethren.

In connection with Pharaoh's daughter we see how wonderfully God preserves providentially what is of Himself and for His pleasure. Even as to the Lord Jesus there was a providential preservation in His being taken into Egypt (Matthew 2: 13 - 15). Where there is faith God comes in providentially so that what is of Himself may be preserved. Otherwise soon there would not be a saint on earth. If Satan had been permitted to have his way he would, by means of Herod, have killed Jesus as a little child, and he would not suffer a saint to live. But God preserves providentially what is precious in His sight, so that it may be maintained here according to His will and for His testimony, in spite of all the hostility of Satan and the world. And "all things serve His might"; He could move the heart of Pharaoh's daughter, and use her to defeat her father's plans, and still retain Moses under the care of his parents.

I think Moses got his spiritual training under the care of his parents, perhaps more particularly from his mother, as she is the one mentioned most in connection with him, and that training proved superior to all the influences of Egypt. You may depend upon it that what he learned in Pharaoh's court, and in the colleges of Egypt, was not of the least use to him as Israel's deliverer, or as king in Jeshurun to order the people of God in the wilderness. "The wisdom of the Egyptians" would have been quite baffled to make a way through the Red Sea, or to supply water and food for that vast host in the wilderness. Egypt's learning is absolutely of no use in the wilderness, and that every one must find. In keeping Jethro's flock in the wilderness Moses was being disciplined and taught of God, and fitted to care for Jehovah's flock in a similar position, but this was divine education. We have to distinguish between what we may learn, in the course of God's providence, of this world's wisdom, and that spiritual education and divine teaching which give the knowledge of God, and which give qualification to act for God and the good of His people. What we may learn, in the course of God's providence, in Egypt's schools, will never be of the smallest help to us in the discernment of the path of faith; nor will it furnish us with an atom of power to take one step in that path. No doubt Moses became a finished product of the highest education that Egypt could afford, but all that had to give place to a very much higher education of an entirely different order. The elements of that education were, I doubt not,

imparted to him by his mother, and through her faith became effective in his soul:

So that Moses came out at forty years of age as the product of the faith and influence of his mother. "It came into his heart to look upon his brethren, the sons of Israel" (Acts 7: 23). He had been cherished by faith as having beauty God-ward, and we may be sure that his mother nursed him not for Egypt but for the brethren. No doubt she gave him an impression of their moral greatness as "the people of God" and "the sons of Israel" that he never lost, even amidst the surroundings of the court, and the ensnaring influence of the wisdom of the Egyptians. He cherished them in his heart as his brethren. "He went out to his brethren, and looked on their burdens". We are only told here what he did outwardly, but in the New Testament we have brought before us his personal exercises of faith. "By faith Moses, when he had become great, refused to be called son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction along with the people of God than to have the temporary pleasure of sin; esteeming the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect to the recompense" (Hebrews 11: 24 - 26). This shows that the true value of a position in the world is that its possessor has the privilege of surrendering it for Christ, and choosing rather that suffering and reproach which are the portion of the people of God, and of Christ, in the world.

But nothing of this is mentioned in Exodus 2, because Moses is viewed here as typical of Christ the Deliverer of His people. His affections and interests were bound up with his brethren, and how perfectly do we see this in the true Moses, the One whose soul ever said to the saints on the earth, and to the excellent, "In them is all my delight". He would go with the repentant remnant in the path of righteousness which they were treading in submitting to John's baptism and accepting its import; and He loved to own as His brethren those who heard the word of God and did His will. He loved the people, and had the thoughts and mind of God as to them, and would connect Himself with every divine exercise that moved in their souls. We see the spirit of all this in Moses — the Spirit of Christ, the true Deliverer — and he looked on the burdens of his brethren as one conscious that he was there for their deliverance from oppression and bondage. "He thought that his brethren would understand that God by his hand was giving them deliverance" (Acts 7: 25).

God had in His mind to free His people from the associations of Egypt, and from everything servile, that He might be served according to the pleasure which His love found in them. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son" (Hosea 11: 1). Moses cherished his brethren in

relation to God, and he was in accord with God's thoughts as to them. "But they understood not". He had to experience in his measure what happened afterwards to the true Moses: "He came to his own, and his own received him not".

We see him here in a twofold character which is full of interest and instruction. The hand of a deliverer smote the Egyptian who was "smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren"; and the heart of a true shepherd appeared in the care with which he would have set two Hebrews at one who were quarrelling. But, refused by those whom he would have delivered, and hated by Pharaoh, he fled to the land of Midian to show there the same hand and heart. He could not be other than what he was — a precious type of Him who is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. If his brethren refused him, and he had to flee from Egypt, it was only that he might reveal in other circumstances, and to other needy ones, the hand of a deliverer and the heart of a shepherd. The hand of a deliverer intervened on behalf of Reuel's daughters, and the heart of a shepherd expressed itself in his care for the flock. He was an exile and apparently buried in obscurity, but he was true to his character as the deliverer even there.

No doubt we may see in this a figure of the present service of grace which Christ is rendering amongst the Gentiles, while rejected by His own people Israel. He is making that precious well — the knowledge of God in grace, and the gift of His Spirit — available for Gentiles.

Then the figure goes further, for we find that of those delivered by his hand he gets a bride. This is clearly a type of the church as given to Christ in the day of His separation from Israel who has refused Him. And the special character of this type of the church is that she is set forth as sharing with Christ the sense of His rejection. Moses in Midian is a figure of Christ in rejection, carrying the sense of it ever in His heart;

this is indicated in the name which he gave his son; Gershom means "A stranger there". And Zipporah represents the church as the companion of His rejection, sharing the sense and the experience of it with Him, and keeping the word of His patience while anticipating the coming day when, through divine working, Israel will call Him Blessed, and reap the fruit in liberty of His delivering power.

Christ will not have His rights on earth, nor will Jehovah have His rights as "the Lord of all the earth", until Israel receives Him and is delivered by Him. The church in the intelligence of this, and as the companion of Christ in rejection, can never be an earth-dweller; she can never take the place of being at home here while Christ is rejected; she must ever have in her heart

that name Gershom — “A stranger there”! In type Rebecca is the church as a comfort for Christ in the day when Israel yields Him no comfort, when she is dead as to her affections for Him. Asnath is the church as affording Him full satisfaction and fruitfulness, so that the sense of toil and exile is forgotten by Him. But Zipporah is the church as sharing with Him in sympathetic affections the place of rejection and strangership. Each type is beautiful and full of instruction in its place.

Moses was no doubt being qualified by the long years of his discipline in obscurity in Midian for the great service which he was eventually to render. Like Joseph he displayed in obscurity the qualities of divine wisdom which afterwards came into public display in the most exalted position. We also see this in the One of whom both Joseph and Moses were types. In humiliation and under reproach, and moving about in the lowliest guise, He showed in every way the Hand and the Heart that will ere long deliver the wide creation from every form of bondage, and that will tend in Shepherd care the vast multitudes that come under His universal rule. The church, too, as typified in Zipporah, has her place with Him in lowliness and obscurity and suffering before she shares with Him the wide glories of His coming reign.

The closing verses of the chapter carry us back to Egypt to show us how God was preparing His people there to appreciate deliverance. We have seen them oppressed and afflicted, and made to serve with harshness, and when Moses went out he looked on their burdens, but there is no mention of any cry until verse 23 of this chapter. When their cry came up to God He heard it, and remembered His covenant. Nearly eighty years of affliction are comprised in the history of this chapter; all intended, under the hand of God, to produce such a sense of their condition and position that they could only sigh and cry. They could not be true “sons of Israel” without being first sons of Jacob, and learning in helplessness what it was to be shut up to God for blessing. God allows the oppression of the enemy, whatever form it may take, and uses it to bring the souls of His people to a point when they can only cry to Him. He is ready to hear as soon as that cry goes up. When His people know no resource but Himself He can appear in delivering power. It is ever so in the ways and grace of our God.

His compassions are seen in His hearing the groaning of the children of Israel in their bondage. But He also “remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob”. It was from those two points of view that “God looked upon the children of Israel”. He had a compassionate regard to their condition, and to their cry and groaning, but He also remembered His covenant. “In his love and in his pity he redeemed them”. There was pity for their distress and

misery, but there was love which had covenanted blessing for them long before. Now that they felt their condition He could acknowledge them as His people.

The chapter closes with these words — the sure pledge of divine deliverance and blessing — “And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them”. Whenever the cry of conscious need and misery goes up to God there is that which He can acknowledge. It is like the repentance which causes joy in heaven, or the supplication of a broken and subdued heart concerning which He can say, “Behold, he prayeth”. When such a cry is genuine, God can acknowledge those who utter it, not only as the subjects of His compassion, but as the people of His covenant.

EXODUS 3

Exodus 3

"The mountain of God", to which Moses came after being forty years in the land of Midian, was that divine elevation from which God made Himself known in delivering grace and power, and in faithfulness to His promises and covenant. Moriah, Horeb, and Zion are each spoken of as the mountain of God or Jehovah, and it is interesting to note the connection between them.

MORIAH (Jah provides) was the place where the burnt-offering would be divinely provided (Genesis 22: 14). This is the basis of all God's ways in grace and blessing. HOREB was where God made Himself known in grace and faithfulness as the One who would deliver His people from bondage, and bring them into the promised inheritance. ZION will be the seat of the kingdom — Jehovah's holy mountain — in that future day of which the prophets so largely speak, when all that God proposed to do at Horeb will be accomplished, and it will all rest upon, and be secured by, the value and sweet savour of Christ as the burnt-offering, the provision of which is connected with Moriah. So that we get the *basis* of God's ways in grace at Moriah, the *character* of those ways at Horeb, and their *fruition* in Zion.

The "great sight" which Moses turned aside to see in the mountain of God was a thorn-bush burning with fire and yet not being consumed. It was a striking figure of the fact that Jehovah was about to appear in good will towards His people. We read of "the good will of him that dwelt in the bush"

(Deuteronomy 33: 16). A thorn-bush — or bramble — was an appropriate symbol of what the people were; as unsuited naturally to the presence of God as a bramble would be to abide uninjured in a flame of fire. But it was in the heart of God to dwell in the midst of the children of Israel, and to bring about in His own "good will" conditions which would render this possible. Indeed, it was His thought to become their glory, and to put His beauty upon them.

Psalms 90, which is "A prayer of Moses, the man of God", was the fruit of what he saw at Horeb. The frailty of the people — their bramble character — is plainly seen there, and the necessity that they should be disciplined and humbled by the recognition of it; but the blessedness of the last two verses is what God had before Him.

"Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy majesty unto their sons. And let the beauty of Jehovah our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us: yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it". Jehovah's work and majesty would appear in the way He would deliver and bless such a people; then He would clothe them with His own beauty or graciousness — He

would become their glory (Psalm 106: 20); and, finally, it would be the work of their hands to make Him a sanctuary that He might dwell among them. He would establish it all Himself. These two verses give us an epitome of the book of Exodus.

It was not the flame of fire that arrested Moses' attention, but the fact that "the thorn-bush was not being consumed". Moses had learned something of the thorn-bush character of the people. He had looked on their state in Egypt, and he had also learned experimentally that they were not even ready to avail themselves of a divine deliverance when it was brought near to them. He had been pondering this for forty years when he saw the bush. He had long before viewed them as the people of God, and had cast in his lot with them as being such. He had viewed them as *in relation to God*, and had sought to act for them, but all had failed; their burdens remained unlightened, and he was an exile in Midian. Now he had to begin at the other end, and to see *God in relation to the people*. If God made Himself known in view of the establishment of covenant relations with His people, that necessitated their deliverance and preservation, and was the pledge of their being brought into suitability to Him for His pleasure and glory. Who but God could have brought this about for such a thorn-bush as Israel?

The thorn-bush contemplates man as he is here, but as made the subject of marvellous divine good will, through the activity of which he is brought into accord with the grace that has reached him. It suggests unlikely material to be in contact with flame, but the fact that it was not consumed showed the presence and result of marvellous divine acting. The fallen creature is, as we should say, very unlikely material for God to connect His glory with, but that creature becomes, through infinite grace, the vessel of God's praise. Such is the line of thought suggested here, and I have no doubt "this great sight" was the answer to long years of exercise in the heart of Moses, and that it laid the foundation in his soul of his subsequent thoughts of the people.

God had set His heart, if we may so say, on dwelling in that thorn-bush, and He would work in grace, and also in holy discipline, in order that all might become suitable to His dwelling there. God would effect what was for His own pleasure from His own side. He would make Himself known in grace, and bring the heart of man under the effective influence of that revelation, and thus secure a response to Himself. He would by His grace engage the hearts of His people with Himself, and close them to every rival.

At the mountain of God we learn divine thoughts in all their blessedness. We see, in figure, that what God proposes is to dwell in grace and holiness in the midst of His people, and that in order to bring this about He will act in grace

and delivering power so as to win their hearts and subdue them to Himself in conscience and affections. We have to “turn aside” from conditions here — from everything human and natural — to see this great sight. Moses had to loose his sandals from off his feet. It is very holy ground to see God in relation to His people, and His people brought as the subjects of grace into accord with Him. The thoughts of grace are holy thoughts; they do not give an atom of place to man in the flesh; indeed, they are outside the range of the flesh altogether. We shall never put our shoes on as sons in the house (Luke 15), if we have not known what it is to take them off at the mountain of God in the presence of God’s grace and holiness. The holiness of grace necessitates an entirely new order of things. Hence Jehovah reveals Himself as “the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”.

As the God of Abraham He calls sovereignly; His call indicates His desire and sovereign purpose to have man for Himself. Then as the God of Isaac He is known as acting in the power of resurrection to secure the accomplishment of His desire and purpose. He has brought in Christ, and raised Him from the dead to be the One by whom He gives effect to all the thoughts of His grace. And as the God of Jacob He is seen as the One who displaces practically from His people by discipline all that is of the flesh so that we may come into correspondence with His thoughts for us. God deals with us so that we may be in keeping with what He has purposed in grace. That He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is His Name for ever, His memorial unto all generations.

It is most important to view the people of God in relation to God’s purpose and grace — in relation to Christ and the Spirit. This gives us an entirely new standpoint from which to regard them. And it is very holy ground; there is no toleration of what is unsuited to God; He is known as a flame of fire. He will consume in holy discipline what is not pleasing to Himself, but He will work in grace to bring about what is in accord with Himself. He will have His people to be partakers of His holiness so that He may be able to be very near to them — even to dwell in their midst.

God comes out to effect what will be for His pleasure — to bring the hearts of His people under the influence of grace so that they may be formed in thoughts and affections which are responsive to grace — and to give effect to all the purposes of His love. “I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good and spacious land, unto a land flowing with milk and honey”. At the mountain of God we learn what God has in His heart, and the direction in which His grace will move effectively, and that puts us on the same line in mind and affection.

Otherwise we may get the people of God before us as identified with the flesh; there is no elevating power then. Here it is what God proposes; Balaam's vision from the top of the rocks is prophetic of the effectuation of it; he saw the people as they will be when the work of God has become effective in them; hence he says, "It shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!" It is not there what God has *thought*, but what He has *wrought* in His people. Balaam saw them, in prophetic vision, as in accord with God's mind in the wilderness; through His own blessed work in them. But *here* it is the grace in which God makes Himself known, and in which He proposes to deliver His people, and to bring them into the land of His purpose.

There is also a blessed hint of how His grace would triumph in bringing about a true response to Himself even in the wilderness. "I will be with thee; and this shall be the sign to thee that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain". Sometimes Christians see the utter ruin of man in the flesh on the one hand, and the purpose of God in Christ completely outside responsibility on the other, without giving sufficient place to the present work of God — the teaching of grace made effective in the souls of His people by the Holy Ghost so that everything unsuited to Him may be set aside morally in them even while in the sphere of responsibility, and elements brought in that are in accord with God and responsive to Him. "This mountain" was where God was declaring what His grace would do for His people, but it was also to be the spot where there would be secured response to that grace from His people. We shall see as we read this book that it is divided into two great parts. As far as the end of chapter 18 it is, in the main, the unfolding of what God was in grace for His people. From chapter 19 to the end of the book it is the development of what His people were to be for Him. We have first to learn what God is in grace for man, then we are prepared to consider what man is to be in holy service for God. His proposal was to deliver His people so that He might be served by a people in liberty, and brought into responsive accord with His holy thoughts.

In verses 11 and 13 we see workings which were not those of faith even in Moses. The unshod feet and the hidden face of verses 5 and 6 might well have taught him that he need not ask, "Who am I?" Nor did the blessed declarations of verses 6 to 12 leave much room for an inquiry as to "What is his name?" For His Name could only express what He was in compassion, faithfulness, and grace, and this had been wondrously told by His own lips from the thorn-bush. But God had come down in GRACE, and in grace He met the "Who am I?" of Moses by saying, "I will be with thee", and in answer to the question, "What is his name?" He said, "I AM THAT I AM". What He had

declared as to His compassion, grace, and faithfulness to His promises and covenant was the outcome of what He was. He was the eternally unchanging, the self-existing One; He was "I AM". That God should come before the souls of His people in that character really puts every other consideration into insignificance, and it connects faith with all the stability and blessedness of what He is. Man, the fallen creature, is a negation; concerning all that is good he can only say, "I am not". But God is "I AM". It was no question of what the people were from their side, but of the absolute and unchanging character of the self-existent and eternal One, and of what He would effect by His own gracious power.

The full meaning of the name Jehovah was now to come out. It implied that God would make Himself known in the deliverance of His people, and in His fidelity to the covenant, and that He would so set them in the blessedness of being brought to Him that they would in perfect freedom enter into the covenant relationship which He purposed to establish, so as to serve Him "in this mountain". He would effect all from His own side.

To serve God "in this mountain" suggests that the service would be rendered in the liberty of all those thoughts of grace and good will which were cherished in the heart of God, and which had found expression from the thorn-bush. Jehovah claimed His people for His service. They were to say to the king of Egypt, "Let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Jehovah our God". The proposal was, that removed typically, by the distance of death and resurrection from Egypt and its bondage, they would minister to the pleasure of God by bringing Christ, in figure, before Him.

And the close of the chapter suggests that God would see to it that His people should not only be liberated from every element of bondage, but that they should be enriched. The moral and religious world has appropriated many conceptions which were originally of God, and therefore have divine value. The world would be poor indeed if it had no conceptions of moral excellence. It has had moralists who have shown "the work of the law written in their hearts", and who have to some extent practised "by nature the things of the law", and who have formulated rules by which men should discipline themselves, and regulate their conduct. It has taken up the law of God, where the light of it has come providentially, and even the teaching and example of Christ and His apostles. And it prides itself on all these things as a kind of moral wealth. But, in truth every conception that is morally excellent — wherever found — really condemns man, for he does not practise the code which he professes to admire, he does not keep the law, nor obey Christ.

Good and divine conceptions are there, but they are all taken up in reference to *the wrong man* — a man who never answered to them, nor ever will. They only condemn the man who — strangely enough — makes his boast in them.

Hence these conceptions of good which men entertain only bring upright souls and tender consciences into bondage. They are convicted of not being what they feel they ought to be. And the more earnestly they endeavour to be what they realize they ought to be, the deeper is the sense of failure and of bitter disappointment. This is really one great element of Egyptian bondage; it is indeed trying to make bricks without straw!

But in the blessed light of divine grace as it is disclosed at the mountain of God we learn that God would take every conception that men have ever entertained that has in itself moral excellence and value — for I think the gold and silver of Egypt may be taken as representing this — and would give it to His people *as made good in Christ*. The world has no moral right to enrich and accredit itself with conceptions to which it does not, and cannot, answer. But God has brought in a Man after His own heart, One in whom there has been a perfect answer to all His pleasure. Every moral excellence has been found in full perfection in Him, and it is given to the people of God in Him — in a living Person who attracts and satisfies and forms their affections by the blessedness that is in Himself. Their hearts can rest in a Person in whom they are enriched with every kind of moral wealth.

The silver and the gold no doubt became material for the tabernacle. When every conception of moral excellence is seen to be substantiated in Christ, and becomes bound up with Him in the faith and affections of the people of God, they are enriched in Him, and furnished with material for the tabernacle. The world has no title to anything that has true moral value. It belongs by the gift of divine grace to the people of God as made good in Christ.

A delivered and enriched people could minister to the pleasure of God, and make Him a sanctuary that He might dwell among them. It was a wonderful time when they made the tabernacle. They served Jehovah, as He had said, “in this mountain”. A liberated and enriched people — made willing-hearted under the influence of the grace in which Jehovah had brought them to Himself, and wise-hearted as having, in type, His Spirit — prepared Him a habitation. The thought of sonship underlies it all, for Jehovah said, “Israel is my son, my firstborn. And I say to thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me” (Exodus 4: 22, 23). Sonship supposes mutuality of delight — God delighting in His people, and His people delighting in Him. Caleb said, “If Jehovah delight in us, he will bring us into this land and give it us”. I think he had, typically, the spirit of sonship.

EXODUS 4

Exodus 4

The signs which God gave to dispel unbelief on the part of the people were signs of His intervention in relation to the conditions in which the people were found. The bondage in which they were held necessitated the exercise of *power* in grace for their deliverance; and their moral state necessitated the *purification* of their affections. These two things were suggested by the rod and the hand in the bosom.

In Genesis 1 man was set up in dominion; the rod of power was in his hand; but in Genesis 3 we might say that he cast it on the ground and it became a serpent. Power in this world became satanic; it took on the character of evil. But in Moses taking the serpent by the tail we see a figure of Christ taking up all the consequences of man's sin and Satan's power; being made sin, and going into death that He might annul him who had the might of death, and deliver those who were in bondage. Power has now been regained by Man in the Person of Christ, and it is being exercised for man's deliverance from every power of evil. Christ is alive for evermore, and has the keys of death and hades; He is at the right hand of power, exalted by God's right hand to be a Leader and Saviour (Acts 5). Power is in the hands of a Man for man's deliverance, and it is available for all. There is no need for any one to remain in bondage now. The God who committed Himself in promise and covenant to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has secured all power in the hand of Christ for the fulfilment of every promise; and the complete deliverance of man.

We need Moses' rod to the end of the wilderness; that is, the authority of Christ as Lord, and the power of the kingdom in His hand for our defence from every evil power.

Moses fleeing before the serpent would indicate that man, as such, cannot face the power of evil. Only Christ could do that. We see Him as the perfect Servant in Mark's Gospel, able to meet and overcome all the power of Satan, and the result of His service is that those who believe are able to "take up serpents". The Spirit has come down to make all the power of the One who sits at the right hand of God available; men in the Spirit can use that power.

But there is another question. The moral state of man needs to be met. His affections are corrupted; his bosom is the seat of leprosy. "From within, out of the heart of men, go forth evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickednesses, deceit, licentiousness, a wicked eye, injurious language, haughtiness, folly; all these wicked things go forth from

within and defile the man" (Mark 7: 21 - 23). The leprosy that attached to Moses' hand when taken out of his bosom would speak of the fact that man is corrupted in his affections, and must be cleansed and purified in those affections before he can serve God or be pleasurable to Him. The dominant influences in man's heart naturally are connected with self-gratification and wickedness and impurity of every description, as the Lord said; morally this is leprosy.

God has come down to deliver men from bondage with a view to having the free and happy service of sons; that is, of those who respond in affection to Himself. The object of the revelation of God in grace is that He may have man for Himself, for the pleasure of His love. Coming into the light of that revelation by faith man is morally purified in his affections. "The heart-knowing God bore them witness, giving them (the Gentiles) the Holy Spirit as to us also, and put no difference between us and them, having purified their hearts by faith" (Acts 15: 8, 9). The knowledge of God in forgiving grace purifies the affections so that God can give the Holy Spirit to those who believe. It is really knowing what is in God's heart that purifies man's heart; so that instead of looking to self-gratification for happiness, one looks to God as known in grace. God knows every heart that thus looks to Him; He is "the heart-knowing God". A purged conscience and a purified heart go together.

When Cornelius and his friends believed what Peter said, the blessed light of God in grace entered their souls and purified their affections, and God could bear witness to the reality of this by giving them the Holy Ghost. There was a condition of heart there that God could connect His Spirit with. God delights to bear witness to that purification of the affections which He has Himself brought about through faith. Divine love has been fully and blessedly expressed with a view to our affections being purified. God would bring about genuineness of heart on our side. It is the pure in heart who see God, and we are exhorted to follow righteousness, faith, love, peace "with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart". Lydia's heart was opened by the Lord, and her affections were purified so as to be henceforth identified with the service and testimony of the Lord.

As we follow the teaching of this book we shall find God speaking in chapter 20 of "thousands of them that love me", and in connection with the offerings for the tabernacle they were to be taken "of every one whose heart prompteth him" (25: 2). God was making Himself known that He might be served by a free people with purified hearts in full and glad response to His holy love. That God is revealing Himself in grace in order to bring this about ought to touch every heart. "It shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither

hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the other sign”.

The third sign — the turning of the water of the river into blood — was indicative of judgment, which would come in if the two previous signs were not believed. There is no suggestion that the third sign was given that the people might believe. “God speaketh once, and twice”. After God has spoken twice there is no more to be said. The two signs speak of Christ in power at the right hand of God, and the Spirit given as God’s witness to purified hearts down here.

The third sign is one of judgment. The apostle did not fail to sound a warning note, “Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish” (Acts 13). A warning to flee from the wrath to come is really the voice of mercy. The wrath of God has been revealed from heaven at the cross, and this cannot be preached without making known that wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. A ministry of supreme grace has come in, but if it is not received, judgment is inevitable. The brighter a light is, the darker the shadow which it casts; and the bright light of divine grace casts a deep and fearful shadow when it only shines on an unbelieving heart. God is appealing to men in tender grace. Paul will not quite say that God is beseeching, but he goes as near to that as possible. “*As though God did beseech by us*”.

God is telling man of a power that is active to deliver him from all the power of evil, and that He has made provision for the purification of man’s affections. It is as much as to say, I have such interest in you that I am prepared to deliver you, and to purify you so that I may have your hearts for myself. If such an appeal will not affect man, nothing will, and judgment is inevitable.

In the next section weakness is apparent in Moses, and reluctance to go, and in this he could not be a type of Christ. But I think this portion is suggestive in that he gets another as his mouthpiece. Christ is the great Speaker, but He gets a voice in others. Paul could say, “Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me”.

Personally Moses was ready to retire through unbelief from the position to which God was calling him, and we never do that without being losers. Weakness often runs into self-consideration; faith considers for God. Then, later in the chapter, we find that Moses had not given circumcision its place in his household. His neglect in this matter was a serious thing in the sight of the Lord. “Jehovah ... sought to slay him”. If the service of God is to be taken up, there must be the practical cutting off of the flesh. All weakness is more or

less connected with what we are as in the flesh, but circumcision signifies the setting aside of the flesh and giving place to the power of the Spirit. There must be this for service and testimony.

EXODUS 5 AND 6

Exodus 5; Exodus 6

“Thou shalt say to Pharaoh, Thus saith Jehovah: Israel is my son, my firstborn. And I say to thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me. And if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill thy son, thy firstborn”.

The bondage of Israel in Egypt was holding them back from their proper service to God. To the people He spoke also of the good and spacious land into which He would bring them; He could speak to them of all that was in His heart for them; but in speaking to Pharaoh He claimed them for His service in the wilderness.

All that is in Egypt — whether it be the flesh-pots, or the idolatry, or the servile labour — detains the people from this holy service. The prince of this world will do his utmost to hold us back from this. The question in controversy was whether the world-system was to have the service of God’s people, or that service was to be for Him? This is very important in its practical bearing on ourselves. It is a serious question for us all to consider, Are we really free for the service of God? Or are we in bondage in some way to the elements of the world?

The world-system would claim everything for itself; everything must be spent in its service, and to enrich it. Satan’s object is to connect the labour of the people of God with his world, and thus to detain them from serving God in relation to an entirely different and spiritual order of things, of which the tabernacle was the type. How many are toiling to improve the world, to reform man, to elevate the masses! But the more earnest people are on this line, the more heart-breaking is the fruitless toil. The children of Israel making bricks in Egypt is a figure of all the labour that goes to build up and enrich the world-system. It is fruitless labour from a spiritual point of view, for it is enriching and building up a system which is under the judgment of God. There is no spiritual liberty or joy in it; it is bondage.

The first movements towards deliverance intensified the bondage of the people. They were set to make bricks without straw. There is a great deal of labour of that kind. Self-improvement and world-improvement involve labour which has no suitable material to work with. It can only end in disappointment.

But God is set to deliver His people from all this kind of thing that they may serve Him in perfect freedom, and as those who are enriched by Him with spiritual wealth. The knowledge of God in grace is the spring of everything.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had known God as the Almighty. He had promised and covenanted, and they knew Him as the God of resurrection power who could give effect to all that He promised.

The Name Jehovah was used all through the book of Genesis, but what was involved in it was not known. Its significance did not come out until God intervened in grace to deliver His people from bondage so that He might have them for Himself. The Name Jehovah involved what God was as a Redeemer and Saviour God, His compassions for His people in their afflictions, and His pleasure in having them for Himself. As Almighty His power and ability to give effect to what He had promised were known. But as Jehovah He would make known what was in His heart — His interest and good pleasure in His people, and His active intervention on their behalf, so that He might be personally known by them, if we may so say. He would have them to realize His deep interest in them. His purpose was that in result there should be a bond between Himself and His people, founded on a known and enjoyed deliverance from bondage, and on the knowledge of Him as their Deliverer, Redeemer, and the One who claimed them in the way of perfect grace for Himself. He looked to cherish them as His people, and to be cherished and honoured and served by them as their God. All this is bound up in the Name Jehovah. It is God known in the solicitude and active intervention of a grace that effected all in the way of deliverance, and was the source of all in the way of blessing.

We now know God as the Father — that Name of full and perfect grace which could only be revealed in connection with the presence of the Son as Man on earth. Now the fulness of grace and truth has come out; there is no more to be told; it has been well said, Who could speak after the Son?

God had established His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them the land of Canaan (6: 4). Then His compassions came in with regard to the condition and groaning of the children of Israel in Egypt (verses 5, 6). "And I will take you to me for a people, and will be your God" (verse 7). The people were in a place which was not God's place for them, and they were in bondage serving a system which was under judgment, but He claimed them for Himself, and would secure His claim, so far as they were concerned, in the way of grace. He would bring them to the abode of His holiness in the wilderness, that they might serve Him in freedom "on this mountain", and that He might take up His dwelling in their midst; and He would also plant them in the mountain of His inheritance in the land. Redemption has both things in view.

In chapter 6: 13, Jehovah gave commandment to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. Moses and Aaron were put in authority by divine

commandment. Jehovah asserted His own faithfulness and authority. It is as much as to say, If the people do not hearken, and Pharaoh will not hearken, I will be faithful, I will not deny Myself. All would hang now on Jehovah's faithfulness, and on Moses and Aaron as commanded by Him — figures of Christ as Lord and as Priest.

Hence the genealogy given in the latter part of the chapter goes no farther than to bring in Levi, so as to introduce Moses and Aaron. All was secured in them; that is in Christ as Mediator and Priest. The glory of the Lord is that He is the Mediator; He brings all that God is in grace and blessing to men; and as Priest He takes a place on our side so as to secure response to it all in the affections and service of His people. Christ can give such an application of it all in a priestly way that response to God is secured. There is also the important thought that priestly judgment maintains holy conditions among the people. Phinehas executed judgment on the offenders in Numbers 25, and had the covenant of an everlasting priesthood on account of his jealousy in accord with Jehovah. Personally Aaron did not always maintain holy conditions, but his personal failure does not affect what he was as a type of Christ.

EXODUS 7 TO 10

Exodus 7 - Exodus 10

Jehovah said to Pharaoh, "I will at this time send *all my plagues* to thy heart, and on thy bondmen, and on thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth" (9: 14). But to Moses He said, "I will ... multiply *my signs and*

my wonders in the land of Egypt" (7: 3). In relation to Egypt God's dealings were *plagues*, but in relation to the people of God they were *signs*. We might, therefore, expect to find them morally significant. It is *by* these "great judgments" that God would bring His people out of the land of Egypt. It suggests a course of moral instruction that issues in the deliverance of the people of God from the world. It seems to me that while the plagues were divine judgments, they were intended to be also "signs" of solemn import, the meaning of which has to be learned by the people of God. The instruction of these "signs" is more particularly for ourselves; it is intended to give us a moral judgment of what is found in the world, so that we may be brought out of it as discerning its true character before God. And the believer has necessarily to take it all up in self-judgment, because he finds all the elements of the world in his own heart according to nature and as in the flesh.

The plagues were preceded by a miracle which was a testimony to the presence and activity of divine power: Aaron's rod became a serpent. The serpent being introduced suggests the acting of divine power in a form which is relative to what is evil. We are familiar with the thought of the brazen serpent as typical of Christ coming sacrificially into the place of sin. And Aaron's rod becoming a serpent seems to speak of divine power manifesting itself in relation to the power of evil in such a form as to be a testimony before the world to the power of God in grace.

This scripture is distinctly referred to in 2 Timothy: "Now in the same manner in which Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, thus these also withstand the truth; men corrupted in mind, found worthless as regards the faith. But they shall not advance farther; for their folly shall be completely manifest to all, as that of those also became" (2 Timothy 3: 8, 9). God has brought in a testimony to Himself, and to His own power in delivering grace. The presence of the saints on earth — as characterized by life in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 1: 1), faith and love which are in Christ Jesus (1: 13), the grace which is in Christ Jesus (2: 1), the salvation which is in Christ Jesus (2: 10), living piously in Christ Jesus (3: 12) — is a standing miracle and a continual witness to the fact that God has intervened in grace to deliver men from all the power of evil

here. As saints walk in the power and vitality of what is in Christ Jesus, there is indisputable evidence of God having wrought for their deliverance from all that is evil here.

There are those on earth today who have come under the headship of Christ — who are in Christ Jesus. And God gives testimony to the world by the manner of life of His saints. In marked contrast to the mere imitators Paul could say, "But thou hast been thoroughly acquainted with my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings" (2 Timothy 3: 10, 11). The life of the saints becomes testimony to the grace in which God is working for the complete deliverance of men.

If such a testimony is brought in we may be sure that it will call forth two things — persecution and imitation. "All indeed who desire to live piously in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But wicked men and juggling impostors shall advance in evil, leading and being led astray" (2 Timothy 3: 12, 13). But what is of God in Christ Jesus will be sustained in the presence of persecutions and sufferings, and it will also prove its superiority to all imitations. Aaron's rod swallowed up all the others.

The world scoffs at those of whom it speaks in derision as "saints", but the very fact that there are such persons here is a divine testimony. It is not too much to say that if all saints were living piously in Christ Jesus, and on the line of faith and love in Him, strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, there would be such a testimony to the delivering power of God in grace as could not be gainsaid by anybody. And it would prove its superiority to every kind of religious imitation. Men may profess to deal successfully with what is evil; they may imitate what is of God, and deceive souls by the imitation; but there is no real power of deliverance for man save what is in Christ Jesus. And the folly of every imitation will be as fully exposed as was that of Pharaoh's sages and sorcerers when Aaron's rod swallowed up theirs.

The exercise and labour of Paul was that the saints might obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, so that they might come out in moral superiority to every phase of evil here. They would then be a true testimony to God's delivering power in grace. Eternal glory goes along with this salvation, but the salvation is in relation to the scene where all the evil is; it would secure the saints from all that is evil here; and eternal glory will be the fruition of grace in a scene where no evil can ever come.

Then it seems to me that the "signs" which follow are suggestive of different features which mark the world as under divine judgment. God would instruct us in the true character of the world that we might be stimulated to desire and go in for complete divine deliverance from it. It has often been remarked that

nine of the plagues are divided into three sections with three in each section. The tenth stands by itself, as a final and conclusive judgment.

The first lesson we have to learn in view of appreciating deliverance from the world is that all that it regards as springs of life — streams, rivers, ponds, reservoirs, and all its vessels; all its sources of life and refreshment — are filled with what is morally death. They subsist in independence of God, and in man doing his own will in lawlessness, and seeking his own pleasure and glory without any reference of heart to God. The fact that Christ has died here has proved that there is no room for God in the world. The very life of the world in every aspect is lawlessness — sin — and where all is sin, all is morally death. Christ has died to sin; His death has severed all His links with such a scene; He lives to God in another sphere, and the true springs of life are there. If we have really learned this first lesson as to the world we see it to be a place from which we might well desire to be extricated. If God came into the world as it is, the whole system would fall to pieces. The whole character of its life depends on the exclusion of God; Christ has no part in it; He has died to it.

Then the frogs would appear to be figurative of the evil influences which swarm in the world — the product of the uncleanness of man's heart. In Revelation 16 three unclean spirits as frogs go out of the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. The heart of man — and the world has all been evolved, under Satan's direction, from the heart of man — yields nothing but evil and unclean influences. We have found that out in ourselves. The experience of Romans 7 proves it; even when there is a desire to do good we have to learn that evil is present with us. This exhibits in a strong light the true character of the world, and intensifies the desire for deliverance from it.

In the third sign the dust of the earth became gnats. We cannot think of the "dust of the earth" without being reminded of the solemn sentence pronounced on man in Genesis 3: 19. "For dust thou art; and unto dust shalt thou return". But in this sign we see life out of death — a striking figure of resurrection power, which even the scribes of Egypt had to own was "the finger of God". Man's history will not end in death. A dying man, when his friends exhorted him not to be afraid of death, said, "It is not death I am afraid of; it is resurrection". The hour is coming when all who are in the tombs shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth in resurrection. How solemn is the thought for those who are in the world and of it!

But there is One who has come by the grace of God into the dust of death (Psalm 22: 15), and in the resurrection of Christ we see resurrection power acting in the way of blessing to man. The resurrection of Christ is the supreme act of God's power in favour of man. He was "delivered for our offences and

has been raised for our justification". This is the blessing side, which faith knows and values as the ground of peace with God, but for the world it is a very solemn thing that "the finger of God" has been evident in the resurrection of Christ. It proves that there is a direct issue between God and the world. The world put Christ in the place of death, but God has raised Him. And the finger of God in that resurrection power is solemn evidence of the state of the world and of its certain judgment. In having raised Christ from among the dead God has given proof to all men that He has set a day in which He is going to judge the habitable earth in righteousness by the Man whom He has appointed.

To the believer the finger of God in resurrection power secures justification by faith and peace with God, it secures righteousness to him in a risen Christ, so that he can receive the Spirit as the power of divine deliverance. It is noticeable that in Matthew 12: 28, the Lord says, "If I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then indeed the kingdom of God is come upon you". But in the corresponding scripture in Luke 11: 20, He says, "If by the finger of God I cast out demons". Scripture thus gives us warrant to identify the Spirit of God with the finger of God. It is by the Spirit that life comes in morally where all was death. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death".

So that if in the first two signs we have the moral state of the world exposed, and the uncleanness of man as a source of what is evil, in the third we have clearly intimated the introduction of life morally by the Spirit of God, so that His people may be found here in separation from the world, and in freedom from the power of sin and death, so as to be practically on the line of righteousness and love. Therefore from this point the people are viewed in a distinctive position. "I will distinguish in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell ... and I will put a separation (literally deliverance or redemption) between my people and thy people" (8: 22). They are viewed as having learned typically the lessons of the first two signs, and as having the Spirit as life on account of righteousness, and being thus in separation from the world in the power of a divine deliverance, and under God's protection. So that the import of the first three signs would correspond in a way with the teaching of Romans 6, Romans 7, and Romans 8. The result is that believers are distinctly marked off from the world. Goshen is typical of the place in which those are found who have taken account of themselves as dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God in Christ Jesus, who have learned their own weakness and the evil character of the flesh, but who have the Spirit as life and power.

The second series of signs begins, as each of the three series does, "in the morning", and what is distinctive of this section is that the land of Goshen where God's people dwelt was immune from the flies, the murrain, and the boils. So that these signs speak of things from which the people of God, viewed as in their normal place and condition as redeemed and delivered, would be free.

Flies are small things, but they are very irritating. The state of the world comes out in the innumerable small ways in which men and women become a trial to each other. Malice, guile, hypocrisies, envyings, evil speakings (1 Peter 2: 1), are well-nigh universal in the world. "We were once ourselves ... living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another" (Titus 3: 3). Petty envyings and jealousies and back-bitings are very characteristic of the world — a veritable plague of flies! They all serve to show what man really is, and the character of the world.

"I will distinguish in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no dog-flies shall be there; that thou mayest know that I Jehovah am in the midst of the land". What a blessed evidence of the presence and power of God in grace amongst His people when all these sources of irritation have no place! Saints walking in the Spirit, and having their conversation by the grace of God, are in Goshen, and there are no flies there. It raises the question whether we have really reached experimentally that sphere under Christ's Lordship where the Spirit is power to maintain practical deliverance from such things? Goshen represents a sphere on earth which stands in moral contrast to what obtains in the world. It is where such things as the flies typify have been laid aside, and the sincere milk of the word is earnestly desired, and the elect sojourners are found growing up to salvation. If we were maintained in the power of what the "finger of God" speaks of there would be no flies, nothing proceeding from the flesh in one to rouse the flesh in another. The absence of such things is the evidence that God in delivering power is in the midst of His people.

Then the plague on the cattle may serve to call attention to the fact that man uses all his possessions for himself and not for God. It may be that we are so accustomed to see this that it does not strike us as being particularly wrong, but it is a sad feature of the world, and will bring it under judgment. It is very interesting to see that all the cattle of the children of Israel were held for God. "Our cattle also must go with us: there shall not a hoof be left behind; for we must take thereof to serve Jehovah our God; and we do not know with what we must serve Jehovah, until we come there" (Exodus 10: 26). Hence no murrain came on the Israelites' cattle. If the saints have really given

themselves first to the Lord (2 Corinthians 8: 5), they necessarily hold all that they have for Him. The enemy will resist such a triumph of grace to the utmost of his power, but God will support and protect His people in their desire and purpose to hold all for Him and for His holy service.

The last sign in this series — the boils — would seem to speak of the coming out openly of the corruption that is in the heart of man. God has brought it all under judgment at the cross — there may be an intimation of this in the “ashes of the furnace” — but what God visited there with unsparing judgment is actually in the heart of man, and makes itself manifest openly. It comes out in the world, where man having turned away from God has been given up judicially to expose the wickedness and corruption of his nature (Romans 1). In the judicial ways of God He allows what has been judged at the cross to be realized to be corruption by coming out as such in the world. The corruptions that break out in men justify God in the condemnation which He has passed on the flesh. “That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, be clear when thou judgest” (Psalm 51: 4). He allows the plain and palpable evidence of the corruption of the flesh to appear.

And if saints get careless, and do not walk in self-judgment, if they get away from Goshen, the corruption of the flesh may manifest itself in them, so that they may not be able to stand even before their brethren. In Goshen the flesh is known and judged in secret, in the light of God’s judgment of it at the cross; it does not come out in the walk and ways of the saints; no boils are there. It is not that the flesh in saints is any better than other people’s flesh, but it is judged in secret with God, and His grace and delivering power preserves it from coming out in an open way. But if we get away we may allow envyings and evil speakings; then we may use what we have for self and not for God; and, finally, we may expose in a public way the corruption of the flesh. But there is a sphere where none of these things is found in activity, and it is our normal dwelling-place as those separated from the world by a divine deliverance. God brings all these things before us to intensify the desire for complete deliverance. They instruct us typically in what is characteristic of Egypt, that we may appreciate the grace and power which are active to deliver us completely from it.

Then another “morning” introduces a last series of three signs. My impression is that in this series the plagues are suggestive of the future and final manifestations of evil in the world, and of God’s judicial dealings as we see them in the Revelation. God will deal with every element in the world, and He has given us prophetic light as to His dealings. The “very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since its foundation until now”, seems to carry a

suggestion of those coming tribulation days when God's forces will be marshalled against the hardened heart and will of man, and against those evil powers of which man has become the willing dupe and tool. He spoke to Job of "the treasures of the hail, which I have reserved for the time of distress, for the day of battle and war" (Job 38: 22, 23). We may say with all solemnity that the time is drawing near when God will declare war. Today He is preaching peace by Jesus Christ, and His longsuffering is salvation, but He will ere long declare war. He will come out in His might to do battle with all the power of evil, and none but those who fear Him will escape.

We may see this in the Revelation, and also note the universal call to fear Him (Revelation 14: 7).

The plague of locusts would be a foreshadowing of a day when not one green thing will be left to men — not one thing that is really pleasant to the eyes or good for food. Men have dreamed for ages of a good time coming, and have laboured to bring it about, but the issue of things in man's world will be that not one true comfort will remain to him. That will be the result of the working out of the evil principles which at the bottom really characterize the world — as to God lawlessness, and as to man utter selfishness.

Then the darkness speaks of the withdrawal of divine light. Man is busy today blocking up his windows to keep out the light. Almost every day we hear of some fresh piece of infidelity in religious high quarters. Man will eventually shut out the light of revelation, and the light of law, and even the light of nature, and nothing will be left but the darkness of apostasy. God will leave man for a season to the darkness that he loves, but will bring in His judgment upon it.

Some might perhaps be inclined to say, What is the good of all this to us? Well, it is a pity if it does not make us anxious to get completely clear of the Egypt world — the world that is around us, and is characterized by the moral features we have been considering. We may also take account of the people of God as in the wilderness; they are seen later in the book in this position. And they may also be contemplated as in the land of Jehovah's promise. But viewed as in Egypt, the only place where there is divine protection is Goshen. There is light there in the dwellings of the Israel of God — the light of Christ, the One who has died to sin and who lives to God, the One who loves righteousness and hates lawlessness, the One known in resurrection outside the world altogether. Under His Lordship and Headship we can escape even now from the elements of the world, and are preserved for God in freshness by His Spirit, and kept in the holy light of the blessed God revealed in grace.

Goshen is where a holy people walk in the Spirit, and in the fellowship of God's Son, and are preserved by the faithfulness of God. It is suggestive of the fellowship in which saints are privileged to walk together in the midst of surrounding conditions of evil. The darkness is deepening around, but there are dwellings in Goshen where things are viewed from the standpoint of Christ and His death. There is divine light there.

All that is written in the Revelation as to the future judgments which will come upon the world is written that the saints may be in moral accord with those judgments now. For example, if it is written that "Babylon is fallen", it is that the whole system of human glory and corruption which is set forth in Babylon may be a fallen system for every saint *now*.

The plagues are suggestive of how God exposes, and deals with, what is in the world. What is a *plague* to the world is a *sign* to the people of God containing moral instruction so that we may realize the importance of getting completely clear of such a system. God is set to bring His people out of it that they may be for Him — for His pleasure and service.

EXODUS 11 AND 12

Exodus 11; Exodus 12

Everything came to a head in connection with the last — the tenth — plague. Egypt was made to realize that it was under the judgment of God. He “smote Egypt in their firstborn” (Psalm 136: 10). The firstborn was the chief of their strength, “the firstfruits of their vigour” (Psalm 78: 51). The firstborn represents all that man can glory in, all that his hopes and desires centre in, his strength and his pride. The whole strength and life of the world is under the judgment of God.

I have no doubt that all the strength and pride of man will be concentrated in the beast and the antichrist, and all the hopes of man as completely apostate will centre in them. And in the closing scene of the history of this present world — immediately before the glorious deliverance of Israel and their introduction to long-promised blessing — God’s judgment will fall in its terrible power on the strength and pride of man as found in its full vigour there. (See Revelation 19: 19 - 21.)

But, before that final and public issue of things, we may learn from the death of the firstborn in every house that everything on which man prides himself, and on which his hopes are set, is under the judgment of God. If the chiefest and best that man has is under divine judgment, how hopeless and irretrievable is his ruin! But the manifestation of this becomes the occasion for those who fear God to learn His righteousness in the way of grace in a wondrous manner.

The Passover is such an important institution that one would wish to realize its full significance, and the bearing of all that is connected with it. It presents Christ and His death as the sacrificial ground on which alone God could give effect to His promise and covenant, and bring out His people to serve Him in liberty. The whole assembly of the children of Israel must learn the righteousness of God as in their favour through redemption. For it could not be said that Israel were morally better than the Egyptians, or that naturally they could stand in the presence of righteous judgment any more than the Egyptians. We have to learn that there is but one ground on which God can have a people delivered from Egypt to serve Him, and to inherit the land of His purpose. And that ground is CHRIST as having borne the judgment of God and died, so that His blood meets the eye of God with perfect satisfaction as to every claim of His holy throne with regard to that state of sin in which they were found by nature.

If God is to have a people for Himself He must have them in a way that recognizes the truth of the condition in which they were through sin; a way, too, which meets and deals with that condition so that He is justified in all His attributes, while bringing in grace and blessing which glorifies Him as a Redeemer and Saviour God. We have been connected with the world that is under judgment; we were part of it as to our natural state. We have to learn how grace could reach us, and how divine righteousness could be in our favour, and how God could take us as a redeemed people to learn all that He is for us in grace. It is all on the footing of Christ and His death. And Christ is available for every man now; every man may be an Israelite if he will. Provision is made in this chapter for the sojourner to hold the passover with God's people if he is minded to do so. But he must come with truth in the inward parts; he must accept circumcision — that is, in figure, the cutting off of all confidence in the flesh — so that in the confessed truth of his condition as a lost sinner he avails himself of God's righteousness in grace to men.

In the book of Exodus we get two distinct years: the first begins with the Passover, the second with the setting up of the Tabernacle. The first year we learn *what God is in grace for us*, and all His glory and blessedness as Redeemer and Saviour God. The second year we learn what it is to be *for God* as identified with the Tabernacle of testimony.

It is noticeable that in Exodus 12: 3, 6, we find mention made for the first time of "all the assembly of Israel" and "the whole congregation of the assembly of Israel". It is suggestive of a people taken out of the world to be God's assembly. The simplest presentation of the truth of the assembly in the New Testament is that God "visited to take out of the nations a people for his name" (Acts 15: 14). And we learn, too, that "the assembly of Israel" was composed of households, and it is in that way that God's assembly is formed.

The thought of God is that His deliverance should be known in households, and not simply by individuals. This is an important element in the mind and ways of God, and it reveals the thoughts of His heart. It is blessed to think of tens of thousands of households today where Christ is known as the Passover Lamb! It is, of course, true that Christ is available for each individual, and that each individual even in a christian household must have faith in Christ in order to be secured from the judgment of God. But the type speaks clearly of household blessing — "a lamb for a house" — and it is well for us to look at it just as it stands. God gave the type a household character, and we shall not gain anything by taking it out of its setting. If we individualize it too much we may miss the blessed thought of God that there should be a vast number of *households* where Christ is known and fed upon, and His blood shelters from

judgment. It is the principle of "thou shalt be saved, and thy house". And the many references to the household both in the Old Testament and the New, and all the household instruction, show what an important place it has in the mind of God.

"All the children of Israel had light *in their dwellings*". How blessed to think of the many households that are now illuminated by the light of Christ, and where there is, at least in measure, deliverance from the evil principles which obtain in the world! The exercises connected with the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread were to have household character. The whole congregation of the assembly of Israel was to kill the lamb; the whole assembly stood in the value of it. But it had to be taken up in each separate household.

The firstborn is the best that the household contains; it speaks of all that would naturally be the pride and boast and strength of the house. All that is under judgment with God; the sentence has gone forth, and all — old and young — have to bow to it. In the christian household there is no building up of confidence in the best that nature affords; it is owned as being under death. But in each house the Lamb is introduced. The obedience of faith brings in Christ, and He becomes the subject of contemplation. The lamb was to be kept from the tenth day of the month until the fourteenth that each one might, as it were, become well acquainted with its unblemished perfection and spotlessness. This is necessary in order to get a true sense of Christ's judgment bearing; His moral perfection and suitability to bear the judgment, and to go into death, must be well considered by each soul. It comes out in much detail in the Gospels. The four days would set forth the Lord's pathway here before death. God would have Him to be considered in all His perfections by those who have a deep and affectionate interest in Him. For we think of Him as the One sacrificed as our Passover.

God would have thousands of households, the world over, where Christ is maintained before the eyes of all in His moral suitability to be sacrificed, and where His death is seen with deep thankfulness to be the only possible ground of deliverance from judgment, and where that judgment is known on all the hopes and pride of man. The children are all to be instructed in this, and to have their part in it. (see verse 26.) God would set the light of it in every christian household.

Then the blood is put on the door-posts and lintel, and when God sees it He passes over. Where that blood is He will not suffer the destroyer to enter. There cannot be a question on God's part, for it is His own provision — the blood of His own Lamb, of His spotless Christ. There could never be a shadow

of doubt as to the efficacy of that blood. It is the sure token that according to nature I was under judgment, but that the grace of God reached me there through the death of Christ, and that now divine righteousness is in my favour. I submit to the righteousness of God when I see how He has maintained what is due to Himself in relation to sin, but that He has done it in such a way as to secure all who believe *from* judgment and *for* blessing.

Then those sheltered must be in accord with what shelters them. So there is not only the blood for the eye of God, and as a token to faith, but the lamb roast with fire for those within the house. There are solemn exercises within. No questions as to security; the blood has settled that. But the judgment is near, and it is felt to be righteously due. Thank God, it has been exhausted by the One who came under it in grace, and He becomes the food of the sheltered household. The affections of all are nourished upon the One who in suffering love bore the judgment. How deeply must each heart be affected that truly eats the Passover! And the type speaks not only of individuals being thus nourished, but of households. As their hearts take in the thought of the love in which He bore the judgment due to them, they are brought into accord with that holy judgment. We get a deep sense through the death of Christ of how everything connected with the world and its life is under judgment with God. But the Passover is the holy ground on which all God's thoughts of grace towards men, and His purposes of blessing and glory in relation to His people can be carried out.

The bitter herbs speak of self-judgment wrought through grace while feeding on the love that bore the judgment. And unleavened bread has its place. If the best of nature — the firstborn — is under judgment, everything that is of man after the flesh is seen to be displeasing to God. The fact that that man has gone in judgment in the death of Christ, and that divine love has reached us that way, becomes food for us. We cannot as thus nourished go on with the allowance of that which came under judgment in the death of Christ. A new kind of Man must come in, in whom no corrupting or inflating influence has any place. The true character of saints is to be unleavened — to be apart from the corruption and inflation of the flesh, and to be in accord with Christ — nothing allowed that was judged at the cross. The leaven must be practically excluded in the power of those affections which have been nourished by feeding on the Lamb. Holy conditions are thus secured and maintained in christian households.

"Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread: on the very first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses; for whoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day — that soul shall be cut off from Israel ... seven

days shall there be no leaven found in your houses ... in all your dwellings shall ye eat unleavened bread" (12: 15 - 20). The feast of unleavened bread immediately followed the Passover — indeed the two are identified in the New Testament; "the feast of unleavened bread, which is called the passover" (Luke 22: 1) and it typifies the whole period of our life here as saints. "Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, according as ye are unleavened. For also our passover, Christ, has been sacrificed; so that let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5: 7, 8).

"Old leaven" is what remains over from one's former history — the kind of fleshly working which belonged to our unconverted days. The "leaven of malice and wickedness" is the flesh in evil thoughts of others, or in the desire to bring evil on them. This kind of leaven often clothes itself in a religious form. (See Matthew 22: 18; Luke 11: 39.)

The "unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" is only really to be found with those who have eaten the Passover. No doubt we have all felt what an exercise it is, and not by any means easy, to be really sincere and truthful. If believers were truly exercised as to *being* all that they would wish to *appear to be* it would lead to wonderful results. We are in danger of keeping up appearances like the world without being genuinely what we appear to be, but there is no keeping the feast of unleavened bread in this. How different is it when Christ really comes before the heart, and one has been inwardly nourished upon the love in which He bore the judgment! Then we get true conditions of fellowship, and can be in vital contact with one another. Keeping the feast goes very much to the root of things, and would set aside all that is a hindrance to fellowship and to spiritual progress. Its importance is very great.

Feeding on the lamb roast with fire is in view of leaving Egypt altogether. "And thus shall ye eat it: your loins shall be girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste; it is Jehovah's passover" (verse 11). The household is typically brought into moral suitability to God, and prepared to leave the world. If the passover is rightly eaten the affections are nourished, and conditions are brought about which are suited to God.

Christian households should be marked by separation from the world, not by trying to get as near to it as possible. The world would be well pleased for Christians to accredit it by following its fashions and ways, but our whole attitude should be that of a people who are going out from it in the power of God's salvation. If we could have looked into the house of any Israelite on that

memorable night we should have seen them all in marching order; it was obvious they were going out of Egypt. If such was the type, we have to see to it that corresponding features are found with us.

“And ye shall let none of it remain until the morning; and what remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire” (verse 10). The eating of the lamb was not to be separated from its being sacrificed. To eat it the next day would be to dissociate it from the import of its death and of its being roast with fire. There is to be no weakening in the soul of the sense of what His death and judgment bearing really were. No doubt at Corinth they spoke of the Lord’s death, but they had lost all true sense of what it meant. Even the supper had become their own and not the Lord’s. They had kept things over, as it were, to another day, and weakened their holy associations and import. What they were doing was no longer livingly connected with Christ and His sacrifice, nor was it being taken up in the consciousness of being morally *near* to that precious sacrifice. Things had lost their holy character, and when they do so they cannot be an occasion of communion; they rather become the subject of judgment.

If the passover and the feast of unleavened bread were kept in the households of the saints there would be nothing to hinder fellowship, and the saints would be in suited conditions to come together happily in assembly, and to take up assembly exercises and privileges. If things are not in suitability to God in the households of the saints, they will not be right in the assembly. The moral foundation of things is in the household. We see this principle in 1 Timothy 3:4,5; 1 Timothy 3:12. I think, for example, that if a man did not pray with his wife and children he would hardly be qualified to pray with his brethren.

How attractive is all this in its moral beauty and perfection! God illuminating the households of His people, and giving them Christ as their Passover! Causing them to feed on Him in the love that bore divine judgment for them, and in the appreciation and appropriation of Christ forming their thoughts and affections in an entirely new character, so that they may be inwardly freed from the working of fleshly leaven, and found practically in the life of Christ! The contemplation of it is delightful to every heart that God has touched. And this is how God works in grace in view of the deliverance of His saints and their households from the world that is under His judgment.

Let us cherish the divine thought that there should be, not only saved individuals, but *households*, marked by the knowledge of Christ, and of the meaning and value of His death, and by feeding on Him. So that in result they are freed, through holy and affectionate exercises, of all that is leaven in God’s sight. To have this household character of blessing before us is most important

in a day when the world is laying itself out more than ever to capture and detain the children of God's people. Pharaoh said, "Let Jehovah be so with you, as I let you go, and your little ones Not so; go now, ye that are men, and serve Jehovah"

(10: 10, 11). But Jochebed, as a typical "mother in Israel", saw her son "fair". If only one of the parents is a believer the children are "holy", and if so they are too fair in the estimation of faith for the best place that the world could give them. They are to be preserved for God in the light of Christ, and in separation from the world. And their interest in divine things is to be fostered and encouraged, and their questions answered (12: 26). I heard a brother say that nothing he heard in the meetings pulled him up like the questions of his little boy!

God does not fail faith. It is for believing parents to lay hold of the divine thought as to household blessing, and to count upon God to work in the dear children so that they may in early years appreciate and value for themselves the light and blessing of the privileged spot in which they are found. I believe God gives even young children a deep sense of the mercy that has put them in christian households. I know it was so with myself at a very early age. And we have previously noted how at forty years of age Moses came out very distinctly as the product of divine grace and of his parents' faith.

EXODUS 13

Exodus 13

We have seen in chapter 12 how each household was identified with the firstborn, and with the lamb that typically bore the judgment of the firstborn. Now Jehovah claims the firstborn for Himself: "Hallow unto me every firstborn ... it is mine". The object of the deliverance wrought was that Jehovah might have His people for Himself. He redeems and He delivers that He may have a people under His eye marked by the refusal of the flesh, and by the presence of the features of Christ. No one is entitled to say, All I want is to be sheltered from judgment by the blood of the Lamb. The same Voice that said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you", says, "Hallow unto me every firstborn". All that is *sheltered* by the blood is *hallowed* to God. He has a distinct claim, and if we have really fed on the Lamb roast with fire, we shall be ready to sing

"Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all". (272:4)

It is a willing surrender brought about by the influence of divine love. Of another day it will be said, "Thy people shall be willing (or voluntary offerings) in the day of thy power" (Psalm 110: 3).

Paul speaks in Acts 20: 28 of "the assembly of God, which he has purchased with the blood of his own". It is His purchased possession, and He is entitled to have it, and it must therefore be hallowed. One distinct aspect of God's assembly is that it is "the assembly of the firstborn (ones) who are enregistered in heaven" (Hebrews 12: 23). It is a great thing to recognize that the assembly is God's, and it is due to God that it should be hallowed. There can be no place in that assembly for lawlessness, independency, or the doing of one's own will in any form. We belong to a redeemed company — "redeemed to God" — and therefore hallowed for holy service as the Levites were afterwards, who were taken instead of the firstborn sons.

The practical working out of this lies in the refusal of leaven. The deliverance from Egypt was to be remembered in the refusal of leaven (verse 3). We have to remember the "powerful hand" — an expression four times repeated in this chapter; how He brought judgment on every element of the life of Egypt, and on all its pride and strength. Now it is certain that He cannot allow in His people what He judged in the Egyptians and in the passover Lamb. Leaven is the subtle working of the principles of the world, corrupting and inflating, so that man as in the flesh is brought into evidence instead of Christ. There is not

a feature of that man that has not been judged with a powerful hand in the death of Christ.

Keeping the feast of unleavened bread is true evidence of deliverance from Egypt. Everything in the world is marked by leaven. The Lord spoke of the leaven (doctrine) of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16: 6); that is religious and intellectual leaven which gives man in the flesh a place. Then the leaven of Herod (Mark 8: 15) is the time-serving spirit that would go on the line of pleasing men: how much there is of it! All leaven — whether it be the legal leaven in Galatia or the carnal leaven in Corinth — gives place and importance to the man who has come under judgment with God. But if God has judged every feature of that man unsparingly in the death of Christ, it is impossible that He could tolerate what gives him a place and inflates him in His people. It is serious to consider that He says, "Whoever eateth what is leavened, that soul shall be cut off from the assembly of Israel" (Exodus 12: 19). It is certain that if there is the allowance of leaven the privileges of God's assembly cannot be enjoyed, for the true character of that assembly is practically denied.

God has introduced that which is absolutely unleavened. He has brought in a character of Manhood that has no leaven in it, and He has brought it in such a way that it has become food for us. In Christ we see sincerity and truth, holy purity, obedience, righteousness, lowliness, meekness — a blessed character of Manhood that is entirely suited to God, and in which there is no corrupting principle, and where nothing is inflated so as to appear greater than it really is. How blessed to feed on this unleavened Bread! All the literature of the world has leaven in it; it gives some place, or attaches some glory, to man after the flesh. We can only get clear of it by feeding on Christ, and by having, and being formed in, the Spirit of Christ. The saints as having His Spirit are characteristically "unleavened" (1 Corinthians 5: 7); the same qualities pertain to them as were found so perfectly in Him.

It is remarkable that it is said, "And it shall be for a sign to thee on thy hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the law of Jehovah may be in thy mouth" (verse 9). This exercise as to leaven is to be such as to manifest its results in a public way. It is to manifest itself as a definite sign on the hand; that is, in all the saint does, for the hand represents his activity. And it is to come into view in his countenance also. It ought not to be possible to look at the saints without seeing the evidence that they are keeping the feast. And such persons can speak for God without being regarded as mockers.

"Nothing leavened shall be eaten" (verse 3). "Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread" (verse 6). "Leavened bread shall not be seen with thee,

neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy borders" (verse 7). There is to be no vestige of leaven seen amongst the people of God.

It is of interest to note that in chapter 12: 16 the feast of unleavened bread begins with a holy convocation and ends with one, but in chapter 12: 14 it is spoken of as a feast to Jehovah, and in chapter 13: 6 "the seventh day is a feast to Jehovah". I think the holy convocation indicates that in keeping the feast of unleavened bread we are able to meet our brethren on happy terms, because we are not allowing what would be inconsistent with the fellowship. It is only as we keep the feast according to 1 Corinthians 5 that we can maintain the holy principles of fellowship which are found in 1 Corinthians 10. And then the "feast to Jehovah" would suggest that we are happy in our relations with God, and that there is pleasure for Him in our being together.

It is of the utmost importance to keep up a character of things which is evidence that we are out of Egypt. We need to be in continual exercise as to leaven because it manifests itself in all kinds of subtle ways — little things in which some place or importance is given to the flesh. The true exercise of the saint is to judge things in their inception — to judge them in thought and feeling before they come out in word or act.

Leaven strikingly illustrates how quickly an evil principle spreads if once introduced and not judged. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump". A corrupt principle introduced amongst the people of God will spread rapidly, and displace what is of Christ, and its character may not be suspected until a ray of light from God in prophetic ministry breaks in and exposes it. We see this at Corinth and in the assemblies of Galatia.

Another thing was to be "a sign on thy hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes" (verse 16); that is, that all the firstborn males were to be held as Jehovah's. We have to hold ourselves as ransomed: God is entitled to us, not we ourselves. Hence we are to glorify God in our bodies (1 Corinthians 6: 20). The firstborn of man and the firstling of an ass are put together. Man is not better naturally than an unclean ass; apart from ransom there is nothing for him but judgment. "If thou do not ransom it, thou shalt break its neck". If spared he can only be held as ransomed. And this is to mark all the activities of a man, and the way he appears in this world; all is to be evidence that he is really brought out of Egypt.

And this is to be so marked in the households of the people of God that it arrests the attention of the children. "When thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, With a powerful hand Jehovah brought us out from Egypt, etc". (verse 14). It is a good thing when children see their parents acting in ways so distinct from those of the

world that they have to ask why it is! We are to carry ourselves as ransomed and as delivered from the world. We might ask sometimes, Is it fitting for ransomed persons to do this or that? "Ye are not your own, for ye have been bought with a price; glorify now then God in your body". To do so is the abiding evidence of what God has wrought. We are to hold ourselves as hallowed for God; we are of His assembly, and no leaven is to have place with us. Each one must answer for himself as to how far it is so.

Then we see the consideration of Jehovah in not leading the people the near way. He would not suffer them to be tried by conflict. They were called at present to see and to celebrate His victory, not to win victories for themselves. He would not have them to see conflict lest they should repent and return to Egypt. God considers for us in blessed grace in regard to what we have to meet. Young souls are watched over, and their way is directed, so that they may not in early days have to face things which would be too much for them. He cares for the lambs that they should not be driven too far or too fast. All this is a blessed manifestation of the compassion and faithfulness of God. And we also know that He led His people another way that they might learn His grace and ways — and their own perverseness and powerlessness — in the wilderness.

Then they took with them the bones of Joseph — the abiding witness of the confidence of faith that though they might have to learn death experimentally, God would fulfil His purpose. It answers, as it has often been said, to 2 Corinthians 4: 10.

Finally, "Jehovah went before their face by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them in the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; so that they could go day and night". This comes in at the end of a chapter in which His people are seen as holding themselves hallowed unto Him, putting away all leaven and owning themselves to be ransomed. If these conditions are maintained we shall have sure guidance; God becomes the Guide and Light of His people; He would not have His saints to take one step in uncertainty. Whether it be in bright circumstances or in dark,

"Light divine surrounds thy going,
God Himself shall mark thy way". (76:3)

EXODUS 14

Exodus 14

In this chapter we see Jehovah opening up a way for His people out of Egypt, and also dealing with the power that would oppress them and hold them in bondage. It is not a question here of what was needed to meet the glory of God as to the sinful state of the people; that was settled by the blood of the lamb. What is before us here is that God makes the power of His salvation known to them in full deliverance from Egypt — the world in type — and then He effects the complete destruction of the enemy's power.

Satan and the world will not give up the people of God without a desperate attempt to hold them. We see here the exercises of the people as feeling their own weakness in the presence of the enemy's power, but we see the salvation of Jehovah for them. He opened up a way by which they might leave Egypt altogether, and then in His dealings with the enemy He made manifest that He was for His people, and against all that would oppress them and hinder Him from having His pleasure in them.

We see here a people sheltered from judgment by the blood of the Lamb, and nourished upon the One who in love bore the judgment, and now exercised to put all leaven out of their houses, and to move out of Egypt as wholly claimed by the One who had redeemed them. But they are not yet clear; the enemy can still regard them as "entangled in the land", and make a last effort to retain them in the house of bondage. They have now to learn, typically, the death of Christ in another aspect; that is, as opening up a way for them out of the world. That is the Red Sea aspect of the death of Christ.

It is often after trusting the blood, and making some attempt to purge out leaven, that we have to learn our own weakness in the presence of the enemy's power. We have to find out how helpless we are. In such a strait the people spoke the language of despair. "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt, thou hast taken us away to die in the wilderness etc". (verses 11, 12). But it was not likely that Jehovah, who had wrought so wonderfully for them already, would fail them now. The gospel Moses preached to them brought the light of Jehovah's salvation to their hearts. They learned in a blessed way that God was *for* them. "Fear not: stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah, which he will work for you today; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever. Jehovah will fight for you, and ye shall be still" (verses 13, 14).

God's salvation is a great one; it involves the defeat of the enemy, and the breaking of his power, and complete deliverance from the world, and from all the influences which rule there. The world is antagonistic to God, and to every thought that He has in view for His people. It is a great system where everything is carried on according to the will of man. Satan's power and influence is behind it, for he is the god and prince of this world, but the principle on which his kingdom is ordered is that all shall be according to the will of man. That, in a word, is SIN, for it is the insubordinate will of a creature who has rebelled against God. We find it everywhere; in the sphere of pleasure, in the sphere of politics, in the sphere of religion. It is the root principle of the world. It is in that kingdom and under that rule — what the New Testament calls "the authority of darkness" (Colossians 1: 13) — that Satan would retain the people of God.

It would be well for us to realize what the bondage of Egypt is. It is a power ever exercised to keep us from being for God, and from doing His will. The divine and only way of deliverance from it is to pass through the sea. God is for His people, and by the death of Christ He has made a way out for them. It is quite clear that if we actually died we should pass out of that sphere where the will of man operates. But we do not need to wait for that. Christ has died, and we are entitled to go out in a very real and spiritual sense by way of His death. The sea is divided now; there is a way divinely opened up by which we may leave the world morally; we have to see that we avail ourselves of that way. "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as through dry land". We are entitled to pass out of this world as the sphere of sin. This aspect of the death of Christ was clearly set forth in our baptism. "As many as have been baptized unto Christ Jesus, have been baptized unto his death. We have been buried therefore with him by baptism unto death, in order that, even as Christ has been raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6: 3, 4).

"Stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah", is like the end of Romans 4 and the beginning of Romans 5. But "Speak to the people that they go forward" is like Romans 6. We have to take new ground — the ground of having died to sin. In the first place "Jesus our Lord ... has been delivered for our offences and has been raised for our justification". A risen Christ is our righteousness. If I see that a risen and glorified Man is my righteousness, the enemy's power to harass me is completely broken; he cannot raise a voice or a weapon. No charge or reproach can be brought against that glorious Risen Man. He is with God in spotless suitability to God, and to that new world which He has entered in resurrection, and through Him we have "access by faith into this favour in which we stand" (Romans 5: 2).

It is one thing to be under the blood, and another to be under the cloud. "All our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10: 1, 2). Many know that they are under the blood who have not really come under the cloud or passed through the sea, and therefore the enemy is still able to harass them. But the same grace that provided the Lamb, and gave me to see that I could take my place under the blood for shelter from judgment, entitles me through the Lord Jesus Christ to come under the cloud. God would have me to know with divine assurance that Christ is my righteousness, and that through Him I am in God's favour, and that God is for me. Such is the blessedness which is the divinely given portion of each one who believes on God as the One who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. This is really the beginning of our assurance, and we are to hold it firm to the end (Hebrews 3: 14). The Corinthians were in danger of departure, and therefore Paul refers to the fathers in the way of warning. After being under the cloud and passing through the sea they became lusters after evil things, etc., and "God was not pleased with the most of them, for they were strewed in the desert". But we cannot hold fast the beginning of our assurance if we have never had it.

Isaiah 4: 5 somewhat corresponds with this scripture in speaking of the cloud being over God's people in the time of their future deliverance. "In that day there shall be a sprout of Jehovah for beauty and glory, and the fruit of the earth for excellency and for ornament for those that are escaped of Israel And Jehovah will create over every dwelling place of mount Zion, and over its convocations, a cloud by day and a smoke, and the brightness of a flame of fire by night; for over all the glory shall be a covering". God will bring in the beauty of Christ and make it the excellency and ornament of His delivered people, and He will spread over them the cloud of His protecting love. But in having a risen Christ as our righteousness, and coming under the favour and love of God through Him, we enjoy divine deliverance before *they* get it. And in the light of this we can take the way which God has opened up for us out of the world.

The people were baptized to Moses in the cloud and in the sea, never again to be commanded and driven by the Egyptians, but evermore to be controlled by one whose authority was exercised for their deliverance and blessing, one who could order them in accord with the pleasure of Jehovah their Saviour and Redeemer. I think what answers to being baptized in the cloud comes out in Romans 5; all the blessed grace of a Saviour God is there; all divine favour from justification and peace to eternal life; "the abundance of grace and of the free gift of righteousness"; all administered through our Lord Jesus Christ. Then what we have in Romans 6 answers to being baptized in the sea. As

having come under grace we are prepared to take new ground. If Christ is our righteousness, and the grace of God and the free gift in grace by the one man Jesus Christ has abounded to us, it is in view of our being identified with Him, and taking up the same relation to things that He has taken up.

He has died to sin and He lives to God, and we are now entitled to take account of ourselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. We were committed to it in our baptism, but there comes a moment when we have to "go forward" in that way for ourselves, and to take new ground. We have been baptized unto Christ Jesus and unto His death in view of an entirely new manner of life here. We are privileged to know what it means to pass out of the world of sin by way of the death of Christ, and because He has died to it, and to yield ourselves to God as alive from among the dead.

Have we really seen the true character of the world as the sphere of sin? It is where the will of a fallen creature dominates everything. But One blessed Man has been found here in a path of divine perfection, doing only the will of God. He never had any moral contact with the world of sin; there was nothing in common between Him and the activity of man's will. But He has now gone altogether out by way of death from the scene which is dominated by the will of man. His death in Romans 6: 10 is not atonement; it is not dying *for* sin, but *to* sin — to the whole character of things which is found in the world.

If He has become precious to us as the One by whom all the grace and blessing of God has come to us, and we have affection for Him, we shall be prepared to go that way too in mind and spirit. The death of Christ thus becomes the "King's highway" out of the world for those who believe on Him. I am entitled to go out because He went out. If I am minded to go out of the world of man's will because Christ has died to it all, nothing can hinder me from doing so. And in taking that way I shall find myself under divine protection from every hostile power.

The Christian takes the ground of being dead to the whole principle of sin which dominates the world in every aspect. He goes out of the sphere of man's will so as to be only for God. "Yield yourselves to God as alive from among the dead, and your members instruments of righteousness to God" (Romans 6: 13). It is a simple question, Am I here for myself and my own will, or am I here for God and for His will? Each one must answer for himself. That we can go out from the world of man's will by the death of Christ so as to be for the will and pleasure of God is the true character and power of God's salvation. It delivers His people from the sphere where man's will dominates everything, and brings them into a sphere where God's will has its blessed

sway and where they are free to serve His pleasure. It is for us to see that we do not make light of it, or neglect so great salvation.

"And he led them safely, so that they were without fear; and the sea covered their enemies" (Psalm 78: 53). We have only to move forward in the divine path to be perfectly secure, and to prove the power of God's salvation. "The waters were a wall: to them on their right hand and on their left". No enemy could touch them, and in the morning they saw all the power of Egypt overthrown.

As to dealing with the enemy, it may be noted that "the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them". God is for His people against all the power of the enemy, whatever its form. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who against us?" (Romans 8: 31). God shields His people "all the night".

The enemy might seem very near sometimes, but the cloud was always between him and the people. "In the morning watch" Jehovah began to deal definitely with the adversaries, and "toward the morning" they were all overturned. It suggests the complete and final overthrow of all that is adverse to God and to His people. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly". Christ will eventually annul "all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign until he put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that is annulled is death" (1 Corinthians 15: 24 - 26).

A morning without clouds is coming when there will be neither adversary nor evil occurrent; not an Egyptian to be seen! But that morning has been anticipated in the resurrection of Christ, and faith is in the present light of His complete victory. He took part in blood and flesh "that through death he might annul him who has the might of death, that is, the devil; and might set free all those who through fear of death through the whole of their life were subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2: 14, 15). And to faith's vision God "having spoiled principalities and authorities" has "made a show of them publicly, leading them in triumph".

The enemy's power is so completely broken that God's people can go out from his kingdom, and none can hinder them. Christ has overcome the world, and the prince of this world is judged. Under the Lordship and Leadership of Christ a redeemed people can pass over under divine protection, and in the consciousness of divine favour, into complete deliverance from that sphere in which the will of man is active. "Now, having got your freedom from sin, ye have become bondmen to righteousness ... But *now*, having got your freedom from sin, and having become bondmen to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end eternal life" (Romans 6: 18, 22). God has been revealed

in grace and power, and He is *with* and *for* His people. His cloud overshadows them; His glory is their beauty and their defence; and they have gone out from the world by profession in their baptism, and in reality by taking account of themselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

EXODUS 15

Exodus 15

This chapter introduces a new feature — the first song in Scripture. Before this righteousness had been known, and approach to God in the savour of the burnt offering, and calling upon Jehovah's Name in a life of pilgrim character. Perfect security from divine judgment under the blood of the lamb had also been known. But there had been no song, no celebration in praise, no outbreak from full hearts to bear witness that God was glorified in the affections of His people. We see here the blessedness of hearts which were filled with God. A people who have gone out from the world, and seen the complete destruction of the enemy's power, and who know that God is for them, and that they are with Him on the ground of the death and resurrection of Christ, can in their affections claim God as their own — "This is *my* God, and I will glorify him". God is glorified in the affections of a free people, and His complete triumph is celebrated.

Moses sings, and the children of Israel sing with him. Christ as the Risen One celebrates the victory of God, and the full fruit of redemption, and every believer is entitled to sing with Him. See Psalm 40: 1 - 3; Psalm 22: 22. Every one who has believed on God as the One who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead is entitled to sing this song. And in principle it covers everything; it celebrates the destruction of all enemies. Not only "Pharaoh's chariots and his army hath he east into the sea", but "all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away". There is not an enemy left to hinder God from doing His pleasure with His redeemed people. It will be publicly seen in a coming day, but it is a reality now. In the morning "Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the sea-shore". Faith's "morning" comes in with the resurrection of Christ; the public "morning" will come in with the rising of the Sun of righteousness — the appearing of Christ. But God is now the strength, song, and salvation of His people. If He is our strength the wilderness path is provided for; if He is our song the heart is replenished with joy; and if He is our salvation no evil can touch us — that is, in a moral sense. There may be persecution, but we are assured of preservation morally.

We are not properly in the good of the gospel until we believe on God as the raiser up of the Lord Jesus, and He is so before our hearts that we cannot help singing. Christ is the true Moses; He is the Deliverer and the Singer. I may be conscious that I am the poorest and the feeblest of the flock of God, but if God is before me as known in the power of redemption, as known in the Lord Jesus Christ, I am entitled to sing every word of this song in company with

Christ. The heart is liberated from thoughts of self; it is all what Jehovah has done; it is "thy", "thou", "thee". If they refer to themselves it is as "the people that thou hast redeemed", "thy people", "the people ... that thou hast purchased". How it lifts the heart to God! We are subjects of mercy; our deliverance is purely the fruit of divine love and wisdom, and of the actings of divine power. We have been purchased, redeemed, led forth, and God has done it all. We might well break forth in song!

What we get here is not exactly worship, but a celebration of God by those who can claim Him — and, as it were, take possession of Him — as their God. "This is my God". It is only a people who are clear of Egypt who can take up such language. They have forsaken Egypt, but they have got God. What a happy and glorious exchange! They have seen the enemy's power broken; they have seen Jehovah victorious, redeeming, saving, guiding; they are with God on the ground, typically, of the death and resurrection of Christ; and they can say with triumph, "This is my God".

It was the day of their espousals, when Jehovah took them to Himself as His people, and they took Him as their God. Seven hundred years afterwards He could say, "I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land not sown" (Jeremiah 2: 2). Jehovah cherished it in His memory. And we see in Isaiah 12: 2 that when He recovers His people and brings them back to Himself they will again sing this song, "Jehovah is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation". This agrees with Hosea 2: 15: "And she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt". The thought of this raises the question as to whether we can sing now as we once did.

It is not certain whether verse 2 should read, "I will glorify him" or "I will make him a dwelling". As a matter of fact the way in which He chose to be glorified was by having a sanctuary that He might dwell among them; so that there is not much difference, morally, between the two readings.

"Thou by thy mercy hast led forth the people that thou hast redeemed" (verse 13). We saw in the previous chapter that the people had to go out by the divinely appointed way; they had to "go forward". But here it is all seen as Jehovah's leading forth by mercy. It is, indeed, wonderful mercy that leads forth from such a world a redeemed people. It is a great exercise to be true to one's baptism. In many cases even those who are baptized as believers only look at their baptism as obedience to an ordinance, or as a confession of faith in Christ. How few realize that the death of Christ is a way out for them from this world, and that they are committed to it in baptism! We are, alas!

accustomed to see baptized persons worldly, but when this is so it becomes quite clear that they have not “obeyed from the heart the form of teaching into which ye were instructed”

(Romans 6: 17). But there comes a moment, often long after our baptism, when we desire to know what it means, and to be true to it. Baptism is “the form of teaching”, but to learn what it means there must be heart obedience. Then we see that a way has been opened up for us through the death of Christ to go out of the world so as to be entirely for God, and to be connected with another system of things altogether. It is the way and leading of His mercy.

“Thou hast guided them by thy strength unto the abode of thy holiness” (verse 13). We are brought to God, to the place where His holiness dwells. This seems to involve the gift of the Spirit — God dwelling by His Spirit in His people — and it also involves the setting up of the tabernacle. The people were to be identified with a new and divine system where God’s holiness dwelt. What a contrast to Egypt! God’s strength guides His people there; it is all a question of the power of God. The more simply we take this in the better, for then we are taken up with the actings of God. He is before the soul, and this is always blessed. God is for His people — victorious, redeeming, guiding — and the end reached is that they are brought to the abode of His holiness. That closes the first section of the song.

Then in verse 14 we pass over to the end of the wilderness, and the land. All the enemies *there* are subdued, and melt, and become still as a stone. Everything is celebrated as if it were accomplished. The Authorized Version rather spoils it by putting it in the future tense, but it is really, “The peoples heard it, they were afraid: a thrill seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the princes of Edom were amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling hath seized them; all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away”. It was not until forty years afterwards that they came to the actuality of it, as seen in the book of Joshua, but it was already known to faith as a reality. It is all “by the greatness of thine arm”. We must have the power of God before us, or we shall regard as impossible the purposes of His love. Here we see a people of value — a people *purchased* that they might be set in the choicest place. And I believe we get here for the first time the thought of God having an inheritance — a portion for Himself. It is not only that man is to have wonderful things, but God is going to have wonderful things too! He has that before Him which will be for His own delight, and sufficient to satisfy every desire of His love.

"He brought them to his holy border, this mountain, which his right hand purchased" (Psalm 78: 54). God acquires a portion for Himself in planting His people "holy and blameless before him in love; having marked us out beforehand for sonship through Jesus Christ to himself" (Ephesians 1: 4, 5). God will have the enjoyment of all that His love and wisdom and power have brought about by planting His saints in it. As heirs of God we inherit His wealth, and as we are planted in it we become His inheritance. Think of the greatness of it! I am afraid that we get accustomed to hearing these marvellous things, and do not consider how great they are. God is going to have the perfect satisfaction of His love. He will have that in His saints which He can take possession of for His pleasure and joy throughout eternal ages. No power in the universe can hinder Him from doing it. In the faith and affections of His saints it is recognized as accomplished, and celebrated in songs of praise. If you have never yet begun to sing, begin now!

There are four thoughts brought together in the closing verses of this song: (1) The mountain of Jehovah's inheritance; (2) His dwelling; (3) The sanctuary; (4) The kingdom. These four thoughts give a complete presentation of what comes about as the fruit of the divine victory. "The mountain" suggests what is great and high. To Moses the promised land was "that goodly mountain and Lebanon" (Deuteronomy 3: 25). The people are purchased, and the mountain which they are to possess is purchased too (Psalm 78: 54). The mountain of God's inheritance is His portion in His saints. What it has cost Him to establish His thoughts in Christ! He has One Man before Him holy and without blame, in sonship's place. The mountain of God's inheritance is set forth livingly in the risen and glorified Man at His right hand, and it is His thought and purpose to plant His saints in that mountain. He would have our roots to go down deep into His love which has purposed such a place and portion for us that He might have His eternal pleasure in us.

The next thought is that of Jehovah's dwelling place. He purposes to dwell in His people so as to be known there, and in order to set forth what He is in them. The mountain of His inheritance speaks of what the saints are *to* Him, but He dwells in them so as to be known in testimony in a world which is alienated from Him. He dwells in His people so as to be known in the fulness of His grace.

Then "the Sanctuary, Lord, that thy hands have prepared" marks the character of the place where He can be approached; it is so holy that only His hands could prepare it. There is nothing there but that which is the product of divine workmanship. We are not always in the sanctuary, though it is always our

privilege to draw near, even to enter the holiest; but there should always be about us a character suited to those who have sanctuary privilege.

The last thought is the kingdom, "Jehovah shall reign for ever and ever". This is the basis on which all rests. Everything which is the fruit of the divine victory has for its foundation the rights and supremacy of God — His authority and power. This gives stability to all. The whole power of His eternal kingdom is put forth to destroy the enemy, and to secure the accomplishment of the purposes of His love. "Now to the King of the ages, the incorruptible, invisible, only God, honour and glory to the ages of ages. Amen" (1 Timothy 1: 17).

When we come to Miriam, and "all the women" who "went out after her with tambours and with dances", we get the side of response so far as it was made good in the state of the people. It was a true response, so far as it went, but it is noticeable that it did not go beyond celebrating the complete victory of Jehovah; it did not go on to the fruits of the victory. I think the subjective state of the people came out in this; they did not rise to the greatness of what was celebrated in the song. Christ sings the triumph of God, and all the precious fruits of that triumph, but on our side we often do not have much before us the fruits that have been secured for God. Believers are glad to think of the complete victory of God, because it makes them feel safe and sure. But if we do not know something of the fruits of that victory we shall fail under every test of the wilderness. We shall soon have to taste something that is bitter — something that goes across the grain of our natural likings — and we cannot face that if we have not some sense in our souls of the positive fruits of divine victory for which we are secured. The fact that the enemy is laid low is a blessed deliverance, but it does not in itself give power to face the difficulties and exercises of the wilderness. But there are wonderful and positive fruits of victory to be known in the wilderness as brought to the abode of God's holiness, and there are still more wonderful fruits to be known and enjoyed in the land, and God gives the light of all this at the very outset to be power in the affections of His people.

We need to cherish in our affections all that the gospel makes known to us of the precious thoughts of God. The gospel confers blessed divine wealth upon us; it gives us the knowledge of the complete victory of God, but it also enriches us with the light of all that is the fruit of that victory in positive blessing. To be really in the enjoyment of this leaves nothing in the heart but song — the spontaneous outburst of a heart that cannot contain itself. And it gives a knowledge of God that would prepare it for every testing of the wilderness. You may depend upon it that the secret of wilderness failure — murmurings, turning back to Egypt, etc. — is that the love of God and the

precious fruits of His victory are not known or cherished in the affections of His people. The weakness and worldliness that are often manifest show how little the gospel is known in its true blessedness and power. Joshua and Caleb did not break down in the wilderness, because what was celebrated in the song was cherished in their hearts. They knew how Jehovah had triumphed, and they were in the light of all that would be the fruit of that triumph. "If Jehovah delight in us, he will bring us into this land", was the language of their hearts.

All that we have had before us is the gospel, and I think we can see that if it were in the hearts of God's people they would be prepared to learn the truth of the assembly. If saints really had the blessing of the gospel I think it would ensure their going on to the truth of the assembly. And I believe, on the other hand, that the full truth of the gospel will only be found with those who are, in some measure at least, in the truth of the assembly.

"And Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water" (verse 22). The people are now seen, in type, under the Lordship and Leadership of Christ. It is by divine leading that they are brought into testing. We may see this in the Lord Himself; He "was carried up into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted of the devil" (Matthew 4: 1). Mark says, "The Spirit drives him out into the wilderness"; this suggests that it was not a voluntary movement on His part. It is never right to go of our own will into testing; to do so would be to betray self-confidence. We are rather to pray, "Lead us not into temptation". But Luke puts it very beautifully: He "was led by the Spirit in the wilderness forty days, tempted of the devil". He was not only carried or driven there, but He was led in the Spirit all the time He was there. It was Man in the power of the Holy Spirit all the time, and therefore no failure.

The people, under divine leading, go three days in the wilderness and find no water. It was a trying experience, but God was setting Himself to teach them, at the very outset, an entirely new manner of life. "Newness of life" is what baptism has in view — a life sustained, not by natural resources or circumstances, but by confidence in God. All things are not smooth and easy in the way by which God leads His people. We are naturally inclined to suppose that if redeemed and under the favour of God, and walking under the Lordship and leading of Christ, all will go very smoothly. But it is not so. You may find something that you have been accustomed to all your life withdrawn — some natural source of comfort and refreshment fails you altogether. You feel it deeply — God means you to feel it — but it brings home to you how much you have been dependent on things which are not God. He is saying, I

have shown you plainly that I am for you; I have destroyed every power that sought to hinder My blessing you; I have purchased and redeemed you for Myself; I have told you what My love and favour will do for you. Now I want you to be altogether dependent upon Me for everything; I want to take the place of every natural resource in the confidence of your heart.

But there is something more than the mere absence of water. At Marah they find bitter water — something that goes right across the grain of every natural desire. There is something that involves suffering; instead of refreshment it is bitterness. We naturally like to be able to think well of ourselves; that is pride. We like others to think well of us; that is vanity. We like things to be agreeable, and according to our taste. These things are in every one of us; they are the very make-up of our flesh. And the fact that it is so renders it necessary that we should drink bitter water. Is God going to minister to all that? Certainly not; He is going to disappoint and reduce all that, that we may live practically in the life of Christ.

“The people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?” I suppose many of us have known what it was to come to Marah. I think I did the day after I was converted; I had a test which no one but myself knew anything about, and it made manifest to me how little I was prepared to suffer in the flesh. When we have bitter water to drink, the flesh rises in murmurings; we think it is hard. That is the time to cry to God. “And he cried to Jehovah; and Jehovah showed him wood, and he cast it into the waters, and the waters became sweet”. I take the wood to represent Christ as here in flesh for the will of God. He suffered in the flesh, and we are to arm ourselves with the same mind. “He that has suffered in the flesh has done with sin, no longer to live the rest of his time in the flesh to men’s lusts, but to God’s will”, (1 Peter 4: 1, 2).

A new principle of life is brought in which is a perfect contrast to everything that was natural to us. The bitterness of the waters of Marah is that something comes in which crosses our natural tastes, inclinations, and likings. But when we have Christ before us as the One who came to do God’s will, and never pleased Himself or sought His own glory, One who obeyed because it was sweet to Him to obey, the heart is attracted to Him, and according to the inner man we delight in Him. Do you not love to think of that life of holy obedience of Him who suffered for us in the flesh? That is the only life for a redeemed people, and God would lead us by His grace first to admire it in Christ, then to accept it as the true character of that “newness of life” in which we are to walk, and finally to adopt it in practical subjection and obedience to His will. The bitter waters then become sweet.

A new kind of humanity has appeared in this world in the Person of Christ; we see Man here absolutely for God's will, and after the new man we delight in Him, and it becomes our desire to be here only for the will of God. We get a new mind — the mind not to gratify the flesh, but to suffer in it and thus cease from sin. A saint who is naturally a proud or vain man — and which of us is not? — will always be so as to what he is naturally, and in the ways of God he will have to drink bitter water in many a humiliation. But then the saint gets away in mind and spirit from what he is naturally by entertaining the thought of Another Man. Christ comes in and gets a place in his affections, and he becomes minded to follow and promote what is of Christ. He cannot find any true satisfaction in doing his own will, or in fostering what is of the flesh, but he does find profound satisfaction in doing the will of God, and submitting to the discipline which checks the working of his flesh so that the life of Jesus may be manifest in him.

It is a question at Marah of what trying experiences are to our own spirits. Are they simply vexatious, and causes of discontent and murmuring? Or do we regard them in the light of what Christ was here, and accept them as the divine way with us, which — though humbling to us — are allowed to promote what is of Christ, and to set us more simply in the path of God's will? If we accept them thus the bitter waters become sweet. There is an inward satisfaction for the heart and spirit found on an entirely new line in relation to the will of God.

"There he made for them a statute and an ordinance; and there he tested them". God's intention is that Christ should become His "statute and ordinance" for us; we are to walk in His steps and even as He walked; and this tests our hearts as to what we are really after. We are called now to be "children of obedience"; we are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by sanctification of the Spirit, unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1: 2). It has been said that "obedience is the only exercise — save praise — of life to God" (J. N. D.). We see the praise side of life to God in the song, and the exercises of Marah are with a view to our learning the obedience side.

On that line we escape all the diseases of Egypt. Jehovah is the Healer of an obedient people. The diseases of Egypt are the consequences of man doing his own will, but if we have come under the teaching of grace, and its blessed influence, we learn to live "soberly, and justly, and piously in the present course of things" (Titus 2: 12).

Then an obedient and healed people can enjoy Elim. Twelve and seventy are numbers connected with ministry, for the Lord sent out first the twelve and

then another seventy also. It speaks of the Lord's administration of spiritual blessing to His people — the refreshment and shelter which, under normal conditions, are enjoyed in the kingdom of God.

EXODUS 16

Exodus 16

In the wilderness of Shur it was “no water” which tested the people, and then at Marah “bitter” water. Thirst speaks of that which man craves in the way of inward satisfaction. He is now to find it on an entirely new line in relation to the will of God, and in the acceptance of suffering in the flesh, and thus ceasing from sin.

In the wilderness of Sin it was not a question of thirst but of hunger. The exercise typified is as to the need of sustenance for a walk of obedience here. The quenching of *thirst* refers to what is inward, so that in heart and mind and spirit one is brought into a satisfied state. But *food* is the source of strength for practical needs; it typifies what we need in the way of nourishment if we are to be sustained in ability to walk in “newness of life”.

When any difficulty arises in the path of God’s will the natural tendency of the human heart is to contrast present conditions with the full provision that Egypt afforded, while forgetting what kind of life Egypt made provision for. They could not serve God in Egypt; they were slaves in bondage there; the kind of life that Egypt’s food ministered to was “men’s lusts”, “the will of the Gentiles”. Every provision was there to sustain that kind of life; it was all made, as it were, easy. “We sat by the flesh-pots, when we ate bread to the full”.

When a soul gets away from the influence of grace it is apt to forget the true character of Egyptian life, and the mighty deliverance which God’s salvation has effected, and all that is the fruit of His victory. The people had acknowledged themselves to be purchased and redeemed, a people for Jehovah’s inheritance, but how quickly was all this lost sight of! In the wilderness of Sin they were worse off — in their own unbelieving thoughts — than they had been in Egypt. “Ye have brought us out into this wilderness, to kill this whole congregation with hunger”. How soon we can give up the thoughts of faith! The blessedness of serving God is never of any account to the flesh, and, if not kept under the influence of His grace, it is easy for God’s people to drop into fleshly thoughts.

But in these chapters God is teaching us the immensity of His grace. So that though at Shur, Sin, and Rephidim nothing appeared on the side of the people but murmurings, nothing appeared on God’s side but grace. The answer God gives here to their murmurings is, “I will rain bread from heaven for you”. He would provide for their being sustained, and in this He would test them as to whether they were really willing to walk in His law or not.

God takes His people out of the world by redemption, and sets them where none of their old and wonted support is available. This is necessarily felt. It is a new experience to be deprived of all that one has been sustained by, and found satisfaction in, and to face conditions in which everything must be of God. Practically none of us pass out of Egypt conditions into wilderness conditions without experiences which enable us to understand the history of the children of Israel. Or rather, their history becomes very illuminating of our own exercises and experiences. In every case Jehovah allowed the need to be felt before He supplied that which would meet it.

Jehovah "rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them the corn of the heavens: man did eat the bread of the mighty" or "angels' food" (Psalm 78: 24, 25). The angels have to feed; they have to be sustained; no creature is self-sufficient. They are sustained in ability to do the will of God by what they feed upon. "His angels, mighty in strength, that execute his word, hearkening unto the voice of his word ... ministers of his that do his will" (Psalm 103: 20, 21). It would thus appear that in giving manna the divine intent was to furnish a supply of food that would enable the people to live morally a similar life to the angels. God's will is done by the holy angels in heaven, and angels' food is given to men that they may be capable of doing God's will on earth. In this connection we may note that man's measure and angel's measure are identical in Revelation 21: 17. Angel's measure is to do the will of God, and man's measure is the same, and manna is given that he may have the ability to do it.

God's will is done in heaven, and a life of perfect obedience — a life that was morally "out of heaven" — came down here in the Person of Jesus the Son of God. Every detail in His holy life of perfection here spoke of what came from heaven. What a study for our hearts is the life of Jesus! We see the grace of heaven touching every circumstance and detail in wilderness life. The manna was "fine, granular, fine as hoar-frost on the ground". It seems to indicate the minute detail in which the moral beauty of the will of God was brought into contact with every wilderness circumstance in the life of that blessed One. It suggests the minuteness of the way in which the grace of Christ would come into every detail of "the face of the wilderness". And now He lives in heaven to be the Source of supply for His saints of heavenly grace so that we may go through this world following His steps and walking as He walked. "My grace is sufficient for thee", is manna.

"In the evening, then shall ye know that Jehovah has brought you out from the land of Egypt; and in the morning, then shall ye see the glory of Jehovah". It is by proving that He can sustain us according to His will in the wilderness

that we know that God has brought us out from Egypt. His glory appears in this, and it is in perfect grace, for He heard their murmurings. He would give flesh in the evening, and then manna in the morning. Christ must be appropriated as having died before we can appropriate the grace in which He walked here, and which He now ministers from heaven. It is the glory of Jehovah "toward the wilderness" that He would give flesh and bread. It was His proposal to give both; the quails here were not like those in Numbers 11, which were given in answer to the lust of the people. Here both the flesh and the bread are given in grace.

"In the morning the dew lay round the camp". "And when the dew fell upon the camp by night, the manna fell upon it" (Numbers 11: 9). It is to be noted that the manna fell upon the dew. It seems to suggest a refreshing influence that prepares the way for the manna. Dew is often referred to in Scripture as a source of refreshment. There is a beautiful word in Hosea 14: 5: "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon". The result of Jehovah being dew to Israel will be their spiritual revival, so that fruitfulness and beauty will mark them. Dew is a divine refreshing which is granted sovereignly. The prophet says it "tarrieth not for man, neither waiteth for the sons of men" (Micah 5: 7). It falls silently and softly while men sleep.

It is very precious to awake in the morning and have one's first thoughts about the Lord. He delights to bring Himself and His love before our hearts so that our affections are refreshed. That prepares the way for the manna. The dew prepares a clean place for the manna to fall on; it cannot fall on the earth; there must be a preparation for it; it falls on the refreshed affections of the people of God. A heart refreshed in spiritual affection by divine love is prepared for the manna. Such have found the Lord to be dew to them, and the manna comes on that. If my spiritual affections are refreshed I want to be here for the will of God, and the manna comes in as support from heaven for me in the path of His will. The source from which the dew comes is the faithful love in the heart of the Lord; after all Israel's history of backsliding He will become dew to them to revive their affections and bring them back to bridal relations. He never departs from first love, and He is always working to bring us back to it.

The gathering "every morning" speaks of spiritual diligence, and the fact that it was "on the ground" rendered it necessary to stoop or kneel to gather it — an attitude significant of dependence. Paul speaks of things turning out for him to salvation "through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of

Jesus Christ". That is very much like manna, but it is not acquired without prayer.

Every one got his omer full, and "he that gathered much had nothing over". There was an equality of supply; no lack and no surplus. How significant is this of the blessed thoughts and activity and administration of grace! There is the same provision for every one; each one gets his omer full. The Spirit of God in 2 Corinthians 8 applies the principle of this in a practical way with regard to the temporal needs of saints. God's principle is equality (2 Corinthians 8: 14, 15); He would not have some to be in abundance while others had lack. If God administers in grace there can be no thought of anybody being short. "But God is able to make every gracious gift abound towards you, that, having in every way always all-sufficiency, ye may abound to every good work" (2 Corinthians 9: 8). Therefore we see this miraculous action in regard to the manna, that whether a man gathered little or much his omer was full. According to grace every one has a full measure; there is no reason why any one should be feeble in the path of God's will. "But to each one of us has been given grace according to the measure of the gift of the Christ" (Ephesians 4: 7). It is in the strength of that we can walk worthy of the calling wherewith we have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love. It is good to see that there is a full supply of grace available for each one that we may be competent for the path of God's will. If we do not see this we may become burdened by the sense of obligation. Light creates a sense of obligation, and if grace is not known correspondingly obligation becomes legal, and hence burdensome. We are to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; that is the manna. Sometimes we excuse ourselves by saying that we are poor, weak things; but our omer is full and we have but to use it. A full measure of grace is available for every saint, that each may walk to the pleasure of God. God is "the God of measure" as to the service He allots to each (2 Corinthians 10: 13), and we may say that He is seen as "the God of measure" here in the supply of grace to tread the wilderness.

If we do not gather what He gives we become feeble. And it had to be gathered before "the sun became hot". The sun represents the influences of the day, and if saints do not get the dew and the manna before the influences of the day come upon them, they will not be provisioned for the day's needs. It would have been a bad day for an Israelite if he had overslept! Alas! we often do that, and the apostle warns us that "it is high time to awake out of sleep". None was to be left until the morning. If kept over, worms bred in it and it stank. We can remember the grace that sustained us yesterday, but if

we do not get fresh grace today we find it has lost all its vitality and nourishing power.

The baking and cooking here seem to suggest the exercise that comes in so that the grace given may be utilized to the best advantage. There is nothing here about grinding it in mills or beating it in mortars, as in Numbers 11. That was the action of those who despised the manna; they tried to make it more palatable. They had lost their appetite for "the corn of the heavens". There is much of that kind of thing today. All that is divine and of Christ is being manipulated to make it suit the taste of man after the flesh; but it is solemn to see that the end of that was the kindling of Jehovah's anger, and a great plague, and the graves of lust. But I take the baking and cooking here to represent the right spiritual diligence of the soul that grace shall be utilized in the best possible way.

We come at this point to the second mention in Scripture of the sabbath, and its connection here is of deep interest and importance. The first mention of the sabbath (Genesis 2: 1 - 3) is as the rest of God from all His work in creation; but here the Sabbath is given to a redeemed people who are sustained by "bread from heaven". "Jehovah hath given you the sabbath; therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread for two days" (verse 29). The manna was given in such a way as to indicate Jehovah's intention to give them a day of rest. There was to be daily activity in gathering the manna for six days, but on the sixth day a double supply was given, in view of a seventh day to be marked by restful enjoyment. We read, "Abide every man in his place: let no man go from his place on the seventh day. And the people rested on the seventh day" (verses 29, 30). It is a beautiful suggestion that it would be the privilege, through grace, of the redeemed people to be in rest with God, and the manna was given with that end in view. It is a very blessed and instructive association.

A people sustained by the grace of which the manna is a figure are found here in accord with the will of God, and it is only such who can enjoy "the rest, the holy Sabbath, of Jehovah" (verse 23). The grace which is made available for us, so that we do His will, is in view of our participating with God in the rest that He has found in Christ. The daily exercise and diligence were essential to God's *way* with His people, but they were not His *end*. They were in view of the people enjoying with Jehovah in type the blessedness of His rest in Christ. He values the participation of His people with Him in that perfect rest which He has found in Christ. The land of Canaan is a type of God's rest, but He gave them a little picture of His rest every week while in the wilderness. It is a wonderful thing to be sustained in wilderness life by the grace of Christ so that

there is nothing to disturb God's rest in His people, and nothing to hinder them enjoying His rest in Christ. We have a place of rest with God, and the manna is given not simply to sustain us so that we may get through the wilderness, but with a view to our enjoyment of that place.

Jehovah's sabbaths were "a sign between me and you throughout your generations ... it is an everlasting covenant" (Exodus 31: 12 - 17). And we know how much there is in the prophets about the people's failure to hallow the sabbath. The more we are exercised in diligence to get the manna, and to be sustained by it, the more we shall be spiritually capable of enjoying the sabbath. To fail of doing so is a very serious loss to us, and it is a grief to God.

Jehovah would never have the manna forgotten or unknown; it was always to be seen as deposited before the Testimony. To my mind it is very blessed that the first mention of the Testimony is in connection with the manna. It suggests to me that the manna was food for the people that they might be sustained in the wilderness in accord with the Testimony. The Testimony was not given to them as written on the two tables of stone until after this, but God had it in view, and made provision typically in the manna for His people to be in accord with it. It is of interest to see that the thought of the Testimony is first introduced in connection with divine resource and provision, and not with demand. The manna was to be kept for the generations of Israel "that they may see the bread that I gave you to eat in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt". It was to be an abiding witness to the grace and faithfulness of Jehovah, who had made provision for the support of His people in the wilderness so that they might be in accord with the Testimony, and that even before the Testimony had been formally given to them. The manna is, in type, the divine provision for God's people that they may be capable of being here according to His will and pleasure, and thus in accord with the Testimony.

In Hebrews 9, "the golden pot that had the manna" is the first thing mentioned as being in the ark, then "the rod of Aaron that had sprouted" (Aaron's rod was also brought before the Testimony — Numbers 17: 10); and then, thirdly, "the tables of the covenant". Manna and the grace of priesthood are ample provision, typically, to enable us to be in accord with the Testimony. Christ is the Source of every grace. The omer is a man's measure — the full measure of grace so that a man may be what he ought to be for God's pleasure down here. The two stone tables of testimony alone would never have secured the fulfilment of what they claimed, but the manna in the golden pot was the witness to all generations of His people that He furnished full provision before ever He made demand. The Testimony was in the heart of Christ when here, and He is now the Source of heavenly grace that His saints

may be sustained in accord with it. God has given us in Christ, and in the grace which He delights to minister from heaven, a full measure of supply. No one can say that his omer is not full — that he has not sufficiency to be here for the will of God.

We might well ask whether we are making use of the manna. The omer of manna — the grace and support which Christ delights to minister — is sufficient to sustain every one of us in accord with the pleasure of God. He lives on high to furnish what suffices to meet every need in relation to our ability to carry out the will of God, and this in every detail. The manna qualifies us to enjoy the Sabbath with God and to be in accord with the Testimony. These are the two great thoughts brought before us in this chapter. The wilderness position according to God is thus maintained in the power of heavenly grace. I may fail to use the grace, but it is there for me.

The overcomer in Pergamos gets the hidden manna. In a church that dwells in the world, and has those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, the overcomer gets a peculiar sense of the support and approval of Christ.

“The children of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came into an inhabited land” (verse 35). It was divine provision for the whole wilderness journey. In Canaan there was “stored corn” — figure of Christ as the glorified One in whom every purpose of divine love has come to perfection and maturity. The “stored corn” of the land is Christ according to divine purpose; this is outside and beyond all wilderness needs.

EXODUS 17

Exodus 17

We have already noted that the people came into the varied circumstances of these chapters by divine leading. It was as led by Moses that they went out into the wilderness of Shur (15: 22); and here it is "at the command of Jehovah" that they journeyed to reach their encampment in Rephidim. They did not come into testing through failure or disobedience on their part; there was a divine intent in it; it was God's way to bring them into circumstances of need so that they might learn His grace in supplying that need. His object was, not to expose their unbelief and infirmity — though that came out under the testing — but to instruct their hearts in His grace, and to unfold to them all the resources of that grace, and to bring them really to Himself. These chapters are most establishing as bringing out the wealth and sufficiency of grace.

God is set to instruct us in Christ, and to bring before our hearts all that His grace delights to make Christ to us. We see Him here as the Rock; we are told plainly "that rock was Christ;" and it is, in figure, Christ smitten so that we might have the Spirit. The instruction of all this is *for us*. "All these things happened to them as types, and have been written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (1 Corinthians 10: 11). They had material bread from heaven, and material water from the rock, but we are privileged to learn the spiritual import of these things.

The rod had smitten the river and turned its waters into blood; it had acted judicially on the sources of life and refreshment in Egypt; it had expressed God's judgment, in figure, upon all that constitutes the life of the world. But it is now seen, in figure, as smiting Christ. The place is called Massah (Temptation) and Meribah (Contention), which shows that it is marked by bringing out all that the flesh is in its unbelief and contrariety. That state calls for judgment, but through infinite grace Christ has come into the place of the murmurer and complainer, and the judgment due to sinful flesh has come on Him so that the Spirit might be given to those who believe.

Provision is made in the gift of the Spirit for the maintenance of what is of God in freshness in the souls of His people. This is the first distinct type of the gift of the Spirit in this book, though it is involved in being brought to the abode of God's holiness (chapter 15: 13). It is the gift of the Spirit looked at from the divine side as bestowed in pure grace — God discerning what was needed to meet man's state and supplying it. Such is the amazing result of the death of Christ that God can give us His Holy Spirit. It would be well if believers

thought more of the death of Christ in this connection. If we were to ask believers generally, What is the result of the death of Christ? we might get many true answers, but probably it would not occur to many to say, He died that the Holy Spirit might be given to those who believe. The result of the smiting of the rock was that water came out of it. This is clearly a type of the Spirit being given. It is good to see the wonderful grace in which God has set us up. We often fail to recognize the divine resources or to use them, and this is why saints often wander a long time in the wilderness without making much spiritual progress.

This was not a temporary or passing relief; the rock followed them (1 Corinthians 10: 4); it was always there. In Numbers 20 it had evidently ceased to give water, but that was at a time when Miriam had died, and the people were rebellious against Moses and Aaron. In figure there was no longer response to Christ, but rather a spirit of rebellion. One can quite understand the water ceasing to flow under such conditions. If response to Christ dies, and rebellion against His Lordship and Headship comes in, it is impossible to have the good of the Spirit. But the remedy for such a state is to return to a sense of grace, and Jehovah was acting at that time with a view to bringing this about. The rock was there, and it had only to be spoken to, and it would give its water. It was there that Moses and Aaron failed, and did not hallow Jehovah; they did not rise to the grace in which He was going on with, and dealing with, a murmuring and contentious people. No renewed smiting was needed, but the recognition that a supply was available because of the grace in which God was going on with His people. He could not deny Himself, and He was acting at the moment to restore the sense of His grace in the hearts of His people.

In Numbers 21 the springing well answers to the Spirit as spoken of in John 4. It is typical of the Spirit as given to energize the affections in the direction of eternal life. But here it is the Spirit as power for inward refreshment, so that what is of God should be kept fresh in our souls *in the wilderness*. We have all been made to drink into one Spirit, so that the sense of grace, and all that God is for us, might be preserved in living freshness in our affections. If all believers were walking in the joy and power and freshness of the Holy Ghost there might be many adversaries, but there would be few infidels! What a testimony! Millions of people on earth having the grace and love of God in living power in their souls by the Spirit!

Immediately consequent upon this type we get the first bit of warfare. "Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim". The people have to learn war. If a people have moved out of Egypt by God's salvation, and have learned

the lesson of Marah, and come into the good of the manna and the water from the Rock, their new manner of life will awaken the hostility of Amalek, who was the grandson of Esau — the profane despiser. I have thought that Amalek might represent Satan's power in the way of persecution. He would have destroyed them, and particularly "the hindmost of thee, all the feeble that lagged behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary, and he feared not God" (Deuteronomy 25: 17 - 19). We may count upon meeting opposition; the Lord speaks of it as the time "when tribulation or persecution happens on account of the word" (Matthew 13: 21); He said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation". (See also Matthew 18: 6 and 2 Thessalonians 1: 4 - 8). God takes account of every bit of opposition to His people: "I have considered what Amalek did to Israel, how he set himself against him in the way, when he came up from Egypt" (1 Samuel 15).

We get in this chapter the conditions of victory. The first thing is that there is no thought of surrender, compromise, or making peace with the foe. "Not frightened in anything by the opposers, which is to them a demonstration of destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God" (Philippians 1: 28). Courage is needed and the true spirit of soldiers. "Choose us *men*", says Moses; "Quit yourselves like men; be strong", says Paul in a similar strain. The "hindmost" and "feeble" were smitten. The fact that there were such was in itself the evidence of decline, for as brought forth from Egypt in the strength of a divine salvation, "there was not one feeble among their tribes" (Psalm 105: 37). It would suggest that such had not really been going on in the energy and freshness which would have been imparted by the manna and the water from the Rock. They were not, therefore, in military power.

Then a good Leader is needed — a good General in the field to direct the operations — such as we see in Joshua, who is a type of Christ as the Leader of His saints in a military sense. We sing sometimes,

"Lead on, Almighty Lord,
Lead on to victory". (115:1)

When it is a question of meeting the assaults of the enemy we need Christ, not only as Moses and Aaron — representing the authority of God over us in the Lord, and the Priest to sustain us — but we need to be under His direction as Joshua, the military Leader. Otherwise we may make mistakes which give the enemy an advantage, but if we are really led by the true Joshua we shall not make moves of that kind. Many believers know what it is to be face to face with opposition and persecution. Watched, perhaps, the whole day long by those who wait for a chance to strike, as it were, at an unguarded moment!

What vigilance is needed! What an exercise to be led by the Lord in every step so that the enemy gains no advantage! Paul knew what it was, but he could say, "The Lord stood with me, and gave me power, that through me the proclamation might be fully made ... and I was delivered out of the lion's mouth" (2 Timothy 4: 17).

But the secret of power was on the hill-top; Moses was there with the staff of God in his hand. We see the militant character of the men of Israel in presence of their adversaries down below under the leadership of Joshua. But I think Moses in this incident represents them in their exercises God-ward, conscious that His power — the staff of God — is with them and on their behalf, but deeply conscious, too, of weakness in themselves. It seems to me he is not exactly a type of Christ here, but that he represents the people in their conscious weakness. His hands were heavy, and apart from the support of Aaron and Hur they would have been let down, and Amalek would have prevailed. It is rather conscious weakness that we see in him, and the need for the priestly support of Christ even to maintain a right attitude of dependence before God. Aaron would be rather the figure of Christ in this particular type, supporting the feebleness of Moses, even as He supports two of His own who ask as gathered together unto His Name (Matthew 18: 19, 20). He is there to support them in all that they ask in relation to His Name. I do not know anything more encouraging than to be conscious of the support of Christ as we pray for His interests. We sometimes think that we shall have a good prayer meeting if we have a sense of need and dependence, but what gives such peculiar character to the prayers of the saints when gathered together in Christ's interests is the consciousness of His support. It is a peculiar and blessed experience. But I do not think it will be realized unless Hur is present also, to use the language of the type before us. Hur means "purity"; it suggests that purity of heart out of which alone there can be a true calling on the Lord — that purity in the affections which thinks only of the Lord's Name and of what is due to Him. Men are to pray in every place, lifting up pious hands (1 Timothy 2: 8).

These are the conditions of victory. In the presence of men, courage and the leading of the Lord in the conflict; in the presence of God, the consciousness of weakness, but the support of Christ as Priest in a dependent attitude of soul, and also that purity of motive which enables one with a good conscience to count upon God. Where such conditions are present there is power to prevail "until the going down of the sun" — until the day of conflict is over. A man who worked in a forge in a Yorkshire town was converted, and when his work-mates heard of it and saw the change in him they took the opportunity while he was at breakfast to put his anvil in the fire and make it hot, and then

laid it down as if it had been knocked over. He came back and — as they expected — laid hold of it to put it in its place. His hands were very badly scorched. That was an attack of Amalek. They expected to hear from his lips such words as had often come out of them in times past. But he had been with God, and he prevailed. He turned to the men and quietly said, "You see I cannot work, but I shall go home and pray for you".

It is a serious thing to persecute the people of God. "It is a righteous thing with God to render tribulation to those that trouble you, and to you that are troubled repose with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven" (2 Thessalonians 1: 6, 7). Jehovah is the banner of His people; "Jehovah-nissi" means that; it is because He is their banner that they are attacked; but such a banner ensures victory. The hand of the adversaries against the people of God is really on, or against, the throne of Jah, and He will have war with them "from generation to generation". Eventually He will "utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under the heaven". He will bruise Satan under the feet of His saints, and not one adverse power will remain. And even at the present time it is a very serious thing to be hostile to the people of God, and especially to young believers, as the children of Israel were typically when Amalek fought with them. Gamaliel gave good counsel when he said, "Take heed to yourselves as regards these men, what ye are going to do ... lest ye be found also fighters against God" (Acts 5: 35 - 39).

EXODUS 18

Exodus 18

We get an interesting type in this chapter of the coming in of the Gentiles. It speaks of what will be fully realized in the world to come, but it is reached in a certain way in the assembly now; the Gentile has come in to share the joy of God's wonderful works in grace.

It is striking that in this book the Gentile should be the first to offer a burnt-offering. In Genesis 22 we get in type the offering of the beloved and only Son; there it is a type of what God has done in connection with the burnt-offering. But here we see the Gentile taking his place with God in the sweet savour of the burnt-offering — apprehending Christ in His personal and sacrificial acceptability to God as the ground of all blessing. It is one of the beautiful intimations in the Old Testament of God's thought to bring in the Gentile. It was always His thought that the Gentiles should rejoice with His people (Romans 15: 10). It should have spoken to Israel of a widening-out of grace beyond their limits. Paul was a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles that they might come in all His sweet savour to God, acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

The promise to Abraham was that he should be the father of a multitude of nations, and that all families of the earth should be blessed in him, that is, on the faith principle. Now we see that the report went out "of all that God had done to Moses, and to Israel his people; that Jehovah had brought Israel out of Egypt", and it was heard by the hearing of faith, and Jethro came to rejoice in all the wonderful works of God done for Israel. No doubt this looks on to a future day. Prophecy speaks largely of the Gentiles coming in to share in millennial blessing by and by, and we get a figure of it here. While God delivers Israel the church will be sent out of the way as Zipporah was. Then the report of what God has done in delivering Israel will go abroad in the Gentile world, and the Gentile will get blessing by owning God's deliverance and salvation in Israel. Ezekiel 37 to 39 shows that it is the report of what God does for Israel, and in the destruction of their enemies, that goes forth to the Gentiles and makes His Name known among them. Isaiah 60 gives the result; the Gentiles come up and own the great deliverance that God has wrought in Israel; they bring their wealth and glory. That is what we get a type of here. The Gentiles come to share the joy of what God has done for Israel, and to give Him the glory due to His Name for His great deliverance. They will be blessed by owning the place that God has given to Israel, and they will learn to know Him by seeing His ways with Israel. The Queen of Sheba coming up

to hear Solomon's wisdom no doubt typifies the coming up of the Gentiles when the kingdom is established.

When the Gentiles come in to share the joy of Israel, the church also appears in the scene, represented here by Zipporah. So that this chapter is a beautiful picture of what will obtain in the world to come. Israel fully delivered; the Gentiles hearing of it and attracted to come and view the blessed portion of Israel, and to give God His due in regard to it all; Israel and the Gentile in happy communion; and the church there in her own proper relationship with the Deliverer, in the heavenly place with Him. And all brought about on the ground of the death of Christ; hence the burnt-offering and the sacrifices come in; all is celebrated as founded on that.

It is striking that here it is Jethro who takes the burnt-offering and sacrifices for God. He takes the lead; "Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law;" not he with them. The Gentile is seen as taking a place of priority to Israel. This would answer more to the present time. It is one of those peculiar touches in the Old Testament which throw light on God's great thoughts as to the Gentiles. It is one of the "prophetic scriptures" (Romans 16: 26). The greatness and character of those divine thoughts came to fruition when Paul was sent to the Gentiles and the truth of the mystery was revealed. (Ephesians 3: 5, 6.) The elders of Israel eating bread with Jethro in the presence of God is very suggestive of the fellowship of the church of God; the Jew eating bread with the Gentile in the presence of God. If the Jew and the Gentile are brought into communion now by both partaking of Christ in the presence of God, the truth of the assembly comes into evidence. And in Zipporah we get a figure of the assembly in her own proper relationship with Christ. We have seen her in chapter 2 as given to Moses in the day of his exile from Israel: she had a son whose name indicated that Moses was an exile, a stranger. Now she has another son — Eliezer, "God is my help". It is well to take note of these two names, because they have to be characteristic of the church during the period of Christ's rejection. We have to keep in the stranger's place, and to trust in God's power for everything. Gershom signifies that Christ is rejected, and that therefore the church must be in strangership here; but Eliezer indicates that the help of God may be counted on to maintain and support everything that is for Christ. The true character of the church's place and hopes in this world is thus set forth.

Joseph also had a Gentile bride and two sons, but that sets forth things in another aspect. Manasseh means "Forgetting"; "For God has made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house". It is the Lord forgetting His rejection by Israel in the joy of His exaltation among the Gentiles; and He becomes fruitful

there; Ephraim means "Fruitfulness". In Joseph's sons we get the thought of the compensation Christ finds among the Gentiles in the day of His rejection by Israel. But in Moses' sons we have the sense He has of His rejection, but also that His interests are being maintained. God is caring for the glory of Christ, and for the help and preservation of everything that is of Him; Eliezer speaks of that.

The last half of the chapter is typical of the order and administration of the kingdom in righteousness.

Some have thought that Moses did not do right in listening to Jethro, but looking at it typically it was not the divine thought that Christ should exercise rule and judgment alone. The first prophecy on record speaks of His coming to execute judgment, but He comes "amidst his holy myriads"; the saints are with Him (Jude 14). Christ will not exercise the rule and administration of the kingdom alone. All is here in its right setting as a type. It was different in Numbers 10, where Moses said to Hobab, "Thou knowest where we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou wilt be to us for eyes". Jehovah had just been telling Moses about the silver trumpets — "Make thee two trumpets of silver ... for the journeying of the camps". Then Moses said to Hobab, "Thou wilt be to us for eyes", as if the divine guidance for journeying by the silver trumpets were not sufficient! Was it not rather in rebuke of this that we read immediately after, "The ark of the covenant of Jehovah went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting-place for them"? It was as though God said in wondrous grace, *I will be eyes for you!* We are often like Moses; we think how nice it would be to have someone to tell us what to do and where to go!

But in Exodus 18 the advice of Jethro results in everything being set in divine order according to wisdom and righteousness. This section of the book closes with a picture of the world to come. Israel blessed; the Gentiles coming to rejoice with Israel; holy and happy communion between Israel and the Gentiles; the church coming into the scene in her own relationship; and the administration of the kingdom in divine order — chiefs of thousands, and of hundreds, and of fifties, and of tens! It is a figure of the character of things which the Lord referred to when He said, "Ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19: 28). Then again in Luke 19 we are told that the one who turns his pound into ten pounds will be made ruler over ten cities, and the one who gains five pounds will be put over five cities. That is all part of the administration in righteousness of the world to come, which is typified in Exodus 18.

EXODUS 19

Exodus 19

It is obvious that this chapter begins a new section of the book. The first eighteen chapters show what God is for man; it is all instruction in grace; even the murmurings of the people only became occasions for fresh manifestations of grace; and all leads up to the final issue of grace in the glory of the kingdom. But the second half of the book, commencing at chapter 19, takes up, generally speaking, the side of what man is for God as the fruit of His grace. It brings out the conditions which are suitable to God on man's part, the fulfilment of which is requisite if man is to keep God's covenant. This forms the moral basis for the making by the people of a sanctuary for Jehovah that He might dwell among them.

Jehovah appeals to them in a touching way (verse 4) as to what He had done, and as to what He proposed to cause them to be for Him. He had destroyed their enemies; He had brought them out of the house of bondage; and had borne them on eagles' wings and brought them to Himself. Believers think of having this blessing and that, but the great thing is that we are brought *to God*. "I have borne you on eagles' wings" is a beautiful figure. The prophet says, "In his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bore them and carried them all the days of old" (Isaiah 63: 9). Jehovah speaks of it as "the day of my taking them by the hand" (Jeremiah 31: 32). What gentle and kindly interest is conveyed in this! What a touch of parental affection! Another scripture says, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him ... I it was that taught Ephraim to walk — he took them upon his arms" (Hosea 11: 1, 3). He carried them as an infant is carried, and then He held them up by His arms as they were learning to walk. On their side stumbling at every step — at Marah, in the wilderness of Sin, at Rephidim — but all the time sustained by the everlasting arms of Him who was patiently and graciously teaching them to take every step in dependence on Himself alone, and in confidence in Him. This is how God has dealt, and is dealing, with every one of us. He has set His love upon us, and His hands are under our arms to sustain us as He teaches us to take one step after another in confidence in Him. He would assure our hearts of His tender parental interest. Paul says beautifully, "He nursed them in the desert" (Acts 13: 18). What a tenderness there is about it!

But if God shows that He is everything for His people in grace and tender care, it is all necessarily in view of His people being for Him. Many believers do not get beyond the consideration of what there is in grace for man. This side must be known first; but if grace is known, and rightly affects the heart,

it produces a desire to be here for God. Keeping His covenant raises the question of what there is to be for God.

God is first of all a Saviour God and a Deliverer — One who has spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, and will with Him freely give us all things. God is for His people through redemption for time and eternity. When your soul is fully settled in that, you can take up the consideration of what it is to be for God as the fruit of His grace, and you will delight to take it up. If we were all in the good of the first eighteen chapters of this book we should be ready to move on to the other side. If the true grace of God as unfolded typically in the first part of Exodus is not known, any attempt to take up the second part can only result in legal bondage. But this could not possibly be God's thought, for this book reveals Him as acting wondrously to set His people free from all bondage that they might serve Him in liberty. Typically what we get in chapter 19: 3 - 6 is a proposal to a redeemed and delivered people — a people not in the flesh but in the Spirit — a people brought to God. If the children of Israel had been in the good of what had been given to them typically, they would have been quite equal to the responsibility they accepted.

It is important that we should see the difference between these two parts of the book. It is a joy to know and prove what God is in grace for us, but it is also most blessed to take up under grace that place of intelligent and affectionate obedience in which alone we are for Him. It would be very sad to think that man was to have everything and God nothing. God blesses His people in the fullest possible way through redemption, and brings them to Himself as known in supreme grace so that it may become their delight to yield themselves to Him, that He may have a people keeping His covenant; that is, true to the bond which divine grace has proposed and established. Thus He secures a people for His pleasure.

It is important for us also to recognize the place of the law in the ways of God with men. The law came to a people in the flesh, and it exposed all the perverseness and contrariety of the flesh, and demonstrated that those who were in the flesh could not please God. It also gave man the knowledge of sin, and discovered to him, even when born again, his own carnality, his utter weakness and inability of himself to answer to any claim of God. The law was holy, just, good, and spiritual, and therefore it condemned man and brought him — when born again so as to be divinely exercised under it — to utter self-condemnation and death. It gave no power to obey, but it pronounced its solemn curse upon all disobedience.

The solemn declaration of God's rights over men, and His claim of what was due to Him from men, could only be condemnation to a people who were really sinful and in the flesh. They took, as we all know, the ground of obedience in the flesh. They accepted the responsibility of keeping the law without really knowing what it was to be brought to God. God knew well the ground they were actually on, and He took His attitude towards them at Sinai in accord with it. Hence the cloud's thick darkness, and bounds set round about the people, and a commandment that every living creature that touched the mount should be put to death. The thunderings and lightnings, and trumpet sound, and the mountain shaking, the people trembling, and the divine warning against perishing, were all suitable to the occasion. God's holy claim upon His creature addressed to a sinful being who could not render it, must needs be accompanied with terror, for it brought to such a creature condemnation and death. It was a solemn testimony; it was God proving man, and bringing His fear before the people (20: 20).

We must not mix up the place of the law in the public ways of God with men with the typical bearing of the covenant as following upon redemption, and in view of the sanctuary and God's dwelling among a redeemed people in the happiness of covenant relations. While fully recognizing the former, one would desire not to lose sight of the latter. Man being what he was, the law was a ministry of death and condemnation, but it had an end in view. It was God's thought that His people should hearken to His voice and keep His covenant, "then shall ye be my own possession out of all the peoples — for all the earth is mine — and ye shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation". If this failed in regard of a people in the flesh it was in view of a day when it would be realized in regard of a people in the Spirit. God has not given up His thought to have a people for His own possession, and Peter shows how He secured it. 1 Peter 2: 9, 10.

The first requisite in a people for God's own possession is obedience. "If ye will hearken to my voice indeed and keep my covenant". We could not think of a disobedient people being *for God* — "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation". Peter speaks of the saints "as children of obedience"; they are begotten of that principle, and characterized by it. He speaks of "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the living and abiding word of God" (1 Peter 1: 14, 23). Man after the flesh is born of corruptible seed, but there is another generation born of incorruptible seed, who desire earnestly the pure milk of the word, and who grow up to salvation by it. They become "a chosen race, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession"; just what Jehovah proposed in Exodus 19. God's thought had an

answer in the remnant to whom Peter wrote, and it has an answer in His saints today, and it will yet have an answer in Israel under the new covenant.

"And all the people answered together, and said, All that Jehovah has spoken will we do". They pledged themselves in self-confidence, as assuming to be competent to answer to God's requirements. It was like Peter saying, "Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death". No finer sentiment ever came from the lips of man, and Peter meant it, but the Lord said, "I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow today before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me". He did not know himself, nor did the children of Israel at Sinai. If they had truly profited by the teaching of grace under which they had been they would have been utterly distrustful of themselves, and there would have been some indication that their confidence was in God alone. If this had been the case they would have found in God that which would have sustained them, and made them equal to carrying out His pleasure. Paul could say, "I have strength for all things in him that gives me power" (Philippians 4: 13). They did not avail themselves of what was in God for them, and hence they broke down. In referring to it long afterwards, Jehovah said, "Which my covenant they broke, although I was a husband unto them" (Jeremiah 31: 32). It is as much as to say, I would have been their strength and support if they had counted on Me.

If they had really had the consciousness of being brought to God as known in infinite grace, and had engaged their hearts to draw near unto Him (Jeremiah 30: 21, 22), it would have been all right. They would have been His people, and He would have been their God. He had acted towards them in love, and had manifested His grace, so as to win their affections; He had, typically, made every provision for them — the manna to sustain them in the path of His will, and the water from the Rock to keep them inwardly refreshed and invigorated in their affections. The water was typically the Spirit of Christ — the Spirit of Him who said, "To do thy good pleasure, my God, is my delight, and thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40: 8). And who said again, "Oh how I love thy law Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea above fine gold" (Psalm 119: 97, 127).

When the children of Israel get the reality of what the manna and the water from the Rock typified — that is, the grace of Christ and the supply of His Spirit — their affections will be quickened God-ward, and they will have power to do His will. In the meantime it is true of every saint that he is under grace, and under the sway of grace he delights in the law of God after the inward man, and he has the Spirit as power. Every true Christian has the Spirit of Christ. God has given His people a Spirit that delights in His will, so that it is

no yoke of bondage to them. His commandments are not grievous, for He never asks them to do anything that is not a delight to the inward man. And believers are appealed to by the compassion of God to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is their intelligent service (Romans 12: 1).

Romans 7 experience is to teach us the incorrigible evil of the flesh, and our own utter weakness. The flesh will never be other than what it is; it will never come into subjection, nor have any element of good in it.

God took an attitude in this chapter that was proper and necessary seeing the conditions that were present. The people had to learn, and we have to learn, that what God looks for in man can never be answered to in the flesh. Man after the flesh can only have his place in the distance of condemnation and death. But even while God took this terror-striking attitude He had other and precious thoughts in His heart — thoughts of infinite grace — and He brought them forward, we might say, at the earliest possible moment. Nor did He fail to indicate in type the ground on which all could be carried out, as we shall see in the next chapter. His thought was to be near to His people and to bless them, so that they might love Him, and devote themselves in free affection to His service. We see this result reached typically when they brought their offerings and made the tabernacle. His thought was to dwell in their midst, but this necessitated holy conditions. None of His saints would have it otherwise.

The commandments lay down the moral conditions on which God can be with His people, and from this point of view they are most important.

EXODUS 20

Exodus 20

The first word of the law is, "I am Jehovah thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage". It is God known as a Saviour; Redeemer, and Deliverer who speaks, and He speaks to a people brought out from the world and from bondage. None but a redeemed and delivered people could render what is due to Him.

We may learn three things from the law. First, the character of man in the flesh. He is prone to do every one of the things which are forbidden, or there would have been no need to forbid them. In this way "law has not its application to a righteous person, but to the lawless and insubordinate, to the impious and sinful, to the unholy and profane", etc. (1 Timothy 1: 9). It gives the knowledge of sin, for the very prohibition awakens desire for what is prohibited, and thus brings to light the unsuspected evil of the heart, as we see in Romans 7.

Then we cannot consider it without being reminded of the blessed One who could say, "Thy law is within my heart". In that way it brings before us the perfection of Christ. I need not say there was much more in His heart than the ten commandments, for He came to be the Saviour of the world, to give His life a ransom for many, and to lay it down for the sheep. He came to glorify God in the highest, and to reveal the Father. Every perfection was there.

In the third place we may see here something of the true character of man in the Spirit. It is said of saints, "But ye are not in flesh but in Spirit, if indeed God's Spirit dwell in you" (Romans 8: 9). And we also read, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, having sent His own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit" (Romans 8: 3, 4). One would desire to keep that in mind in reading these chapters.

Every reader of Exodus 20 must have noticed how little there is in it about works to be done by man. There are only two positive injunctions — the fourth commandment and the fifth. The fourth, in regard to the hallowing of the sabbath day, expressly says, "Thou shalt not do any work"; they had to remember what Jehovah had done, in which they had no part, but as He had rested so must they. The fifth commandment is the only one that can be regarded as suggesting works, but even that enjoins rather an attitude of mind — "*Honour* thy father and thy mother". No doubt becoming works would

accompany such an attitude, but they are not expressly mentioned. Then at the end of the chapter man is neither to lift up his tool upon the altar nor to go up to it by steps. If man in the flesh moves hand or foot in relation to God it is only polluting, and the exposure of his own nakedness.

Everything depends on God having His right place with us. It must be so, seeing that He is God, and that man is His creature. But man is naturally prone to idolatry; he is ready to entertain a thousand things that are rivals to God and that displace God in his mind and heart, and Satan's power is behind all these things. Now God has come out to deliver man from every idol by revealing Himself as a Saviour God; He has asserted His rights in the way of mercy and grace and redemption. He has made Himself known, and the nature of His claim over us, in our Lord Jesus Christ. It was all set forth typically in His ways with Israel which have come before us in the first eighteen chapters of this book, but we know it now as actually accomplished by the coming here of the Son of God, and on the ground of His death and resurrection. The first thing is that we should give the Saviour God the place that is due to Him. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me".

God has rights over us as Creator, but He does not base His claim on that ground, but on the ground that He is the Saviour God. "I am Jehovah thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage". The gospel is the revelation of how God has asserted His rights in grace. He has effected redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ, and has made Him Lord of all, that blessing might be available for all through Him. It is in giving the Saviour God the place that is due to Him that we come into blessing. So long as "other gods" have place with us, whether it be the self-gratifications which in a thousand forms exclude God from man's heart, or the religious idols which man's works, prayers, etc., often become, we are strangers to divine blessing. It is in turning to God from idols that we get delivered from the power of darkness. Repentance is the first movement in this direction; it is, as Paul testified, "repentance *towards God*" (Acts 20: 21). When a sinner repents it is the beginning of God getting the place that is due to Him in that man's soul, and hence there is joy in heaven over it.

It becomes the joy of the one who receives the gospel to give God the place that is due to Him — the place that He has taken in supreme and all-blessing grace in our Lord Jesus Christ. Everything that absorbs man, so that God known in redeeming grace and love does not get His due place with him, is of the nature of an "other god". In the light of this we can see the force of that final word in John's first epistle, "Children, keep yourselves from idols". And we can understand Paul saying, "Wherefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry" (1

Corinthians 10: 14). What a contrast to all that is idolatrous is seen in the blessed Man of Psalm 16 : "Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another: their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, and I will not take up their names into my lips".

God has revealed Himself in grace and love that He might get the place that is due to Him in the heart of man, His poor fallen creature. One might say that God has given His heart to man that He might get man's heart for Himself. He covers the returning prodigal with kisses, sheds His love abroad in the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit given to him, and the Spirit who sheds God's love abroad in the believer's heart is also the Spirit of Christ — the Spirit of the blessed Man who ever gave God His place, and who never took up the name of another into His lips. Believers, as having the Spirit of Christ, delight to give the blessed God the place that is due to Him; they know that it is fatal to spiritual blessing to have any other god; to have such would be to lose their happiness and their liberty.

The second commandment connects itself with the fact that "God is a Spirit". Man is essentially material in his thoughts, and hence the prohibition to make "any graven image, or any form of what is in the heavens above, or what is in the earth beneath, or what is in the waters under the earth". The natural thought of man is that something material would be a help to worship, but any image or form simply opens the door for Satan to possess himself of that which is due to God from man. Those who worship God must worship Him in Spirit and in truth. It is a true instinct that leads people to close their eyes when addressing God; they desire to be withdrawn from the seen and material.

The water in baptism and the bread and the cup in the Lord's supper are material things, but they are not at all objects of worship. To make them such would be idolatrous, and would simply be to fall under Satan's power. We know, alas! that this form of idolatry is widespread in christendom. But our great exercise should be to know the spiritual import of our baptism and to be true to it, and to have a spiritual appreciation of what was in the Lord's mind when He instituted His supper.

How wonderful that God should say, "I, Jehovah thy God, am a jealous God". That is the language of love. It is as much as to say, "I cannot bear not to have your affections wholly for myself". How God must love His people to use such language! Can *my* love be anything to God? Yes, it is most precious to Him; He cannot be satisfied without it. Blessed be His Name, He knows how to secure it, not in one or two only but in a vast company. He must have a *great*

company to love Him. How strikingly is this set forth in the words, "showing mercy unto *thousands* of them that love me and keep my commandments"!

The divine government goes on. It is noticeable that when God's government is spoken of, the tendency is to think of it chiefly as involving certain retributive consequences if evil is done. It most certainly does so, and this is a matter for grave consideration. But there is another side to it. It is always *in favour* of the thousands of them that love God and keep His commandments. Saints walking normally according to the Spirit in love and obedience have the comfort of knowing and proving that God's holy government is always in their favour. And even if we have come under the governmental consequences of wrong-doing in the past, from the moment that we begin to sow to the Spirit, and to continue in well-doing, the government of God begins to operate in our favour, and "mercy" comes in, so that there is often even some alleviation of what we suffer governmentally, while the suffering which remains becomes the discipline of love for our spiritual profit to promote our being partakers of God's holiness. How blessed to see that God has in view "thousands" of obedient lovers! Not a little company, but "thousands" who delight to give Him in their affections the place due to Him, and who refuse all association with what is idolatrous, and not in accord with His Name!

The third commandment concerns what is due to God's Name. His Name indicates that He has revealed Himself, and the truth lies in that revelation, and it must not be brought into contact with what is inconsistent with it. "Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that for an untruth uttereth his name" (Exodus 20: 7, margin). To connect that Name with what is false is to deny it. Then it is a holy Name. The natural man is essentially profane; he really has a kind of pleasure in connecting God's Name with his own wickedness. In perfect contrast to this, God's Holy One taught His disciples to pray, "Hallowed be thy name".

The One who is holy and true commends Philadelphia because they had not denied His Name. The devil is always seeking to connect that Name with what is untrue. It is a great exercise for the saints to preserve the Name of the Lord from being connected with what is contrary to the truth. In christendom the Lord's Name is connected with much that is false, and faithfulness demands that this evil should be judged and absolutely separated from. We have to see to it that by our associations we do not connect that Name with what is unholy or untrue. Those who do so will not be held guiltless.

The fourth commandment refers to the hallowing of the Sabbath day. God would have His people to apprehend the thought of His rest, and that He would have them to participate in it. Man naturally does not care for the

thought of God's rest; he has no interest in it, nor does he desire to share it. The Sabbath is really a call to communion with God, such as could only be possible through redemption. The perfect character of what God has done to secure rest for Himself must be known and entered into. He wrought six days in creation, and rested on the seventh day. In Genesis 1 there was a scene of confusion and darkness, but God acted in it in such a way as to secure rest for Himself. And what He did then was figurative of the way in which He has acted, and will act, in relation to all the moral disorder that has come in through sin and Satan.

At the present time we know God in the rest of redemption. He has reached perfect rest in the Person and work of His beloved Son. He would have us to sit down in perfect rest of soul, and consider what He has done, and how perfectly it is finished, and in this way remember the sabbath day and hallow it. He would have it to be to His people what it is to Himself. He has reached a point of rest, and He would have His people with Him in rest. His own gracious and holy workings through redemption have secured rest for Him. He has closed up sacrificially in the death of Christ the history of that old order of things which sin had polluted, and in which He could not rest. He has been vindicated and glorified infinitely as to it all, and He is in rest.

The *first* day of the week — which is the special and distinctive day of Christianity — suggests an entirely new beginning. It introduces new and spiritual and eternal conditions. Think what that day was to the Lord Jesus! The day of His resurrection; the day of new and spiritual relationships and associations; the day in which He had brethren to whom He could declare the Name of His Father and God! Let us have that day hallowed in our hearts that it may be to us what it was to Him!

Then the last six commandments concern what is due to man; if what is due to God is maintained, what is due to man will not be absent. The first of these commandments addresses children, and requires that they should honour father and mother. This provides for things being right from the very beginning. It supposes, of course, that the father and mother are amongst the thousands of those that love God and keep His commandments. It is the one thing children have to do, and this commandment is renewed in the New Testament (Ephesians 6: 1 - 4). This obedience, like all in the christian household, is to be "in the Lord". His grace and love are known there, and His sway is known and accepted. It is clear that if parents are not themselves really under the Lordship of Christ they cannot bring up their children in His discipline and admonition. The parents must know what His discipline and admonition are for themselves before they can bring their children up in the

same. The children are not simply to "obey", but to "honour" their parents, and this necessitates much exercise on the part of the parents that there should be that in them which the children can truly honour. The parents know how the Lord has dealt with themselves, how His discipline and admonition have come in to check their self-will and movements of their flesh. They have learned under the Lord's hand, and they bring what they have learned to bear on their children, and the Lord supports it.

Children have oftentimes much more exercise than we think; there is often deep exercise in the heart even of a little child. If parents maintain in affection what is due to the Lord it has a wonderful effect on the children; I speak from personal experience.

We see here again, as we have before in this book, God's household thoughts. His assembly is made up of households. God takes very great notice of how children regard their parents. The general tendency of children is to despise their parents, and especially when they have had advantages in the way of education, etc., which their parents have not had. It is rather striking that long life on earth should be connected as a promise with this commandment, and that this is repeated in the epistle to the Ephesians. A long life on earth *for Christ* is a great privilege. Who would not desire it? The Lord promised Peter a long life of service, and then that he should glorify God by his death. I do not think the promise contemplates a life of self-will or natural enjoyment, but a prolonged period during which we may minister to the will of God in our generation, as David did (Acts 13: 36). This is a great privilege. And every *day* now is worth more than a year in Methuselah's time!

The following commandments are summed up in "Love works no ill to its neighbour: love therefore is the whole law" (Romans 13: 10). There are those on earth with whom one feels perfectly safe, and with whom all one's interests are in safeguard. The protective character of the law has been pointed out. It protects one's life, the sanctity of the marriage relationship, one's property, good name — all are safe with those in whom the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled. In moving about, if one finds oneself amongst believers there is at once a feeling of relief and security; you know you are amongst those who will do you no harm.

These commandments show what man is naturally prone to do; these are the kind of things we should do as men in the flesh. And there must always be watchfulness and prayer, or we may fall into some of these things. For instance, how much care is needed not to "bear false witness" against one's neighbour. If unwatchful it is easy to do so in small ways, perhaps even without any wilful or malicious intent.

The last commandment is the most searching. It forbids desire (Romans 7: 7, 8). It has been said that the sting is in the tail. But on the other hand it shows the wonderful power of grace. For it suggests that in knowing the love of God, and in owning His Hand in everything, one may be free even from desire for what He does not give. The spirit of the law, and indeed of all the Old Testament, is the Lord, and if we have the Spirit of the Lord and are controlled by it we shall not covet. If you can say as He could, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage", you do not covet what your neighbour has. There is nothing more harassing than a desire for what you cannot have; it is one of the greatest blights on all human happiness that men covet what they cannot have. Not knowing God, or His grace and love, they do not trust Him with their happiness, and are consumed with desire for what they see others possess, or with sullen discontent because they cannot have it. But if the saint is conscious that all things are his, there is not much left to covet! "All things are yours. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things coming, all are yours: and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians 3: 21 - 23).

The "law of liberty" is when you are told to do what you want to do. According to the inward man the saint delights in the law of God, and as having the Spirit of Christ he is on the line of love and liberty, and not bondage. The will of God is carried out not as being under law but under grace.

The people here could not endure the character of things in presence of which they found themselves. "They were not able to bear what was enjoined" (Hebrews 12: 18 - 21). The holy majesty of God, and the character of His claims, is a terrible thing to the flesh; "for it is not subject to the law of God; for neither indeed can it be" (Romans 8: 7). Man in the flesh has no ability to respond to the claim; indeed, he *wants* to do all that is forbidden; and the very prohibitions only stir up the desires and propensities that are there. God saw fit, nevertheless, to bring His fear before the people, that they might not sin. Yet even this terrible majesty did not deter them from making a golden calf soon after, and that in the very presence of the "consuming fire on the top of the mountain" before their eyes (24: 17). It shows plainly what the flesh is.

It is of the deepest interest to see how quickly Jehovah turns to an entirely different character of things. He still claims the supreme and unrivalled place with His creatures (verse 23); He could not do otherwise, let the dispensation be law, grace, or anything else. He is God, and the creature's first step to blessing must ever be to give Him His place as God. This is, indeed, essential to repentance.

But He speaks at once of an altar, and of burnt-offerings and peace-offerings (or thank-offerings). The law in itself, as coming to man in the flesh, meant distance and curse. But neither distance nor curse were in the heart of God, so He turns at once to speak of nearness and blessing. He says, "I will come unto thee, and bless thee". The secret of that is the altar and the burnt-offering. I think we shall see that the altar involves the full recognition of what man is, but it furnishes him with an entirely new ground of blessing and of approach to God.

The "altar of earth" and the "altar of stone" were both typical of Christ, for it is by Him alone that we can come to God. "Earth" here is the very word from which Adam got his name, but Adam and all his posterity came under sin and death so that there could be no approach to God by men except on the ground that God has been glorified about all that came in by the sinful man, and Christ was here as Man to accomplish this. It involved His being made a sacrifice for sin, and He was great enough to come into the place of sin and death, and to glorify God in it, and we can only come as worshippers to God on that ground. Hence this altar is obligatory — "an altar of earth shalt thou make unto me". It speaks of Christ as establishing in Himself, and by His death, a way by which we must come to God if we come at all.

Then on the "altar of earth" burnt-offerings and thank-offerings are to be sacrificed. We might have expected that immediately after giving the law God would have spoken of sin and trespass-offerings, but He does not. He speaks, in type, of all that Christ is in His devoted affections which went infinitely beyond keeping the law. He glorified God in the very place where man had dishonoured Him, and glorified Him about that very dishonour. His sacrifice of Himself was fragrant with sweet-smelling savour to God.

Can we approach God in the value and savour of that — in the acceptance of Christ and of His offering of Himself? Yes, blessed be God, we can, and never does He propose that we should approach Him on any other ground. If the burnt-offering speaks of what Christ is to the heart of God as furnishing the ground of acceptance for His people, the thank-offering speaks of what He becomes to their hearts as a spring of eternal thanksgiving. Thankfulness and holiness go together. "Be thankful ... giving thanks" is a kind of climax in Colossians.

It is in the light of all this, and in relation to it, that Jehovah would make His Name to be remembered. What God is as known through Christ, and in the light of the burnt-offering, is the everlasting remembrance and delight of His people. Christ has taken away the legal system, and the man who would not and could not keep the law has been ended sacrificially in His death. But the

burnt-offering speaks of perfection in every moral quality, and in the affections of a Man wholly devoted to God — such perfection as could only be found in a divine Person — the Son of God — come in flesh. And that perfection has been offered up in death so that God's will might be established, and His saints set apart and perfected for ever for His pleasure. We remember God's Name in relation to all that, and glorify Him in our praises.

"And if thou make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone; for if thou lift up thy sharp tool upon it, thou hast profaned it" (verse 25). The "altar of stone" speaks of what is permanent, and this brings in the thought of resurrection, for it is only in connection with Christ as risen that things have permanent character. It is to be noticed that this altar is introduced with an "if", suggesting that the people of God have the privilege of making such an altar, but that they may not always be prepared to do so. They are not always ready to approach as identified with Christ as risen, for this is a spiritual matter, only to be taken up as we apprehend what it is to be risen with Him. The "sharp tool" of human ability has no place there; it can only profane what is most holy. The stone must be left unhewn; the working of God has raised Christ from among the dead, and His saints are raised with Him by the faith of that working. No human hand can touch that order of things; philosophy or the teaching of men can have nothing to say to it. The epistle to the Colossians is intended to shut out the "sharp tool" that can only profane.

"Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon" (verse 26). Christendom is full of human means which are supposed to facilitate the worship of God, but they only expose man's nakedness. If God is approached He must be approached in spirit and in truth; His people must worship by the Spirit of God (Philippians 3: 3). He expects His saints to clearly distinguish between what is by His Spirit, and the best possible human order. The latter may be very suitable in man's judgment, but God is the only One who has the right to prescribe what is suitable on the part of those who approach Him.

And then, wherever His Name is remembered, "I will come unto thee, and bless thee". One could not imagine a greater contrast to the conditions present in the previous chapter. We are once more on those blessed terms of grace which constitute the true bond between God and His people. The altar speaks of a self-sacrificing love that goes beyond all that law required, and a ground of acceptance infinitely greater than any obedience of ours could be, however perfect. All is accomplished according to the perfection of Christ. So far as man in the flesh goes, he moves neither hand nor foot in the matter. It is remarkable how this chapter of law excludes man's works altogether!

EXODUS 21

Exodus 21

The Hebrew bondman is another lovely type of Christ. We get the thought of His perfection sacrificially in connection with the burnt-offering and the altar; but in the Hebrew servant the type is of His perfection in relation to service. How wonderful the place of service which the blessed Lord came into! And He so fulfilled all that was due that personally He could go out free. The law claimed six years of service, and then the bond-man might go out free: he need only serve six years. With the blessed Lord the law could not detain Him, for He fully answered to its every claim. As the old hymn says,

“Of Abba’s love, of God’s great claim,
He came not short at all;
Perfect in everything was He,
Alone since Adam’s fall”.

Now the question was, would He go out free? The reading in the margin is very striking. “If he came in alone” reads literally, “If he came in with his body” (verse 3). Hebrews 10: 5 shows how He came in with His body, “Thou hast prepared me a body”. But would He go out with His body? No, He would not. Personally He was entitled to do so, but it was exactly what He would not do; He devoted that body to His Master, His wife, and His children. That holy body prepared for Him, He has devoted to God, the church, and the saints individually. In the Supper He says, “This is my body, which is *for you*”. He has not gone out free with His body; He has devoted it; and in the giving of His body the Lord has pledged Himself to serve in love eternally.

“This is my body, which is for you” — there is a depth in that which appeals to every heart that loves Him. The eating of the Supper is bound up with a right appreciation of this; if we do not appreciate it we do not eat the Supper. So 1 Corinthians 11 speaks of the possibility of eating and drinking unworthily, and it says of the one who does so, that he “shall be guilty in respect of the body and of the blood of the Lord”; and again, “Not distinguishing the body”. The great thought which the bread in the Supper presents is that He has devoted Himself in love, He has said plainly, “I love”; He has pledged Himself, He has gone to the post and had His ear bored. It is another precious aspect of His death. His death in connection with the altar and burnt-offering has to do with the glorifying of God in relation to sin, but having the ear bored is dedication to service. He has pledged Himself thereby to eternal service. He has said plainly, “I love”. This is all excess; it goes infinitely beyond anything the law

demanding. It brings before us the whole scope of His service towards His own: advocacy; intercession; support; succour; sanctifying and cleansing; feet washing; making His own to sit down and coming forth to serve them; and all other service. What a wonderful service the Lord has pledged Himself to! It is what He has done, is doing, and will do eternally; He will serve for ever. The effect of apprehending the love of Christ in this way would be that we look for everything from that service of love. We tell Him sometimes that He is the source of every grace; He lives to serve eternally.

The master boring the bondman's ear suggests that God has accepted the dedication of Christ to eternal service; it is well-pleasing to God that He should devote Himself; it is all in perfect accord with the Father's thought and the will of God. The servant carries for ever in his own person the mark of his pledge — the hole bored in his ear. The Lord will never lose the marks in His own Person of that pledge which His death involved. He called attention in resurrection to the marks of His hands and His feet in Luke; and His hands and His side in John. His love is pledged in that. You can fancy what it would be to the wife and children to look at that bored ear! How it must have touched a chord in their hearts every time they looked at it! The Lord loves to be recalled in connection with all that. "This do for the calling me to mind"; we are to call Him to mind in connection with the love in which He pledged Himself to God and to us eternally.

Revelation 5 speaks of Him as "a Lamb standing, as slain"; He bears in heaven the evident tokens of the suffering love in which He died. It is that side of it there; He carries the tokens of suffering love. Here it is the token of serving love; the same love that suffered, now serves eternally. When He comes into the midst of His own He comes to serve them. When we open the door to Him He comes in to serve. In Luke 12, when they open the door to Him, He comes in and girds Himself and makes them to sit down to meat, and comes forth and serves them. I think that happens whenever we open the door to the Lord. He can serve His household as no other can. He can make us sit down in the restfulness of the love of God and the Father, and minister all the thoughts of that love to us: He has pledged Himself to such service. Would that our hearts were more affected by these things! This is not only something that He has done in the past, or that He will do in the future; it is going on and being known and proved now. It is a great thing to have hearts awakened to look for it when we come together. There is nothing the Lord cherishes in His heart more than to have His saints with Him; but before He has them with Him, He loves to be with them and to serve them in love. It is the peculiar and distinctive privilege of the present time: if there are suited conditions we can have His company, and the service of His love in this peculiarly blessed way.

Of course there must be moral suitability in the household to receive such service. It is to those who wait and watch for Him that He comes. He would not come where He was not wanted, and where conditions were not suited to Him. There is no greater privilege than to have the Lord with us to serve us in relation to all that which divine love has conceived and brought into effect. We need His service individually in intercession and advocacy and succour and support. But for the moment I am thinking of how He loves to serve us in connection with all the thoughts of God, and in relation to the Father's love.

One part of His service is that He is Minister of the sanctuary and the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man. He serves in relation to God's things and to God's praise; He can put the service of God into perfect order. It is blessed to have the divine service ordered under His hand, so that if a brother takes part in a meeting he does so in a way that is the fruit of the Lord's present service and support. The Lord loves to serve His household by giving support in relation to divine things. We have One who can serve us and serve God in holy things, and the saints are under His hand as holy vessels. The children of the captivity returned from Babylon with five thousand four hundred vessels of gold and silver. A specified number of holy vessels returned from Babylon for holy service. I think the Lord has been bringing back some of the holy vessels in recent years, that they might come under His charge as the Minister of the sanctuary, and be filled, and sustained, and carried by Him, so as to be for God's glory and praise in His holy service. All the vessels hang on Him.

The position of the saints, according to divine thoughts, is a very wonderful one, whether it be in relation to the place where Christ has died, or to the love revealed in His death, or to the saints' place of association with Him. He loves to serve and support us in relation to it all, and to direct us into the love of God. *He* is pledged to this service of love; are *we* surrendered to it? I do not think the Lord would ever withhold His service or manifest reserve unless there were some reason for it. If the Lord holds back there are moral reasons for it, as in the Song of Solomon where He withdraws Himself. If the Lord does not give Himself to us in the freeness and gladness of His love and service, there is a moral reason, and we should be exercised and search our hearts. If there had been any reserve on the part of the Hebrew servant towards his wife and children after his ear was bored, there must have been something on their side to cause it, for he had pledged himself to them for ever. They would have wanted to get the cause of the reserve removed as quickly as possible!

The Hebrew bondman is a precious type of Christ, but in the maidservant of the following section I think we may see a figure of Israel. She is not suffered

to go out free because of the grace and faithfulness of her Master. It says, "If she is unacceptable in the eyes of her master, who has taken her for himself, then shall he let her be ransomed". Israel has not pleased her Master; she has been very unacceptable to God. She has failed as tested by the law, the promises, and the presence of Christ; under every test she has been displeasing to her Master. Yet this gracious suggestion comes in, that she shall be ransomed. Though she has been so displeasing to God, ransom comes in; He will not give her up to a foreign people. It reminds one of the touching word by the prophet, "Where is the bill of your mother's divorce, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?" (Isaiah 50: 1).

"And if he have appointed her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the law of daughters". God will be faithful to all His own thoughts in regard to Israel, and He will see to it that she is endowed with everything suitable to the position in which he intends her to be set in relation to Himself and to His Son.

In the taking of another in verse 10 there may be a hint of the church coming in, but nothing of Israel's portion is to be diminished. The church comes in to stand in heavenly relations to God and to Christ, but Israel will still have her own wonderful position and endowment, and will be held by the power of love and divine faithfulness in her appointed relationships. In spite of all that Israel has proved herself to be she will be held by divine faithfulness. She was a maidservant to begin with, but she will end by being a daughter. And, indeed, her Master will become her Husband, according to the prophetic word, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart And it shall be in that day, saith Jehovah, that thou shalt call me, My husband, and shalt call me no more Baali (Master) ... And I will betroth thee unto me for ever" (Hosea 2: 14 - 23).

We have a wonderful cluster of pictures of the death of Christ here: the altar and the burnt-offering; the boring of the ear of the Hebrew servant; and ransom brought in in regard to the maidservant. Then there is another type of that death. We have had the love side first, and now there is the hatred side. A man smites a man and kills him (Exodus 21: 12). That is Israel again in the guilt of killing their Messiah, but there is a wondrous answer of grace to it! "But if he have not lain in wait ... I will appoint thee a place to which he shall flee" (verse 13). In grace God has taken account of things in that way as to the death of Christ. Peter in Acts 2 and 3 is on this line, "Him, given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye, by the hand of lawless men, have crucified and slain" (2: 2, 23). They did it, but in chapter 3 Peter says, "I know that ye did it in ignorance, as also your rulers" (verse 13). It is

looked at from the point of view, that it was not wilful, but God delivered Him into their hands. "I will appoint thee a place to which he shall flee". Peter in Acts 2 and 3 is pointing them the way to the city of refuge. God delivered Christ into their hands or they could not have touched Him. It is seen to be what God permitted in His ways of grace to men. Their smiting of Christ was regarded as a sin of ignorance. What a marvellous answer of grace to the Lord's intercession on the cross! "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". There is no grace like that! The Lord had said, "They have both seen and hated both me and my Father". But grace takes account of it as a sin of ignorance, and Peter points the way to the city of refuge, Repent and be baptized, and you will have remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit; your terrible crime will be expiated (Acts 2: 38). The Epistle to the Hebrews shows what strong consolation God has given — two immutable things — to those who flee for refuge (Hebrews 6: 17 - 20). The city of refuge is open for the murderers of Christ! It is most wonderful how the law abounds with grace.

EXODUS 22 TO 24

Exodus 22 - Exodus 24

From chapter 21: 14 we have various "judgments" which show that the ways and government of God are retributive, and that there is no evading responsibility which rightly attaches. Then God would have a beautiful spirit of grace and compassion to characterize His people. They are not to vex nor oppress a stranger, nor to afflict any widow or fatherless child (22: 21, 22). No interest is to be charged on money if lent to a poor brother (verse 25). A neighbour's pledged garment is not to be kept overnight, "for I am gracious" (verses 26, 27). The character of God is to be reproduced in His people.

Then what is due to God must be rendered without delay. "Thou shalt not delay the fulness of thy threshing floor and the outflow of thy winepress", etc. (verses 29, 30). This is the secret of prosperity and blessing. "Honour Jehovah with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy vats shall overflow with new wine" (Proverbs 3: 9, 10). "Bring the whole tithe into the treasure-house, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I open not to you the windows of the heavens, and pour you out a blessing, till there be no place for it" (Malachi 3: 10).

"Thou shalt not accept a false report" (23: 1) is to be noted. It puts on the hearer the responsibility of knowing that a report is true before he accepts it. People often listen to things, and pass them on to others, without making sure that they are true. We are too ready to listen and to become tale-bearers, but we are responsible to make sure that what we hear is true.

There is also to be a readiness to do a kindly action to an enemy (verses 4, 5); such an action in the spirit of grace is very likely to turn him into a friend.

The same spirit of grace comes out in connection with the sabbatical year and the Sabbath. Both are brought in here as expressive of gracious consideration for the poor, and even for the beasts, the ox and the ass, etc. "Six years thou shalt sow thy land, and gather in its produce; but in the seventh thou shalt let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of thy people may eat of it; and what they leave, the beasts of the field shall eat" (23: 10, 11). The rest of the weekly Sabbath was "that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger may be refreshed" (verse 12). God would have in His people the spirit of kindly consideration for the poor, for servants, and even for beasts. We must not lose sight of this. It is an individual exercise preparatory to that which has a collective bearing — the feasts of Jehovah.

The feasts refer to what is collective, for all had to come together. It is a pleasure to God that His people should be together; we cannot be truly festive alone. And all the exercises of our individual pathway are in view of what we are privileged to take up together. There were three occasions on which all the males were to appear in the presence of the Lord Jehovah. The people of God viewed as those marked by strength and intelligence have to keep the feasts. "The feast of unleavened bread" speaks of the setting aside of all that is unholy and untrue, all that would inflate man and be unsuitable to God. Then "the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours which thou hast sown in the field", is indicative of the new order of things which has sprung up from what was sown in the death of Christ. There was a wonderful sowing in His death, but the One who sowed has come again with rejoicing bearing His sheaves. Then "the feast of ingathering,

at the end of the year, when thou gatherest in thy labours out of the field", looks on to the full result, when every divine thought and purpose will be gathered in under the Headship of Christ. We anticipate that, as seeing it all secured in Him; every divine thought harvested and garnered in the risen and glorified Man — the Head.

There is a moral order in the three feasts. The feast of unleavened bread necessarily comes first. It is typical of the setting aside of all that in which God could have no pleasure; whether it be the leaven of the Pharisees — religious leaven, or that of the Sadducees — intellectual leaven, or the old leaven, or the leaven of malice and wickedness. Everything that is of the flesh, and that ministers to the self-importance of man in the flesh, has to be got rid of that Christ may have His place. As the saints have Christ before them, and give place to Him, they are marked by "sincerity and truth". They have Another Man in view, apart from whom there would be no "harvest", and without whom they would appear in God's presence "empty". But as enriched in Christ there is an abundant "harvest", and the saints appear in God's presence filled with thanksgivings and praise.

As we keep the feast of unleavened bread and the feast of harvest, we are prepared to be led into the fulness of all that God has in His heart for His people. So that the feast of ingathering follows, and at the end of the chapter the inheritance in all its extent "from the wilderness unto the river" is set before us. If the hearts of saints are encouraged and united together in love, there is nothing to hinder them from entering into "all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the full knowledge of the mystery of God; in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge" (Colossians 2: 2, 3). In company with our brethren, and in taking up our relations with them in

joy before God — that is, in festive character — we get great enlargement in relation to His things. Where brethren dwell together in unity the blessing is commanded.

In chapter 24 we get the ratification of the covenant. God had laid down the terms on which He proposed to go on with His people, and according to which His people could go on with Him. Now those terms were to be ratified in the most solemn way. Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders go up to Jehovah. But they worship “afar off”. Moses, the mediator, is alone allowed to come near.

“And Moses came and told the people all the words of Jehovah, and all the judgments; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words that Jehovah has said will we do”. They undertook to keep the covenant, and Moses wrote all the words of Jehovah, so that there was a “book of the covenant” — what Hebrews 9 calls “the book itself”. It contained the definite terms in writing according to which covenant relations would be established.

But the Mediator was in the intelligence of God’s mind. We have seen that after uttering the ten commandments in chapter 20 Jehovah immediately turned to speak of the altar and the burnt-offering. His thought was to be with His people, not on the ground of the obedience of man in the flesh, but on the ground of Christ and of the fact that He had been glorified in the death of that Blessed One. And here we find that the first thing the Mediator does after writing the words is to build “an altar under the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel”. He identified the whole of the people of God with the altar which spoke of sacrifice.

It is remarkable that before ever the covenant was signed, if we may so say, Israel was thus put typically on wholly different ground by the Mediator. God would be glorified in death as to all the breakdown under the first covenant, and His people identified with the Person and work that glorified Him. In the public ways of God the people were being sanctified to their own obedience under law, but the whole action of Moses was clearly typical of another sanctification of an entirely different character.

In the mind of God the blessing of His people would be secured in the value and savour of the burnt-offering, and by the introduction on their side, by His own gracious work, of an entirely new race, totally different morally from man in the flesh. This is intimated in the fact that “the youths of the children of Israel ... offered up burnt-offerings and sacrificed sacrifices of peace-offering of bullocks to Jehovah”. This is in contrast to “the elders of Israel” in verse 1, and it suggests a new generation. It is a thought frequently presented in

Scripture. "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy sons" (Psalm 45: 16); instead of fathers that utterly failed under the law, being in the flesh, there will be children who will know God in forgiving grace, and will come under divine teaching, and have the law written in their hearts. They will be engaged before God with Christ in burnt-offering and peace-offering character. This will be the new generation of Psalm 22: 31. "They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done it". Another remarkable scripture says,

"From the womb of the morning shall come to thee the dew of thy youth" (margin, i.e., young men) (Psalm 110: 3). A wonderful morning is going to dawn, and that morning will give birth to a new generation for the pleasure of God. They will come in on the ground, not of obedience rendered by a people in the flesh, but of the death of One who thus set aside the man of failure, and brought things in according to God's pleasure. The death of Christ maintains every holy requirement of God, for He died to make manifest that there could be no discharge from the penalty of a broken law save by that penalty being borne to the full. The new generation will learn "that *he hath done it*", and they will rejoice in what He has done, and bring the sweet savour of it to God in their offerings.

But Peter tells us of a morning that has already dawned — the morning of resurrection — and how it has brought forth a new generation. He tells us that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ "has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead". And he speaks of those who are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the living and abiding word of God" (1 Peter 1: 3, 23). And it is of such that he says that they are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by sanctification of the Spirit, unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (verse 2). This is a direct allusion to the very scripture that is before us in Exodus 24. A generation born of incorruptible seed are "children of obedience", and are set apart to obey as Christ obeyed, and to be with God in all the value of the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Their sins and iniquities are remembered no more.

The witness of death is everywhere in this chapter. It is on the altar, and on the people, and, the New Testament tells us, on the book also. It spoke typically to God on the altar of His Name glorified and His will established. It spoke to the consciences of the people as sprinkled on them of "death having taken place for redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant" (Hebrews 9: 15). And as sprinkled on the book it intimates typically that every claim of the first covenant has been ratified and vindicated by its full penalty

being borne. There has been a removal in death of the man who would not and could not keep the law.

The veil of self-sufficiency was on the heart of the people when they said, "All the words that Jehovah has said will we do". Hence they did not see Christ as the end of all this typical teaching, but we can see plainly that Christ was in the mind of God all the time. It will be a wonderful day for Israel when they read such a scripture as this with the veil taken away from their hearts. Then they will see in it something of what we see, through infinite grace, now.

The New Testament adds some details of deep interest; that there was also "water and scarlet wool and hyssop" (Hebrews 9: 19). The water speaks of Christ's death in its power to cleanse morally; it speaks of moral purification. Israel will yet learn the import of the water as well as the blood; "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your uncleannesses and from all your idols will I cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you" (Ezekiel 36: 25, 26). The scarlet wool was a witness of what the people really were in spite of all their professions of obedience; they were deeply dyed in sin. There may be also a figure in it of their pride and vainglory, all of which had to come under death. And the hyssop speaks of that lowly self-judgment — that humility and contrition of heart — to which God could draw near in blessing. The whole scene looks on to the establishment of *new* covenant conditions. Those were the conditions ever present to the mind of God, and cherished in His heart, even while formally and publicly inaugurating a dispensation of law which tested man in the flesh, and proved him to be what he was — an utter moral ruin.

It was on the ground of these striking typical representations of Christ and His death that "Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up; and they saw the God of Israel". It seems to speak of that blessed day when "they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them" (Jeremiah 31: 34).

The "feet" of the God of Israel are spoken of, and "his hand". His feet would, I think, clearly suggest His movements in grace — His coming out to men to make Himself known. Under His feet is seen "as it were work of transparent sapphire, and as it were the form (or body) of heaven for clearness". Scripture seems to connect sapphire with divine glory shining out in a Man. "The likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it" (Ezekiel 1: 26). The work of transparent sapphire under the feet of the God of Israel would speak, I think, of a path in which divine glory was revealed in a

Man. We see this work of transparent sapphire in the Gospels. It is there we see the feet of the God of Israel — every one of His steps speaking of infinite grace as He moved on in a path where all brought to view the divine glory in a Man. As we look at Him we see the very “body of heaven” — the very substance of heaven was there. He came down from heaven, He was ever in heaven, and He brought the light of all that was heavenly here. The vision of Exodus 24 was anticipative of what would be seen of men when God became manifest in flesh! How wonderful to see it, and yet to remain in human life here! “They saw God, and ate and drank”. The anticipation falls short of what we see in the Gospels, for there we see the God of Israel, not only allowing men to eat and drink in His presence, but eating and drinking with them! He ate and drank with disciples, with publicans, with Pharisees, with sinners! Yes, it was Jehovah — the God of Israel — who did so! And not only was this so in the days of His flesh, but Peter could speak of “us, who have eaten and drunk with him after he arose from among the dead” (Acts 10: 41).

“On the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand”. Men were near to Him, and He laid not His hand in judgment on them! Blessed grace, indeed, but *we* have seen surpassing grace! We have seen Him lay His hand on a leper and cleanse him, on a fevered woman and heal her, on a long-bound woman and loose her from her infirmity, on a dead maiden and bring her to life, on the bier of the widow’s son and raise him, and how many others! That is the God of Israel. How blessed to be in new covenant conditions, and to be able to see His glory without a veil! He says of Israel, “They shall all know me”. They will know their God when they see Him in Jesus, and see the wondrous movements of His feet and His hands as they are portrayed in the Gospels. He will one day show them His hands and His feet, and they will recognize adoringly that those hands and feet not only moved in the unwearied ministry of grace through a world of need and woe, but that they were nailed to the cross when He was wounded for their transgressions and bruised for their iniquities. They will then see the God of Israel. In the meantime we see Him, and can sing of

“Our God whom we have known,
Well known in Jesus’ love”. (72:1)

We see here a beautiful and touching anticipation of the revelation of God, and of the fact that He would have men to be peacefully at rest in His presence. Indeed He

“Rests in the blessing of His own,
Before Himself above”. (72:1)

God has come out to make Himself known in the glory of grace, and a reconciled universe is the answer to that revelation, and of this the tabernacle is a type. We see there a figurative representation of things in the heavens, and a wondrous picture of the vast scene of God's accomplished glory in Christ. The way that God has revealed Himself, and the perfect answer to the glory of God as revealed in Jesus, is seen figuratively in the tabernacle.

EXODUS 25

Exodus 25:1-9

It has been said that this is the most important chapter in the Pentateuch, and I think its contents justify the statement.

In Exodus 15: 2 Moses and the children of Israel sang of Jehovah, "This is my God, and I will glorify him (or, make him a dwelling)". The two readings are not inconsistent with each other, for God is glorified in His people making Him a dwelling. Redemption, and the ways of God in grace, bringing His people to Himself and establishing covenant relations, are all in view of this. Jehovah looks now for energetic movements of affection towards Himself on the part of His people. "A heave-offering" (Exodus 25: 2) suggests this. A "wave-offering" is a movement of affection God-ward, but a "heave-offering" is an energetic movement. It suggests that His people have grown up in strength of heart God-ward.

To take up the teaching of this chapter requires spiritual affections to be in energy. All the material for the tabernacle was to be furnished as the fruit of promptings of heart; all was to come, as it were, out of the affections of the people. That is a simple thing to see, but most important. Does it not say plainly that the whole vast scene of God's glory in Christ is to be made good through active affections? Everything that will go to make up the system of glory is being formed in the affections of saints now, so that each one may bring his bit of divine wealth and beauty to contribute to the perfection and glory of the whole.

A people furnished with divine wealth can bring a heave-offering. The giving has all been on God's part up to chapter 18, but as brought to God, and brought under divine teaching, the people are enriched so that they have precious things to bring to God. What has become precious substance in the affections of saints is suited material for the sanctuary. It has to be spiritually fashioned so as to fill its appointed place in the divine system, and all put together in blessed unity to form God's dwelling. It ought to be an exercise with us to have something that will do to form part of the true tabernacle.

The list of things which make up the "heave-offering" begins with "gold" and ends with "stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breast-plate". God has been pleased in His wisdom to use these symbols in communicating His mind to us, and it is our wisdom to apply ourselves to the understanding of them. It has been said that the language of symbols is as definite as any other. God

has been pleased to speak in this language, and it is for us to learn in much dependence and sober exercise the language in which He speaks.

There is, no doubt, a moral order in the way these things are presented. I would suggest that "gold, and silver, and copper" speak of different ways in which the knowledge of *God* comes to us in Christ. *Gold* is the most precious metal of which Scripture takes account, and it fittingly represents what is wholly divine. *Silver*, being given as atonement-money (Exodus 30: 11 - 16), would typify the grace and faithfulness of God as known in redemption. While *copper* seems to speak of the unsparing judgment of evil (Numbers 16: 36 - 40), and as covering the altar there may be also in it the thought of ability to endure testing of the most severe nature. (cf. Revelation 1: 15).

Then the seven things which follow — "Blue, and purple, and scarlet, and byssus, and goats' hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins" — are, I think, typical of the moral and official glories of Christ — God's anointed *Man*. "Blue" speaks of what He is as the heavenly One — the One "out of heaven", and "the Son of man who is in heaven". He is the One who is to have supremacy, and to be invested with official glory in God's system. "Purple" suggests His royal character and glory, His imperial supremacy, "King of kings and Lord of lords". "Scarlet" would set forth the true glory of man as seen in Christ, in contrast to all the vain-glory which marks man in the flesh; and which will appear full-blown in the beast and the clothing of the great harlot (Revelation 17). "Byssus" — fine Egyptian cotton — seems to speak of the even texture of a life where everything is in perfect adjustment God-ward and man-ward, and that in the minutest detail. This is righteousness in Man, seen in perfection in the Righteous One. The fineness of the fabric is its prominent characteristic. "Goats' hair" speaks of holy separation. We read of prophets, "neither shall they wear a hairy mantle to deceive" (Zechariah 13: 4). There had been with them a pretence to separation, an attempt to pass off as being more holy than they were. But in the Lord Jesus there was true separation to God.

"Rams' skins dyed red" would indicate something of a very distinctive character, such as His disciples took knowledge of when they "remembered that it is written, The zeal of thy house devours me" (John 2: 13 - 17). An intensity of devotedness to the will and glory of God, which found indeed its full expression when He went into death. "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father has commanded me, thus I do. Rise up, let us go hence" (John 14: 31). He went from the supper table to the garden and the cross, that His devotedness might be seen in all its intensity, and marked, as it were, in an indelible character.

"Badgers' skins" — the exterior covering of the tabernacle — would suggest, I think, the ability to resist every approach of evil, to withstand every temptation, contradiction, pressure, and persecution. Satan tempted Him, men sought to catch Him in His words, sinners contradicted, but every approach and attack was met with divine vigilance and ability to repel and overcome it.

It is good to meditate on these significant figures. We shall miss great spiritual wealth if we do not pay attention to them, and seek to learn by the Spirit their divine import. These seven things put together give us a wonderful setting forth, as we have said, of the moral character and official glory of Christ.

Then in the "acacia-wood" we have a figure of that holy humanity in which Jesus Christ came in flesh. It is called in the Septuagint Version "incorruptible wood". The moral qualities that were seen in perfection in the Lord Jesus, and the official glories with which He is invested and in which He will soon be publicly manifested, are such as could only be found attached to holy Manhood. The figure of a tree suggests what He was as growing up here; it is used of Him in different forms: "a tender sapling", "a root out of dry ground", "the Branch". But it is an entirely new kind of humanity, seen in One who did no sin, and who knew no sin, and in whom was no sin. The "acacia-wood" may also, as seen in the boards of the tabernacle, set forth what the saints are as born of incorruptible seed, and as formed in the moral qualities of the new man. There is that in them which corresponds morally with Christ, so that John can say, "which thing is true in him and in you".

Then we come to types of the Spirit. "Oil for the light". In relation to the divine system the only Source of light is the Holy Spirit. Christendom is full of human substitutes for the Holy Spirit — trained intellect, impressive ritual, and much even amongst believers that is really an attempt to illustrate or explain truth so that the natural mind may be able to take it in. But "oil for the light" is absolutely essential. If saints do not give place to the Spirit they will not have divine light. We need to realize more the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Lord when here prepared a vessel for the Spirit; then He died to accomplish redemption, and went as a risen and glorified Man to the right hand of God in order that the Spirit might be given at Pentecost to fill the prepared vessel. The Spirit is here to maintain the ministry of Christ through the night of His rejection, and no other source of light has any spiritual value.

"Spices for the anointing oil". The priests and the whole tabernacle were to be anointed. The whole divine system and its service has to come under the anointing of "the Spirit all pervading". Everything that comes under the Headship of Christ shares in His anointing, and what we find here is that it is a fragrant anointing. Psalm 45: 8 gives the spices of the anointing: "Myrrh and

aloes, cassia, are all thy garments"; everything is fragrant. Where the anointing is there must be the fragrance, for the "spices" are blended in it. Think how fragrant Christ was! But every grace that was fragrant in Christ is really blended in His Spirit, so that it may become characteristic of the priesthood, and of the whole divine system which is "the true tabernacle". One may say, "I know I have the Spirit", but what about the "spices"? Is there a fragrance about us that cannot be hid? Are the precious graces of Christ yielding their sweet perfume in us?

"And for the incense of fragrant drugs". The spices in the anointing oil speak of the graces of Christ whose fragrance can be perceived by the saints with whom we come in contact, but the "incense" is what is expressed of the Spirit of Christ God-ward, and for God's delight only. Out-breathings of desire, and of holy and intelligent exercise, which answer to God's thoughts and purposes of love — prayers which have a true sanctuary character, and which go up to God in the fragrance of the Spirit of Christ.

Lastly, the "onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate" bring the saints before us according to the way in which they are sustained by Christ as Priest, and carried on His heart before God. The saints may be viewed as of divine generation — all alike children in the family of God — or they may be viewed in the diversity which marks them according to divine sovereignty. The stones in the breastplate represent them in the latter character. Each stone is diverse from the others; each carries a different ray of the glory and beauty of Christ. Peter is not like John, and John is not like Matthew; each has his own colour and beauty as derived from Christ, but all are held together in the breastplate in the unity of the testimony. Each saint is ever on the heart of Christ before God in accord with divine thoughts, and the object of His priestly service is that we should be sustained in the blessedness of those thoughts.

God has given us this wonderful summary of all the elements which go to make up the divine system as an introduction to what He would bring before us as to the tabernacle, which is a type of that system. God would have His people enriched, through grace, with the varied apprehensions of Himself and of Christ and of the Spirit that are here suggested. Apprehensions, too, of what the saints are called to be; their places in the divine system; and how they are sustained therein. He would have it all to take form in the affections of His saints so that it might become material in our souls for the true tabernacle. It is thus that His people are able to make Him a sanctuary. It is all to be constructed of spiritual material — the knowledge of God in Christ, and of all that Christ is as Head, learned in the light of the Spirit's ministry, and of

all that the saints are as having come under the anointing, and as reflecting in many-coloured diversity the glory of Christ, and sustained ever by His priestly grace. How much energy in the affections is needed to become possessed of these things so as to be able to bring them as a heave-offering!

The contribution of each one was needed, and all had to be brought together. There was to be no independency, no breach of unity; each individual contribution had to find its place in relation to the whole. The tabernacle was one united whole, and all had eventually to come under the hand of Moses to be put together. The material had first to come from the affections of a devoted people, enriched through grace with that which had value before God, and which was suitable to His dwelling. Then it had to be constructed in the power of the Spirit, answering to spiritual formation. And finally it had to be put together "as Jehovah had commanded Moses".

THE ARK AND THE MERCY-SEAT

Exodus 25:10-22

We have seen in type all the elements that make up the divine system in the opening verses of this chapter. The revelation of God, the moral and official glories of Christ, different aspects of the Spirit, and lastly the saints as borne upon the heart of Christ the heavenly Priest.

We come now to the consideration of them in detail and the first thing to be described is the ark. God begins with this very distinctive type of the One in whom He has secured everything for Himself, and who has sustained His glory in every way, and by whom He will bring to pass His will in the reconciled universe. He would have that Person to be known and enshrined in our affections. Paul's prayer was that the saints might be strengthened with power by the Father's Spirit in the inner man, "that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts" (Ephesians 3: 16, 17). He would secure a place for the Ark in our affections.

No type of Christ in Scripture is more wonderful than the ark, and in this chapter it is seen as "the ark of the testimony". That is a character of the ark peculiar to the wilderness; it is never spoken of as "the ark of the testimony" after the crossing of Jordan. Testimony is not needed in the sphere of resurrection or in heaven, for there is no evil or darkness there. (In Revelation 11: 19 it should read "the ark of his covenant"). Testimony is what comes into witness for God in a scene of darkness and contrariety, and every element of that witness is embodied in Christ, so that there is no true testimony except as He is held in our affections.

It is well to remember that in normal conditions the ark had its place in the holiest, and could only be contemplated there. I do not think that we could rightly understand what is presented in Exodus 25 except in the light of the holiest. Entering into the holiest is not a privilege reserved for very advanced saints; Scripture rather puts it as open to all who have remission of sins. (See Hebrews 10: 14 - 22). If you have remission of sins in the witness of the Spirit you have the freedom of the holiest. Now the question is, Have you a true heart? Do you really love the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, you will delight to approach in full assurance of faith, sprinkled as to your heart from a wicked conscience, and washed as to your body with pure water, to contemplate all that Christ is as the Ark of the testimony and the Ark of the covenant.

"The Ark of the covenant" is Christ as the One in whom the love of God is made known, and the perfect answer to that love in a Man. Everything that

gives character to the covenant is set forth in Him. "The love of God, which is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8: 39) suggests to my mind the Ark of the covenant. Christ Jesus is the One in whom is perfectly set forth the disposition and thoughts of God man-ward. But then we cherish Him, too, as the One in whom all the suited conditions on man's side are secured also. Man is in the presence of the holy love of God in perfect response to it without a cloud or a trace of distance. And nothing can separate God's elect from that. It is eternally secured in Christ as the Ark of the covenant.

"The ark of Jehovah" is Christ as the One in whom all the rights of Jehovah are maintained. It is at the Jordan that this title comes in: "the ark of Jehovah, the Lord of all the earth" (Joshua 3: 13). He asserts His title to everything, and maintains it in power. It was the far-reaching power of "the ark of Jehovah" that caused the waters of Jordan to stand "in a heap, very far". It was "the ark of Jehovah" that compassed Jericho and brought down its walls. And it was before "the ark of Jehovah" that Dagon fell on his face. Power completely victorious over all the strength of death and the enemy is seen in the ark under this title.

In the time of Eli they tried to use the ark to secure victory over the Philistines when their own moral condition was not at all in keeping with it, but God would not allow this to succeed. They thought they could repeat the triumph of Jericho, but the attempt only ended in disaster; the ark of God was taken. "The ark of God" is a title much used in days when God had not His true place in Israel. Its being taken by the Philistines was the departure of glory from Israel. Its being brought back to Bethshemesh by *the kine*, and afterwards to the city of David by *the king*, strikingly pictures how all that is due to God has been maintained in the face of His public dishonour here. Christ has restored that which He took not away. He has brought it back in a path of suffering love, but of complete devotedness, which ended in the offering up of Himself. In a coming day as the true Solomon He will bring it all to its proper and public honour. In the meantime the place of the ark in the house of Abinadab on the hill, and in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite, and "in the midst of the tent that David had spread for it", suggests different aspects in which Christ is cherished and honoured before the day of His public recognition as Centre and Head of all things in the dispensation of the fulness of times.

In the wilderness the ark went before the people to search out a resting-place for them. But in moving forward there is always sure to be conflict. Hence, when the ark set forward, Moses said, "Rise up, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thy face". But when the ark rested there was restful enjoyment for the time of the presence

of Jehovah, so Moses said, "Return, Jehovah, unto the myriads of the thousands of Israel" (Numbers 10: 33 - 36). If the two and a half tribes had really been identified in their affections with the ark they would not have wanted to stop on the wrong side of Jordan when the ark went over.

The ark was to be made of acacia-wood. This speaks of a holy and incorruptible humanity brought in by the power of the Holy Ghost, and in which everything was suitable for the setting forth of the glory of God in a Man. There is clearly a difference between the acacia-wood, and the pure gold with which it was covered. The acacia-wood sets forth the kind of *Man* that Christ was as begotten in the virgin of the Holy Ghost. "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and power of the Highest overshadow thee, wherefore the holy thing also which shall be born shall be called Son of God" (Luke 1: 35). There was nothing in Him but what was suitable for the Spirit of God to come into contact with. Everything inwardly and outwardly was of such a character that the Holy Spirit of God could descend upon Him and abide on Him. But then this was in view of all that *God* was being expressed in a Man, and this is the gold. The acacia-wood and the gold came into most intimate contact in the type, though clearly distinguishable one from the other, and we see what answers to both in Christ — perfection in Manhood, and the setting forth of all that God is in a Man.

"A border of gold" is on the ark, the table, and the golden altar. It indicates something which applies in a distinctive way to these three types. *The ark* is that of the testimony, *the table* speaks of an order and administration in which the people of God are maintained before Him in accord with the testimony, and the *golden altar* teaches us that all is sustained by intercession — by the activity of dependent affections. The "border of gold" — a double border in the case of the table — is in each case "round about". It seems to intimate that the apprehension of Christ in each type is to be held in the soul as surrounded — one might say, guarded — by a distinct sense of the divine glory of His Person. This is essential to any right thought of the testimony or the covenant, and it is essential to all priestly intercession, and the type would suggest that it is doubly essential, if one may say so, to any true communion of saints in accord with divine order and administration. This will come before us, if God will, when we consider the table.

Then the "rings" and the "staves" — whether on the ark or the other things — tell us plainly that all was intended to be carried. Everything that is of God, every divine thought that has been made good in Christ, is to be carried in testimony through the wilderness. This is an important part of Levitical service, and it has to be carried out under priestly direction. It is the privilege of all

who have the Spirit to be Kohathites, and to bear the most holy vessels, but how far we are spiritually competent to take up this service is another matter. "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of Jehovah" (Isaiah 52: 11), is a very important word in this connection.

No one is debarred from being a Kohathite if he has desire and affection to take up this service. But only sanctified persons can take charge of the ark. The men of Kirjath-Jearim had a sense of what was due to the ark when they hallowed Abinadab's son Eleazar to keep it (1 Samuel 7: 1). I do not think that Uzzah was a hallowed person; his touching the ark was not a hallowed touch, so "he died by the ark of God" (2 Samuel 6: 7). Indeed, putting the ark on "a new cart" was not at all "after the due order"; such an expedient might be allowed in Philistines, but not in David. The religious world uses many "new carts", but woe betide us if we depart from "the due order".

When the ark was brought into the temple the staves seem to have been partly removed to indicate that its journeyings were over, and it was now in rest. But "the ends of the staves were seen from the holy place before the oracle" (1 Kings 8: 8). Every divine thought will be brought to fruition and rest as manifested in glory, but it will never be forgotten amid the holy splendour of the kingdom that all was once carried in testimony through a scene of difficulty. It will never be forgotten that saints have carried the ark in testimony for two thousand years before it was brought to the place of its rest. There will be no burden-bearing then; so that we find each family of the Levites taking its part in the service of song. But even in the wilderness the ark was not always being carried. From time to time it sought out a resting-place for the people. That answers to the coming together in assembly, where it may be realized that:

"The Spirit's power
Has ope'd the heavenly door,
Has brought us to that favoured hour
When toil shall all be o'er". (74:5)

"And thou ... shalt put in the ark the testimony that I shall give thee". In chapters 19 and 24 the law is spoken of as the covenant, and morally the covenant comes before the testimony. That is, we must know the covenant before we can be really identified with the testimony. The covenant is private rather than public; it is the bond between God and His people, the terms proposed by Him and definitely accepted by them as committed to Him in affection. If we are not in "the bond of the covenant", how could we be identified with the testimony? The testimony is the public witness on God's

part. As written with His finger on "the two tables of testimony, tables of stone" (Exodus 31: 18), it signifies that His will is to prevail universally. But this was to be brought about by the introduction of One who could say, "Behold, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, To do thy good pleasure, my God, is my delight, and thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40: 7, 8).

The will of God — His good pleasure — has come into the world as having its place in the heart of Christ,

and just as everything in the tabernacle centred in the ark, and, one might say, took character from it, so Christ has come in to be the Head and Centre of God's moral universe, and to give character to everything that stands in relation to Him. At the present moment God is giving testimony to His good pleasure by setting forth Christ as the One who came to do it. Hebrews 10 is a wonderful setting forth of the will of God as brought in and established by Christ.

Christ is the Ark of the testimony. The will of God has come into the world in a way of supreme blessing for man. Every man may now be blessed in Christ according to the good pleasure of God without any compromise of what is due to God. To believe in Christ is to accept His Headship, and to be blessed in Him according to the wealth of God's good pleasure. But if the divine testimony is refused or disregarded, judgment is inevitable, for God's will must prevail. If man's lawless will is not judged and set aside in repentance, in presence of all the blessedness of God's will made known in Christ, it must go out as expelled from His presence in judgment. It is utterly unfit to have a place with Him; it cannot be part of the reconciled universe.

How blessed to get an apprehension of Christ as the Ark of the testimony! To see Him as the One who not only delighted to do God's will personally, but as great enough to give effect to God's pleasure in relation to men, and indeed to all things. It is God's pleasure that men should be blessed through believing in Him who has come to give effect to His will in a scene of lawlessness. Those who believe on Him receive His Spirit, and are thus brought into moral accord with Him. They then delight to contemplate Christ as the Ark of the testimony — to see in Him the expression of God's blessed will, and to know that He will make that will the law of the universe. The will of God is known in Christ as a will to bless man infinitely, so that, though fallen and lost through sin, he may know God as One who willed his blessing, and who sent forth One who came in obedience and love to establish that will. Christ is the great Testimony of what is in the will of God for man, and indeed for the universe. God has made Him the Head of every man, the Head of all principality and authority, the

Head over all things. Everything must take character from Christ; this is God's great testimony in His universe.

Christ coming to do the will of God, and with God's law in His heart, was with a view to God being known as sovereign in mercy. The Ark of the testimony sustains the Mercy-seat, and from above the Mercy-seat God speaks with the Mediator, and through Him to His people.

"Thou shalt make a mercy-seat of pure gold". God sets forth in the Mercy-seat what is altogether of Himself, hence it is of "pure gold". It supposes utter and hopeless ruin on man's side, so that nothing but *mercy* will meet the case; everything must stand in mercy. It is God coming out according to what He is in Himself when His creature has become fallen and lost. It is the setting forth of God's righteousness in the way of mercy, but it is founded on the fact that His will has been established in Christ. The Ark supports the Mercy-seat.

It is through death that Christ has become the Mercy-seat; the blood is on the gold. Man being what he is, and God being what He is, death was a necessity if God's rights in mercy were to be established. "The redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood, for the shewing forth of his righteousness in the present time, so that he should be just, and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus" (Romans 3: 24 - 26).

Nothing is more wonderful than that God should assert His sovereign rights in the way of mercy and grace. The Mercy-seat was sustained and measured by the Ark of the testimony. God has brought in One by whom His will has been done, and by whom His pleasure will be established in the whole universe. It is in Him that God sets forth His righteousness in the way of mercy. Christ coming to do the will of God involved the removal of man after the flesh, and the glorifying of God as to all that that man was, and had done, and this becomes the support of the Mercy-seat.

It was a wonderful moment when God had Christ here under His eye. We can understand the heavenly host saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men". The Ark was there, and everything was secured for God and man; the sure pledge of everything was there; an unshakable pillar for the support of God's moral universe. But all this involved His death; we can only read the Gospels rightly in the light of His death. The Epistles really prepare us for the Gospels, for they show us — Romans for example — how every question that was connected with our guilt and state has been met, and that sets us free to come to the Gospels and contemplate that wonderful Person who is the Ark of the covenant and the Ark of the testimony. Then in the light of the Epistles and the Gospels we can take up the

Old Testament Scriptures and see how “the things concerning himself” are everywhere and presented with most instructive detail, and in moral connections that add greatly to our apprehensions of Christ.

Then the two cherubim of gold were to be made “out of the mercy-seat ... at the two ends thereof”. The only place where cherubim had appeared before was as guarding the way to the tree of life (Genesis 3). Man, as fallen, could not be allowed access to the tree of life to perpetuate a sinful life upon the earth. But the cherubim are seen here in a very different character. In Genesis 3 they were found with “the flame of the flashing *sword*”, but what is made prominent here is their outstretched *wings* over the mercy-seat. I think the cherubim are representative of what must ever be attendant on God’s throne; they enforce in a judicial way what is morally suitable to all the attributes of God. “Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of thy throne”. The seraphim seem to be more identified with the divine nature; they ascribe holiness to God, and fly with the swiftness of divine love (Isaiah 6). But when God comes out as revealed in Christ according to what He is in His nature, it is seen that all His attributes are in perfect accord with mercy. His throne can take publicly the character of a Mercy-seat, and be glorified in doing so. The cherubim were to be made “out of the mercy-seat”, and they were to cover it over with their wings. In Christ and through His death all God’s attributes are seen to be in accord with what is in His heart. God’s rights in mercy are secured and protected by all His attributes. As we sing:

“The glories that compose thy Name
All stand engaged to make us blest”. (330:1)

His righteousness, and all that is concerned in His moral government of the universe, are in harmony with His sovereign mercy. How could this be, save through the death of Christ? We can understand it now, but it is divinely wonderful, and it claims adoration and praise from every heart that perceives it.

“Toward the mercy-seat shall the faces of the cherubim be turned”. They were not to look outward to take account, as it were, of man’s state or guilt, but inward and downward on that “pure gold” which ever carried, as we know, the blood sprinkled there on the day of atonement. The righteousness of God is not at the present moment taking account of men’s sins and their state for judgment, but is taking account of the infinite value of the blood of Christ, so that men universally are in God’s view from the standpoint of Christ and His death. Justification, forgiveness, reconciliation, are God’s thoughts — what He has in His heart — for all men. People do not believe it, but it is so. God would

be known by all men as having come out in Christ, and as having secured His rights in mercy through the death of Christ. He is a Saviour God; it is His glory to be so.

Then it is "from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony", that God speaks. All that He has to say to men at the present time is from thence, whether it be to His people or to men universally. The Mediator is introduced also. "There will I meet with thee, and will speak with thee". God is speaking to men by Christ, and all that He says is in keeping with what Christ is as the Ark and the Mercy-seat. It is the speaking out of all that God is in supreme and infinite grace. And it can be spoken because the testimony is in the Ark. God's will has been done, His glory and all that was due to Him maintained even as to sin, the man that was an offence to Him removed. The Ark with the testimony in it is the support of the Mercy-seat, and the wings of the cherubim cover it.

"God's righteousness with glory bright,
Which with its radiance fills that sphere,
E'en Christ, of God the power and light,
Our title is that light to share.

O mind divine, so must it be
That glory all belongs to God:
O love divine, that did decree
We should be part, through Jesus' blood.

O keep us, love divine, near Thee,
That we our nothingness may know,
And ever to Thy glory be
Walking in faith while here below". (88:4)

THE TABLE OF SHEW-BREAD

Exodus 25:23-30

In apprehending the spiritual realities of which the tabernacle is a figurative representation, we have to entertain first the thought of the ark and the mercy-seat. They set forth what is made known of God in Christ. The next thing presented is the table; it speaks of Christ as the One who sustains before God that which is for His pleasure. It thus suggests an answer for God's delight to the blessed revelation in the ark and the mercy-seat. "Thou shalt set upon the table shew-bread (literally "bread of the presence") before me continually". We know from another scripture that the cakes of shew-bread were twelve in number, corresponding to the twelve tribes. But we do not get the number of the cakes in Exodus, which seems to indicate that the thought of administration is not prominent here, but rather what is before God for His pleasure. The bread represents Christ as identified with the people of God, and seen in them; it speaks of the saints viewed as having Christ as their life — for the cakes were to be of "fine wheaten flour" — and as having been subject to the action of fire.

The set feasts in Leviticus 23 are repeatedly spoken of as "an everlasting statute", and so are the dressing of the lamps, and the eating of the shew-bread by Aaron and his sons. But placing the shew-bread before Jehovah is "on the part of the children of Israel: an everlasting covenant". There is in it the thought of a bond between God and His people; it seems to indicate the pleasure of God in having Christ thus before Him as identified with His people, and also their pleasure in taking up and answering to His thought.

The word "continually" suggests to me what abides under the eye of God. "And it shall be a bread of remembrance". The saints in divine order, as typified by the cakes of shew-bread, become the memorial of Christ before God. It is said that Moses "arranged the bread in order" upon the table before Jehovah, or, as it is literally, "set in order upon it the order of bread" (Exodus 40: 22, 23). The "order" is emphasized, and I think we are justified in saying that any order which is pleasing to God must be a spiritual order, and not merely outward correctness. The bread on the table does not typify what is before men, nor does it speak quite of what the saints are as set together in fellowship for the support of the testimony in a hostile scene. We shall come to that presently in other types. But here it is what the saints are as sustained by Christ, having Him as their life, and carrying His fragrance — as having frankincense upon each row (Leviticus 24: 5 - 9) — under God's eye for His pleasure. It is in keeping, if I understand it aright, with the truth as presented

in the Epistle to the Colossians — the spiritual order of the saints as under God's eye. "I am with you in spirit, rejoicing and seeing your order". What was before Paul was that the Colossian saints should hold fast "the head, from whom all the body, ministered to and united together by the joints and bands", should increase "with the increase of God". He would have the body to come into view, and a spiritual order that was in keeping with the mystery, not exactly for testimony but for the pleasure of God.

Christ is presented in Colossians as "the head of all principality and authority". The universe will be set in order for the divine pleasure under His headship, but before He is manifested in this character "He is the head of the body, the assembly". He sustains a spiritual order of things which is for the pleasure of God — the continuation of Christ here in His body for God's delight — the bread of remembrance before Him. There is no spiritual order for God's pleasure in Israel yet; there will be in another day; but in the meantime Gentile saints as sustained by Christ and holding Him as Head, are before God, having Him as their life, and having His fragrant grace upon them (Colossians 3: 12 - 17), and they are for God's delight — His elect, holy and beloved. They will soon be manifested with Christ in glory to be in universal administration — the number twelve speaks of this — but all that is in divine order, and suitable to be in administration for God, has come before His eye already in His saints.

I am speaking of the divine thought; I do not say how much or how little it has been spiritually made good in us. We see the deep exercises of the Apostle as to this. But God puts it before us as His thought in regard to us that we may be exercised about it. If Paul and Epaphras agonized for the saints it might be well if we, too, laboured fervently in prayer that we and all saints might stand perfect and complete in all that is in God's will for us.

The loaves on the "pure table" suggest that it is God's will that all His people should be before Him in spiritual order as a remembrance of Christ. This order and memorial would come out very much in the way we walk together, and in all our mutual relations as saints. I am not thinking, for the moment, of testimony, but of those holy bonds and relations in the divine nature, and that mutual flow of nourishment, encouragement, increase, and knitting together which are delightful to God as developing before Him the present fruit of the Headship of Christ in the saints as His body. It is this side of things which I believe to be suggested in the table and "the bread of the presence". It is a great thing when exercise is found with saints as to what is before God for His pleasure. "Shew-bread before me continually". The consideration of this would give an entirely different character to the exercises of many of us.

The table is typical of Christ as the One who can sustain His saints in a divine and spiritual order for the pleasure of God. But for this to be brought about in reality He must be held as Head. I think the way that Paul enlarges upon the greatness and glory of Christ in Colossians 1 very much answers to the "border of gold round about" the table. He would have us to know the divine glory of the Head. Then, again, it is said, "Thou shalt make for it a margin of a handbreadth round about". The word here translated "margin" is found in Psalm 18: 45 and Micah 7: 17, where the marginal reading is in each case "fortified places". It suggests a necessity for the defence and safeguarding of all that the "pure table" represents. Paul says, "To the end that we may present every man perfect in Christ. Whereunto also I toil, combating according to his working, which works in me in power. For I would have you know what combat I have for you ... to the end that their hearts may be encouraged, being united together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the full knowledge of the mystery of God; in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. And I say this to the end that no one may delude you by persuasive speech See that there be no one who shall lead you away as a prey through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the teaching of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ". All this seems to me to be in keeping with the thought suggested by the "margin" or "fortified place" round about the table. And then he adds what may answer to the "border of gold for the margin thereof round about" when he says, "For in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and authority".

In the spiritual order which Christ sustains for the pleasure of God, everything is really of Himself. "Christ is everything and in all". If we have before us that there is such an order, it becomes a deep exercise that nothing should be admitted that is contrary to it. Hence the combating of Paul and Epaphras for the Colossians. The enemy has ever sought, and ever will seek, to bring in that which would mar the spiritual order by the introduction of elements which are not according to Christ, so as to spoil God's pleasure in His saints. If the will and wisdom of man are kept out, and nothing allowed but what is of Christ, the saints as holding the Head would be for God's pleasure; they would be sustained in holy and divine order.

God would teach us by the "pure table" the ability of Christ as Head to sustain the saints in a spiritual order for His pleasure. His body, deriving from Him, carries His graces for God's pleasure. To hold the Head is an exercise of affection. We do not become pleasurable to God by effort, but by holding Christ as Head in reverence and affection. It is as much the mind of God that

we should be before Him for His pleasure in a spiritual order as that we should be justified. The more we see this, and perceive the greatness and divine glory of Christ who can sustain His saints in such an order, the more jealously shall we watch against every intrusion of what is unholy and of man's mind. In that which Christ sustains in all the grace of Headship there is nothing but what is of Himself. "Wherein there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is everything and in all" (Colossians 3: 11).

It is the aspect of the table God-ward that is the subject in Exodus. It has not only the shew-bread, but "the dishes thereof, and cups thereof, and goblets thereof, and bowls thereof, with which to pour out: of pure gold shalt thou make them". These things speak of the saints as holy vessels for the outpouring before God of joy and praise, everything in His service being by the Spirit of God and thus answering to "pure gold", and all sustained by Christ. All is seen in the type according to the purity and perfection of the divine thought, that we may know the true character of what is pleasurable to God. To answer to it spiritually requires the taking up of the exercises of Colossians 3: 5 - 15.

We learn from Leviticus 24 that the cakes of shew-bread were twelve in number. This suggests an administrative thought. It intimates that what is pleasurable *to God* will be set in administration *for God*. The holy city in Revelation 21 answers perfectly to measurement by the "golden reed"; it comes up to every requirement of divine pleasure; and hence it can become the great centre of divine administration. God intends to order and benefit the universe by setting forth all that is of Himself in His saints. The blessed knowledge of God as known in the Ark and Mercy-seat will be administered in the universe through the twelve gates of the holy city. The out-goings of the city are towards "the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel", for their names are inscribed at the gates thereof. And on earth the twelve tribes will have an administrative place towards the nations. Divine order will appear in the universe where lawlessness has been; it will be seen in the holy and heavenly city, and it will be seen on earth in the twelve tribes, and its influence will extend to all that comes into reconciliation. All will be sustained by Christ as Head, for God's "good pleasure which he purposed in himself for the administration of the fulness of times" is "to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth".

Israel will then have the Spirit of Christ, and as having the law written in their hearts they will be in divine order and administration. God will be able to say of them, "This people have I formed for myself" — that would answer to the

“shew-bread before me” — then “they shall shew forth my praise” would answer to the administrative place in which He will set them.

The sabbath day prefigures the rest of God when all this will come to fruition. “Every Sabbath day he shall arrange it before Jehovah continually”. It is striking that the only two priestly activities specially connected with the Sabbath day are the offering of “the burnt-offering of the sabbath” with its meat-offering and drink-offering (Numbers 28: 9, 10), and the arranging and eating of the shew-bread. One gives the ground on which the rest of God will be brought in, and the other is typical of the divine order in which Israel will be sustained before God for His pleasure, and in administration for Him.

The table sets forth Christ, I believe, in His ability to sustain His saints in an order of things which is of Himself, and which is, in the first place, pleasurable to God, and which can then be in administration for God. Before the day when all this will have its answer in Israel, it has an answer spiritually in saints of the assembly as they hold Christ as Head. One owns with sorrow the feebleness and departure which are evidenced on all hands. But strength and recovery are brought about by a return to the divine thought. The revival of the truth of the Headship of Christ is the distinctive feature of God’s present ways with His saints, and as we hold Him as Head, the different features suggested as sustained by the table — the bread of the presence, the vessels for out-pouring before God, and the divine administration — will assuredly be in evidence.

At the end of each week the shew-bread became the food of Aaron and his sons. What is before God for His pleasure becomes food for the priesthood. All that Christ is as identified with His saints, and as giving character to them for God’s pleasure, is to be fed upon. The saints viewed as the priesthood are privileged to feed upon it — to appropriate what Christ is, not only in what He is personally, but in what He is as in relation to those “reconciled in the body of his flesh through death”, and whom He presents “holy and unblameable and irreproachable before” the Fulness of the Godhead. God would have us to be nourished and sustained by all that which was so perfectly to His delight as seen in Christ personally, but which is now to His delight as seen in His elect saints, holy and beloved, the continuation of Christ as His body here. If we feed on this we shall understand the mystery, and know that His body is here, which is the assembly.

We may see in 1 Corinthians 10 how Paul passes from the thought of “the body of the Christ” — referring to Christ personally — to the thought of the saints being “one loaf, one body; for we all partake of that one loaf”. The shew-bread is Christ in His *continuing* character. The word “continually” is to

be noted, and it is "on the part of the children of Israel". It is that which is carried on "continually" here on the part of the saints for God's pleasure. It is good to feed on this in a holy place — to be nourished and strengthened by the appropriation of it into one's moral being.

It is the privilege of the priests to feed on Christ in many different characters — as the meat-offering, as the sin-offering, as the breast and shoulder of the peace-offering, as the consecration offering — but the last to be presented in Leviticus is feeding on Him as the shew-bread. It involves for us, if we are able to take it up, the knowledge of the mystery, and personal identification with it, so that we come out here as strengthened for the expression of Christ under the eye of God. Just as we are built up and strengthened physically by what we feed on, so are we built up and strengthened spiritually by what is given to us as priestly food, so that we may take character from it.

But this is not found in Exodus. It is the table as sustaining what is upon it, whether it be the golden vessels or the shew-bread. It is Christ as the One who sustains every vessel from which there is an out-pouring of joy and praise in God's service, and who sustains "continually" that which is a pleasure to God as the continuation of Himself in His saints.

THE CANDLESTICK

Exodus 25:31-40

The “lamp-stand of pure gold” comes next, and its use was to sustain light in the holy place through the night. It thus typifies the maintenance of light within during the time when darkness overspreads the scene around. No lamp-stand will be needed in *the day* when the Sun of righteousness has arisen; hence we read of none in Ezekiel’s temple. It is during the night of Christ’s rejection that the lamp-stand and its seven lamps fulfil their purpose.

Aaron had to light the lamps “between the two evenings” (Exodus 30: 8), and they burned “from evening to morning” (Leviticus 24: 3). I take it that the lamp-stand and its lamps speak of Christ as sustaining light for His saints “continually” by the ministry of Himself in the power of the Holy Ghost. For it is to be noted that the lamps were to shine out before the lamp-stand (Exodus 25: 37), and “the seven lamps shall give light over against the lamp-stand” (Numbers 8: 2). This seems to intimate that the primary object of the lamps was to throw light on the lamp-stand itself. Then we read further in chapter 26: 35 that the lamp-stand was to be “opposite to the table”; this would seem to suggest that the saints as represented by the shew-bread on the table — are to be continually in the shining of the lamps.

The ministry of Christ by the Spirit is not sustained without much exercise. It is not as if Christ and the Spirit were acting directly without vessels; they act through human vessels, whether it be primarily the apostles and prophets, or other gifts and vessels of ministry. This brings in an element of exercise connected with what is divinely wrought, so that there may be spiritual competency to minister Christ through the way in which God has made Him known in the affections and spiritual intelligence of His servants. I think the “beaten work” speaks of this, and we may also note what is said in chapter 27: 20, “And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee olive oil, pure, *beaten*, for the light, to light the lamp continually”. The same character attaches to the oil as to the lamp-stand. While the oil clearly typifies the Spirit, it is the Spirit viewed as acting through human vessels, and therefore there must always be the element of exercise and diligence, so that what is of Christ and the Spirit may be known and preserved in purity, and the candlestick may truly answer to its description as “the pure candlestick”.

The “beaten work” was the result of patient and skilful labour — a striking contrast to the golden calf which was cast in a mould. What is idolatrous, or according to man’s mind, can be quickly and easily cast into shape, but for the shining forth of what is of Christ in the power of the Spirit there must be

“beaten work” and “beaten oil”. It suggests spiritual exercises leading to apprehensions of the preciousness of Christ which become available in ministry as light. It is only as “the unsearchable riches of the Christ” are known that they can become available as light in the holy place. We see in the apostles men who were divinely wrought, and had apprehensions and appreciations of Christ which they ministered as light amongst the saints, and this ministry of Christ is to be maintained “continually”. It was the first service and care of Aaron and his sons — the priestly family — “to light the lamp continually” (27: 20, 21).

The children of Israel had to furnish the lamp-oil. A people giving place to the Spirit, and walking in self-judgment, are spiritual, and support the light. Praying in the Holy Ghost is a good way to supply oil for the light. Many prayers are just the expression of personal needs, but it is a blessed thing to get into the line of desires which are formed in the Holy Ghost so that one prays in the Spirit for Christ’s interests, and for the ministry of Himself. That the ministry of Christ in the power of the Spirit should be maintained is the first care of the holy priesthood. The state of a carnal people, instead of ministering to the light, really hinders the light from shining. “And I, brethren, have not been able to speak to you as to spiritual, but as to fleshly; as to babes in Christ” (1 Corinthians 3: 1).

Then it is a priestly exercise to dress the lamps, and to use “the snuffers thereof, and the snuff-trays thereof, of pure gold”. The provision of such utensils shows that the lamp-stand and its lamps typify Christ as ministered by the Holy Ghost through human vessels. If it were Christ personally one need hardly say there would be no need for “snuffers”, nor if the Spirit were viewed apart from the vessels in which He dwells. But if it speaks of the ministry of Christ maintained by the Spirit as light through human vessels, one can understand that an element of responsibility comes in, and a constant need for the golden “snuffers” and “snuff-trays”. They speak of the careful removal of everything that would tend to dim the light. In 1 Corinthians Paul was using the golden snuffers to remove that which was causing the light to burn dim, but in 2 Corinthians I think we may say he was rather replenishing the lamps with oil!

The ministry of the apostles was a pure and unadulterated ministry of Christ. They had been called to know Him in a peculiar and blessed way, their knowledge of Christ was divinely wrought, and their own exercises and the way they were instructed and disciplined in view of their service all had the “beaten work” character, and it resulted in their ability to set forth Christ in ministry in the power of the Holy Ghost, so that though Christ was personally

absent He was maintained in ministry as light in the holy place. And we see what care they exercised that nothing should dim the light. "Giving no manner of offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed; but in everything commending ourselves as God's ministers, in much endurance, in afflictions ... in watchings, in fastings, in pureness, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in kindness, in the Holy Ghost, in love unfeigned, in the word of truth, in the power of God", etc. (2 Corinthians 6: 3 - 7, etc.).

Christ as known in the ministry of the apostles is the light of the holy place. The Holy Spirit came to bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever He had said to them, and He came also to be the witness of all that He is at the right hand of God. That Divine Person in whose power the apostles presented Christ in ministry is still here to glorify Christ. It should be a great exercise with us that nothing should be allowed which would hinder or grieve Him, and that Christ should be so known in the affections of His own that the ministry of Himself should be maintained in spiritual completeness — seven lamps would speak of this — and in undimmed brightness and purity. The *seven* lamps would suggest that the ministry of Christ by the Spirit comes out in its perfection through different vessels. We see this very distinctly in the apostles, and in principle it is so still.

The "base" of the lamp-stand (it is, literally, "thigh") would suggest, I think, the truth as to His Person and work which is the strength and support of everything that is contained in the ministry of Christ. Its "branches" would indicate the widespread scope of all that is presented in that ministry. The "cups" in six series of three, and in one series of four, would perhaps speak in figure of the divine and universal supply which the fulness of Christ affords, and which is made known in the ministry of Himself.

The "knobs" or "chapters" are closely connected with the "flowers". I understand that the word signifies the ornamental work at the head of a sculptured column. The only other places where it occurs are Amos 9: 1 and Zephaniah 2: 14. Amos 9: 1 speaks of that which is elevated and conspicuous in Israel being smitten, and in Zephaniah 2: 14 it is the pride and glory of Nineveh which are seen to be given over to the pelican and the bittern. The prophets thus show how the "chapters" — everything that appeared to be eminent and glorious — both in Israel and among the Gentiles will be laid low. But the Spirit of God shows us in Exodus 25 "chapters" on the lamp-stand, suggesting the dignity and eminence which attach to Christ as the One who, though cast aside as worthless by men, will yet be "the head of the corner". Everything that is rightly conspicuous, and that has true beauty and ornament,

and is suited for elevation to the supreme place, is seen in Christ, and is ministered by the Spirit in the holy place as attaching to Him.

The "flowers" suggest a corresponding thought. This word is used of the lily-blossoms on the rim of Solomon's brazen sea, and of the blossom which appeared on Aaron's rod. (Numbers 17: 8). In each of these cases its reference to Christ is as obvious as it is in the lamp-stand. There are only three other occurrences of the word. "Their *blossom* shall go up as dust; for they have rejected the law of Jehovah of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 5: 24). That is Judah and Jerusalem. "For before the harvest, when the *blossoming* is over and the flower becometh a ripening grape, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning-knives, and take away and cut down the branches" (Isaiah 18: 5). That is the end of all that may be done by the "land shadowing with wings" to restore the Jews to their own land. All human attempts to restore them will end in failure and judgment. "Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the *flower* of Lebanon languisheth" (Nahum 1: 4). These are the most fertile spots naturally. It is striking that in each case the "flower" is seen as withered to dust, or as cut off, or as languishing. But when we turn to the lamp-stand we see "flowers" of perennial beauty and freshness, for they are brought forth in the power of an endless life. The "almonds" carry our thoughts to Numbers 17, where Aaron's staff "for the house of Levi" had budded and brought forth buds, and bloomed *blossoms* (same word as "flowers" in Exodus 25) and "ripened almonds". For the dead staff thus to bring forth is a clear type of resurrection, and the lamp-stand is marked by the sign of resurrection. It is Christ as the Risen One who is set forth in it, and everything in Him is beyond the reach of death; it is unfading and eternal.

"Almond" means "watchful" or "vigilant", and is used with this signification in Jeremiah 1: 11, 12. "And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree. And Jehovah said unto me, Thou hast well seen; for I am watchful over my word to perform it". God has seen to it that His every word and promise has been substantiated in a Risen Christ. It is of interest to know that the almond-tree is the first of all trees to bud. If everything fails and comes to the dust of death in connection with man in the flesh, God has seen to it that all His thoughts and purposes have been established in Christ Risen. Everything there is glorious, incorruptible, and unfading.

Christ is the Subject of all true ministry, and He is also the Sustainer of it, so that it becomes the blessed evidence that He is alive for evermore. The gifts come from an ascended Christ, and their presence and ministry bears witness that Christ is victorious and living.

It is noticeable that no dimensions are given of the lamp-stand, but its *weight* is specified. "Of a talent of pure gold shall they make it". All true ministry of Christ must be marked by moral weight in itself and in its ministers; there can be no levity about it. "Did I then use lightness?"

It is helpful to see the different connections in which the lighting of the lamps is referred to. In Exodus 25 they throw their light on the lamp-stand itself; this is the primary thought. The Spirit is here to glorify Christ, to display every feature of His glory and beauty, and to cause it to be illumed by living light. Whenever a priest entered the holy place at night the first object to arrest and engage his attention must have been the golden lamp-stand shining in the light of its seven lamps. The Spirit's ministry makes Christ the all-glorious and attractive Object in the holy place.

Then in Exodus 26: 35 we are told the lamp-stand was to be set "opposite to the table". This would suggest that the saints, as represented by the cakes of shew-bread, are set in the shining of Christ as made known by the Spirit's ministry.

Numbers 8 gives the lighting of the lamps immediately before the cleansing of the Levites, indicating that all service must be regulated in the light of the ministry of Christ, and must take character from it.

Then in Leviticus 24 the command as to the light is repeated in another and a solemn connection. Here it precedes the account of the man — product of an unholy alliance between an Israelitish woman and an Egyptian — who blasphemed the Name. This speaks of apostasy. But even at such a time the lamp is to be kept burning. We can discern in our own day in an unmistakable manner the working and development of elements which are really apostate. But in presence of such conditions the ministry of Christ is to be maintained in its purity and spiritual power. It is the divine antidote to every evil of the last days in a corrupt profession. It is an abiding exercise for all the people of God, and for the holy priesthood, that it should be maintained. And we may note what is said in Exodus 30: 7, 8. Referring to the golden altar, it is said, "And Aaron shall burn thereon fragrant incense; every morning, when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn the incense. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps between the two evenings, he shall burn the incense — a continual incense before Jehovah throughout your generations". This speaks of continual prayer in connection with the continual light, and it indicates plainly that the ministry of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit is maintained by priestly intercession. How much Paul prayed, and how earnestly he sought the prayers of the saints! It is our privilege to keep the light burning through the activity of dependent affections.

The seven golden lamp-stands in the Revelation represent the assemblies as in responsible witness here. They show that the assemblies, as being in the light of the ministry of Christ, were set to be light-bearers here. And as such all the exercises connected with the pure lamp-stand should have had place with them — the “beaten work”, and the supply of “beaten oil”, the diligent use of the golden snuffers to remove every element that tended to dim the light, the “continual incense” of prayer. Had these exercises been maintained, the seven lamps would have retained their truly “golden” character; the assemblies would have been characterized by what was spiritual and divine; and their state and activities would have been the practical answer to that ministry of Christ which is the light of the holy place. The assemblies should have corresponded with “the pure lamp-stand” of the sanctuary. That they have not done so is made manifest in Revelation 2 and 3.

But the Lord has restored, and maintains in the sovereignty of His love, a ministry of Himself in the power of the Spirit. There are still, through His grace, priestly exercises and activities, and vessels through whom Christ is ministered. The lamps are still shedding their holy light on the pure Lamp-stand. And as we appreciate that ministry, and take up the exercises which it involves, we shall be found overcomers. The overcomer is one who rises superior to the influences which have dimmed the light, and as we do so there is that which, in its measure, shines in light-bearing character in this dark scene.

EXODUS 26

Exodus 26

In the mercy-seat sustained by the ark we have set forth the way in which God is made known as having come into the light of revelation. He has come out in the way of mercy to make Himself known, and to establish His will of blessing by Christ. In the table we see His thought to have His people before Him in purity and holy order, and set in the shining of Christ by the Spirit. Then He would have Christ to be the Light and Object of His saints all through the night of His rejection by the world. The lamp-stand, as we have seen, speaks of this.

Now in chapter 26 we come to the tabernacle in which the things spoken of in chapter 25 were to be contained. The ten curtains are spoken of as "the tabernacle", the eleven curtains of goats' hair are the "tent over the tabernacle", and the rams' skins and badgers' skins are called coverings. I believe the ten curtains — each twenty-eight cubits (seven by four) long and four cubits in breadth — represent the saints seen in spiritual completeness as those suited to cherish the great divine realities set forth in the ark, mercy-seat, table, and lamp-stand. The *tent* of goats' hair, and the two *coverings*, suggest that which is needed to preserve the *tabernacle* from defilement or injury. The *boards* are for the support of the *tabernacle*; that is, to hold up the ten curtains. They speak of the saints as marked by stability, each set up on the firm basis of two silver sockets, and able to stand up. I think Romans would give us the saints viewed as boards; Colossians and Ephesians would more answer to the ten curtains. The veil is clearly Christ personally (Hebrews 10: 20). There are no "couplings", "loops", or "clasps" in the veil; it is one fabric — holy type of the flesh of Christ.

But the curtains correspond with the veil. They represent saints viewed as having taken character from Christ — as having put on the new man. John says, "which thing is true *in him and in you*". But the order of description is different in the veil from the curtains. In the veil the "blue" comes first, indicating that the first thing as to Christ is that He is the heavenly One — the One out of heaven; but in the curtains the "twined byssus" comes first; righteousness must be the basis of all the features that mark the saints. If we are not marked by righteousness it is evident that we shall not carry the heavenly colour. The "twined byssus" speaks of the fine and even texture of a life in which all that is due to God and to man has its place. Then the "blue" comes in — what is characteristically heavenly. "Purple" signifies royalty; the saints are to reign with Christ, but it is not the reigning time yet; the royal

character comes out at the present time in the way of suffering. "If we endure we shall also reign together". "Scarlet" is the true glory of man in contrast to all that is vainglory. The "cherubim" speak of ability to discern and judge things according to God's mind. Paul told the saints at Corinth that they would judge the world and angels. It was a strange thing that such persons should carry their differences before the world's tribunal for adjustment. If saints were to judge the world, surely they could settle a petty dispute between two brothers! The "cherubim" were not in evidence as they ought to have been. But "artistic work" is needed for this feature. The saints must be "full-grown men, who, on account of habit, have their senses exercised for distinguishing both good and evil" (Hebrews 5: 14).

All these moral and official glories were seen perfectly in Christ, and as the saints come under His influence they take character from Him. Do we accept this as God's mind for us? If we do, we shall give ourselves up more unreservedly to the influence of Christ.

There will be more surrender as to things here, because we are learning the character, and dignity, and beauty of what attaches to us in our divine calling. These beautiful curtains were not seen without; they speak of what is known within rather than of what is displayed without. But it is instructive to see that the measure in length of these curtains corresponds with that of the hangings of twined byssus which formed the court. The hangings of the court represent what the saints are in the presence of men; they can be taken account of there as righteous persons. What the saints are spiritually within has its answer in what they are before men. It is a shame when it can be said of those who profess to know God, "These people can talk of wonderful things, but their lives do not correspond". Let us remember that the 280 cubits of curtains within have a corresponding 280 cubits of twined byssus without! Indeed, the fact that there are *ten* curtains intimates that all which is seen typically in the curtains has a bearing on responsibility. There is no privilege, relationship, or spiritual dignity in which divine grace sets us which is not intended to have a direct bearing on what we are as in responsibility here.

There is a difference in width between the curtains and the hangings. The curtains are *four* cubits wide, which indicates completeness; we have *four* Gospels to give us the complete presentation of Christ as come in flesh, and when the holy city comes down it "lies four-square". The saints are "complete" — "filled full" — in Christ. The *five* cubits of the hangings would perhaps suggest the weakness which ever casts the saints upon divine grace in their whole responsible course. The curtains speak of what the saints are as forming a shrine for the cherishing of all that is of God in Christ. They have a

character suited to it spiritually; but if this is so it must necessarily work out, as it were, to the outer circle, and manifest what is worthy of God in that responsible life which comes under the eye of men.

In connection with the curtains prominence is given to the thought of coupling. It is one of the chief thoughts presented in the tabernacle and the tent. There is a tendency with us all to be too individual, but we belong to a system marked by "couplings" and "loops" and "clasps of gold" and "clasps of copper" and "rings", and the true character of the tabernacle is not realized if we do not see to this in a practical way. The great thought is "that the tabernacle may be one (whole)", and the same words are used in connection with the tent. I remember a book being written on the features of the assembly that did not mention unity! Yet that is clearly a very essential feature of the assembly. When the Lord presented Himself at the golden altar, if we may so say, in John 17, His prayer was that His saints might be one.

We have to see, too, that our links even with fellow believers are really "loops of blue" and "clasps of gold". It is possible to have couplings that are neither heavenly nor divine. Persons of similar social status or with similar natural tastes may form special links, but these things are corrupting and destructive when brought into the house of God. The "loops of blue" are heavenly links; do we cultivate that kind of coupling? The "clasps of gold" are ties which subsist in the divine nature. Ephesians 4: 1 - 3 gives us the "loops of blue" and "the clasps of gold". "Using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace" shows that care and real purpose of heart are needed to keep the couplings in place. The more we consider the divine pattern as seen in the mount, the more we shall realize the ruin into which the assembly has fallen. And the ruin makes it more than ever essential that we should not lose sight of the divine thought. Many things now hinder the practical unity of the saints. We cannot bring the scattered and divided saints together, but we can cultivate heavenly and divine links with our fellow saints, and we can see to it that there is nothing allowed in our spirits or our associations that would hinder unity. As recognizing the unity of the tabernacle one could not be linked with any party or sect that is less than the whole. Christians in the light of the unity of the assembly may walk together according to 2 Timothy 2: 22, but they cannot accept that they belong to anything less than the whole assembly. We cherish the divine thought "that it may be one". If all Christians recognized the unity of the assembly, and were diligent to see that their links with one another were really "loops of blue" and "clasps of gold", all saints would be found together. But if this is not the case we have to see to it individually that we cherish the divine thought, and that we cultivate such links with our brethren as are really heavenly and divine.

If we consider all that these things mean — the byssus, the blue, the purple, the scarlet, the cherubim, the loops and clasps — we see something of the true character of saints as having put on the new man. And we cannot but feel that such a character can only be preserved by the most rigid separation from all that is not in accord with the mind of God. Without the “tent” of goats’ hair the beauty of the tabernacle would very soon be soiled and corrupted. “A tent over the tabernacle ... to cover it” (verses 7, 13) seems to convey the thought of preserving the holy beauty of the tabernacle unblemished.

There are *eleven* curtains of goats’ hair; that is the number of responsibility with an added tithe to secure the complete protection at all points of the tabernacle. The extra two cubits in the length of the curtains also ensure this. The goats’ hair speaks of the same character of holy separation as was seen in perfection in the Lord Jesus. He was absolutely separate from everything that was inconsistent with faithfulness to God. And the saints are to be divinely linked together in unity in this also, but the clasps in this case are of copper. Saints are to be held together in separation from evil as well as in the bond of divine love and the unity of the Spirit. In the couplings of the tabernacle we see the unity of the saints on the positive side in relation to all that is holy and blessed; they are “clasps of gold”. But in the couplings of the goats’-hair curtains we see the unity of the saints in separation from evil; in this sense it ever remains true that “separation from evil is God’s principle of unity”. The “clasps of copper” suggest a character of things that is in keeping with the altar, where all is tested by holy fire. If any principle or practice is introduced which is not of God, it is the responsibility of all saints to stand together in separation from it. All Christians should covet to be “exclusive” in their associations; it is the only principle on which holiness and truth can be maintained.

Each one is responsible to act on the principle of separation from evil. The fact that others will not act on that principle does not relieve me of responsibility to do so. Many see things to be wrong, and wish they could get others to see the wrong and to put it right; but as they cannot, they go on with it. There is no goats’ hair in that, and the links of association in such cases are not “clasps of copper”.

The prophets wore “garments of hair”; they were separate men. And the goats’ hair is essential to preserve all that is set forth in the tabernacle. There may be a link of connection suggested with the goat of the sin-offering. We are called to be separate from all that was condemned in the death of Christ. The will and tastes and wisdom of man were all condemned in that death, and

therefore that which is the product of these things can have no place in God's dwelling or service. Only that which is according to God's will can be there.

Then "thou shalt make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red". The spiritual beauty of the "tabernacle", and the character of separation set forth in the "tent", need such "a covering" as is typified in the "rams' skins dyed red". All must be preserved and maintained in a spirit of true devotedness to the Lord. The ram was the consecration offering; it speaks of Christ in all His maturity and energy as devoted even in death to the saints to secure them wholly for God — for service of priestly character. That devoted love of Christ when known in the heart produces true devotedness to Him. A heart dominated by the love of Christ must be a devoted heart. Paul could say, "The love of Christ holds me"; he was consciously held in the embrace of that love; and in what a distinctive way did his devotedness become manifest. "Dyed red" would speak of an intense and marked character. Both the thought of "skins", and dyeing red, would suggest, I think, that saints are viewed in this type as having come under the influence of Christ's blessed devotedness even to death, and it has left its mark on them. It did on Paul; he could say, "The Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me". And he judged that if Christ died for all, it was "that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died for them and has been raised" (2 Corinthians 5: 15). That was a bit of the rams' skins dyed red; it gave a distinctive colour to the man.

Then "a covering of badgers' skins over that". This is the exterior protection. It would seem to suggest a vigilance that could detect every form of attack on the testimony, and a power of endurance that is capable of withstanding every attack. It would indicate an attitude of mind that neither fears man's frown nor courts his smile. The enemy has made many attacks on the testimony during the last hundred years, but men of God have been characterized by spiritual vigilance and have been enabled to detect and resist those attacks. The truth has been preserved, and saints have been preserved. In a scene where the power of evil is, the defence and safe-guarding of the testimony is of the greatest importance. This, I think, is suggested by the covering of badgers' skins.

"The boards for the tabernacle" give the idea of stable support for the curtains and their coverings. I believe them to represent the saints as viewed in the Epistle to the Romans. They are spoken of as "standing up", and each board is ten cubits in height, and they are made of acacia-wood — the same material as the ark. This reminds us that there is moral similarity between the saints and Christ. If *He* could say by the prophetic Spirit, "To do thy good pleasure,

my God, is my delight, and thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40: 8), each one of *them* can say, "I delight in the law of God according to the inward man" (Romans 7: 22). And though the man who says that is not yet in true spiritual liberty, as born again he is conscious that according to the inward man he delights in the law of God. I think we see the acacia-wood there.

But this is not sufficient to enable a man to stand up as a moral support to the tabernacle. Each board was to have two tenons (literally hands) to lay hold of two bases of silver under it. The bases were made of the atonement money which the people gave for the ransom of their souls (chapter 30). This clearly indicates a firm establishment in the value of the death of Christ. The soul must have as its very foundation a tenacious hold of the death of Christ as that in which the testimony of the righteousness and love of God are set forth. I would say that these answer to the two silver bases under each board. If you are not firmly fixed on those two foundations you will have no stability; you will not be able to stand up, nor to give support to the tabernacle. I need hardly remind any believer of how fully these two bases are set before us in Romans 3 - Romans 5 — the righteousness and love of God made known in the way of redemption through the death of Christ.

But more than this is needed before the board can occupy its place with all the other forty-seven as a moral support of the tabernacle. It must be covered with gold. But it may be noted that the covering with gold is not mentioned until *all* the boards and bars have been spoken of. The Spirit of God does not connect the thought of covering with gold with one board, but with them all. No one believer could be great enough to receive the Spirit. Christ was, of course, but it requires the whole company of saints to constitute an adequate vessel for the Spirit. The Spirit came down at Pentecost on a company, and from that day to this each individual believer who has received the Spirit participates in a gift which is shared by the whole company of those who are in Christ. The individual believer in Christ has the Spirit, but he has that wondrous gift in common with tens of thousands who constitute at the present moment the body of Christ and the habitation of God upon the earth. So that each one who is conscious that he has received the Spirit should be also in the recognition that tens of thousands of others have received the same Spirit. This constitutes a divine bond of such a character that it throws into absolute insignificance every human and sectarian bond. Indeed, anyone truly recognizing the saints as the vessel of the Spirit, and seeing that each one of them is an essential part of that structure which forms the true tabernacle, would feel ashamed to be identified with anything other or less than the divine structure.

Through the gift of the Spirit divine power comes in to set saints free. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death" (Romans 8: 2). It is not only that "according to the inward man" they delight in the law of God — that is the acacia-wood — but there is now power to carry it out. The whole secret of deliverance lies in the fact that saints have the Spirit. If *God* is here, by the Spirit given to His saints, there is divine power available for complete deliverance, so that saints may stand up to the full measure of their responsibility — ten cubits (see Romans 8: 4). It has been said that saints are morally glorified in having the Spirit. As the saints walk according to Spirit, they not only fulfil the righteous requirement of the law, but they give expression to the character of God (see Romans 12, particularly verses 8, 9, 13, 14, 16, 21). I think God's character coming out in the saints as having the Spirit, answers to the boards being covered with gold. We do not get in the types of the tabernacle pictures of our shortcomings and defects, but of the full measure of God's thoughts, and of what His grace and His Spirit can bring about. The grace and power of God by His Spirit can enable us to stand up to the full "ten cubits" of our responsibility, and can make us shine in the display of qualities that are expressive of His own blessed character.

The forty-eight (twelve by four) boards would suggest completeness in administration. The corner boards joined beneath and "united at the top thereof to one ring", and the five bars with the rings to receive them, all emphasize the importance of the binding together of the saints as constituent parts of one structure. The "corners" would represent points where the greatest stress would come, and in relation to which special care would be needed to avoid coming apart. I think we may see a "corner" in Acts 6, where there was a tendency to divergence between the Hellenists and the Hebrews in the assembly at Jerusalem. And we see how the wisdom of grace, and the special action of love, in appointing seven Hellenists to see to the matter, strengthened the corner. Then all the exercise of Paul about the collection amongst Gentile brethren for the poor saints at Jerusalem was a strengthening of the corner. If at any point there is a tendency for saints to get apart, let us see to it that the corner boards and the rings are secured! Love is spoken of as "the bond of perfectness"; it holds all together. There is no thought in Scripture of the saints being merely units, or being joined together in sects or parties of their own choice. Each saint is a constituent part of a divine system marked by unity, and it should be the exercise of every saint to be in his place in that system. The divine testimony is marked by unity; the tabernacle and the tent coupled together by their loops and clasps, and the boards held together by bars and rings. In a day when Christians are so scattered and

divided it is important to see the mind of God and what marks His tabernacle. People think it quite right that Christians should meet in many different ways, and be found in many different organizations, but all this is quite contrary to the fashion of the tabernacle as seen in the mount.

The apostles, though having different lines of ministry, were all held together in the unity of the divine testimony. But we can see that it was the enemies' effort to use even the apostles as a means of dividing the saints, some saying, "I am of Paul", and others, "I of Cephas". I have thought that the "bars" might have reference to the gifts and their ministry, all given by the Lord for the building up and binding together of His saints. They are given "for the perfecting of the saints, with a view to the work of the ministry, with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ; until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God". All true ministry is given with a view to the saints being bound together. But such is the present state of confusion that the gifts practically tend to divide the saints. A divinely-given evangelist perhaps ministering to one congregation in a town, and a divinely-given pastor or teacher ministering to another — the practical effect being to divide the saints. This is like the bars getting between the boards, instead of keeping them all together and in line! We need all the gifts, and all the saints, and if in the present state of things we cannot, in a practical sense, have them all, we can at any rate stand apart from what is plainly contrary to the mind of God. We must keep before us the divine pattern as seen in the mount, though the thought of it gives us an overpowering sense of the present state of scattering and ruin.

The object of all true gift and ministry is to build up the saints in the knowledge of God and of Christ in the power of the Spirit. There is certainly unity in these divine Persons, and as we are built up in their knowledge we must be drawn together. God would have us together according to the truth of His system.

If we have taken in in a small measure the thoughts connected with the saints as "boards", we cannot but see that such would be capable of being a support for the tabernacle. Romans 12 shows us the boards covered with gold and put together — "we, being many, are one body in Christ, and each one members one of the other" — a suited moral support for the beautiful curtains. For what answers to the latter we might look, as before suggested, to Colossians and Ephesians.

In verse 30 there is the command to "set up the tabernacle according to its fashion", and then follow the instructions as to making and placing the veil, and placing the other furniture of the sanctuary. It suggests that the assembly

is suited to contain the veil, the ark and mercy-seat, and also the table and lamp-stand. It is the place where all these things are cherished in spiritual affections and intelligence. The veil is a type of the flesh of Christ, as Hebrews 10 tells us. It is Christ as presented in the four Gospels, of which the "four pillars" may be a figure. It is what He was personally as having come in flesh. People think the Gospels a simple narrative, and so they are as to the letter, but "John's simple page", is the most profound part of Holy Scripture. If a Divine Person comes in flesh, there must be a profound depth in every detail of the acts and utterances of that Person. The "bases of silver" for the pillars would suggest, I think, that all that is presented of Christ in the four Gospels is really based upon His death. That is, none of it could have been really available for men apart from His death. If He could say, "Be thou cleansed", or "Thy sins are forgiven thee", or could speak of the gospel being preached to the poor, or the great supper of grace, all really had its base in His death. But here there is only *one* base under each pillar. In the case of the boards there are *two* bases under each, because on our side we need adequate testimony so that our faith may take firm hold of divine righteousness and love as revealed in the death of Christ. But the silver base under each pillar of the veil speaks of the death of Christ as known of God to be the ground on which Christ could be presented to men and become available for their blessing. There is no need of *two* bases from the divine side.

The ark and the mercy-seat being "inside the veil" would also intimate that neither could be really known apart from His death. All the truth of them was there, but veiled until He died. We can see that even the disciples had a very imperfect apprehension of things before the death of Christ, and His resurrection and ascension and the coming of the Spirit. But when He died the veil was rent, and God came out in accord with all the precious character and value of the Ark and the Mercy-seat.

It is noticeable that on the curtain "for the entrance of the tent" there were no cherubim. What is judicial is not presented there, nor on "the gate of the court" (chapter 27). It is in perfect keeping with grace that one desiring to approach should not be met by anything that would discourage or repel, but everything to attract. The cherubim are within, and we are thankful for them there. How good it is for a true heart to know that the Lord has perfect discrimination as to everything! We see Him marked by the cherubim in Revelation 1 - Revelation 3. Then as on the curtains the cherubim suggest ability in the saints to judge and discriminate. "Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge"; it supposes ability to do so. "Try the spirits" also brings in the cherubim. We see the cherubic character in perfection in the Lord; He could say, "For judgment am I come into this world"; that is,

judgment in the sense of discernment and discrimination. Saints need to be able to discern the true character of things; otherwise they may swallow every kind of error. Saints have the unction, but they have also to acquire ability of discernment through having "their senses exercised for distinguishing both good and evil". That might answer to the "artistic work" by which the cherubim were formed on the curtains. The cherubim are a great safeguard; one is thankful to be amongst people who can discern, and who will not tolerate any departure from the truth. One rejoices to see the cherubim on the curtains. The apostle surely recognizes the cherubim when he says, "I speak as to intelligent persons: do ye judge what I say".

The five pillars for the curtain at the entrance have bases of *copper*. We come at this point to an order of things which stands in relation to what is without. *Silver* speaks of the death of Christ on the side of its redemption value, but *copper* (as seen in the altar) is connected with the thought of His ability to endure suffering. *Within* the bases are silver, but at the entrance and round the court they are copper. It seems to suggest that in relation to that which is external such divine support is needed as will give stability in a position that involves the test of suffering. When Peter speaks of our being redeemed by precious blood I think it is much in keeping with the silver bases on which the boards stand. But when he says, "Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you a model that ye should follow in his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when reviled, reviled not again; when suffering, threatened not; but gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously; who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, in order that, being dead to sins, we may live to righteousness"; I think he has rather before him what answers to the copper bases. So, too, when he says, "Christ, then, having suffered for us in the flesh, do ye also arm yourselves with the same mind; for he that has suffered in the flesh has done with sin, no longer to live the rest of his time in the flesh to men's lusts, but to God's will". *Within* the preciousness of the death of Christ, its redemption value, gives stability to the soul in its relations with God. But *without* we can only stand firm as we have the sense of how He has suffered under testing which brought out how entirely He was here for the will of God and as a model for us. It is only as being fixed on that base that we can stand for God in relation to a scene where the "lusts of men" and "the will of the Gentiles" dominate everything. To stand for God there requires a preparedness to suffer which can only be brought about by the soul being firmly fixed in the apprehension of Christ as the One who has suffered here, so that the saint arms himself with the same mind. Each of the five writers of the Epistles was a man who had known how Christ suffered, and who was set to stand in a suffering testimony. They knew

what they were set for, and what they would have the saints to be set for, in relation to what was outside. I thought that the copper bases had reference to this. It is the only thing that will ensure divine stability here.

EXODUS 27

Exodus 27

The altar is a very important type. Indeed, I think we are justified in concluding, from the Lord's own words in Matthew 23: 19, that the altar is greater, as a type, than the offerings which were placed upon it. It is specifically "the altar of burnt-offering". It speaks of Christ in His ability to sustain that which brings in sweet odour for God in the very place where sin had been, so that instead of God having to pronounce a curse He can speak to men in infinite grace and blessing. Other offerings were burned on the altar as well as the burnt-offerings, but in connection with them all the word "burn" signifies to burn as incense. There is a "sweet odour" character about all that is offered there. The fat of the sin-offering is burnt there, but this speaks of the personal excellence of Christ; and the handful of fine flour of the sin-offering (Leviticus 5: 12) also speaks of His personal perfection. This was ever, necessarily, fragrant to God, in whatever way it might be tested.

Christ is the Altar as well as the Sacrifice and the offering Priest. The Spirit of God presents Him to us in *the Ark* as One personally great enough to bring in the will — or pleasure — of God, and to establish it in a universe where lawlessness had been. But in *the Altar* we see that in such a universe the will of God could only be established on the footing of sacrifice, and Christ is great enough to sustain all that is involved in this.

He has come in holy Manhood — the acacia-wood typifies that — and He was found here in those conditions of weakness and dependence which rightly mark man and force him into dependence upon God. I believe the five cubits are suggestive of this. Man, as fallen, is always aiming to be characterized by the number *six*, which speaks of self-sufficiency and independence of God such as will, in an intensified degree, mark the beast of Revelation 13: 18. We see a figure of this in the man of Gath, who had on each hand six fingers, and on each foot six toes (2 Samuel 21: 20). This is altogether abnormal. For man to attain a development which God never intended for him is really apostasy. His proper place is that of weakness and dependence. The Lord as Man here never once departed from that place; He was cast upon God from the womb (Psalm 22: 10). He was ever in the spirit of those words, "Preserve me, O God; for I trust in thee". A blessed Man marked by dependence expressed in prayer, as we see on seven occasions in Luke's Gospel. And in connection with the altar we may see it particularly in Luke 22: 39 - 46 where He was in view of all that was involved in drinking the cup.

"The altar shall be square" would intimate, I think, that what He was as the Altar has a universal bearing. It stood "before the entrance of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting" (chapter 40: 6). It was outside, and this gives it a public character; it speaks of what is set forth in public testimony. It was where Jehovah met the children of Israel and spoke to them (Exodus 29: 42, 43). But now God is revealed in grace, and the scope of that grace is "all the world" and "every creature under heaven". Christ has suffered here, God has been glorified here, so that His grace might be completely set forth to men. God says of the blood, "I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17: 11). God can say to every man, You are in sin, but Christ has glorified me as to sin, and I have perfect grace for you. What a complete and universal setting forth of divine grace to men there is in Christ! He is "the power of God", not now for judgment but for blessing. It is not only that the judgment of sin has been borne, but that One has been found in the place of sin in such obedience and affections that sweet savour has gone up from that very spot to God, and He now speaks to men in grace according to His appreciation of that.

"The height thereof three cubits" would suggest that resurrection power was inherent in Christ; He could say, "*I am* the resurrection". If He had to pass through "the suffering of death" it brought out that there was a power there superior to death; He could not be holden of it. What a thought it gives us of His capability to undergo every form of testing and suffering, even to death itself!

Then "its horns at the four corners thereof; its horns shall be of itself" speaks of strength peculiar to that holy and unique humanity in which Jesus Christ came in flesh. They suggest the power in which He met, and was superior to, every form of opposition or testing which came upon Him. He met all in divine strength; there was no weak corner. The prince of this world came, but had nothing in Him. Nothing overcame Him; He was ever the Overcomer. Then, last and greatest test of all, He had to drink the cup and to endure the suffering of death, but He was equal to this also.

"And thou shalt overlay it with copper". Copper would seem to indicate ability for endurance in such Scriptures as Deuteronomy 33: 25; Jeremiah 1: 18; Jeremiah 15: 12, 20, and this would be a needed quality in the altar, which must bear the testing of fire.

The "broad plates for the covering of the altar" were "a sign unto the children of Israel". (Numbers 16: 36 - 40). They declared plainly that lawlessness was intolerable to God, and must be visited by His judgment. But if the covering of

the altar was a sign of this, it also spoke of that which had passed through the "fire from Jehovah". It is because there was ability in the Lord Jesus to suffer all that was involved in the judgment of sin that He could, as the Altar of burnt-offering, sustain all those sacrifices and offerings which were of sweet savour to God.

Then the utensils of verse 3 would speak of all that was necessary in order that the offerings might be presented and dealt with in a suitable manner. We can understand in the case of Christ how perfect it all was; it was "by the eternal Spirit" that He "offered himself spotless to God". Every detail connected with the offering up of Christ has been provided and arranged and carried out according to God's mind and glory. The Scriptures have been fulfilled in every detail.

The "grating of net-work of copper ... to the very middle of the altar" would suggest that everything in Christ to the very centre of His being was of such a character as to abide the testing of fire. The fire is what God is — "our God is a consuming fire" — applied in the most searching and testing way to that which is presented before Him. When the latter is sin, as brought sacrificially before Him, it is utterly consumed, as seen typically in the burning of the bodies of those beasts, whose blood was brought into the sanctuary for sin, without the camp. When it is the excellence and perfection of Christ that is before Him, as in the offerings burnt on the altar, the sacrifice is consumed, but all goes up as sweet odour for God's delight. When it is the copper of the Altar it abides the test. Infinite as the suffering is, there is ability to endure it. How these varied presentations of Christ enlarge our apprehensions of Him in different features of His relation to what is sacrificial! He was made sin for us, wholly to remove that state so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5: 21). That is the burning without the camp. He delivered Himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour (Ephesians 5: 2). That is the offering made by fire on the altar of burnt-offering for a sweet odour. "Christ also has suffered for you ... Christ, then, having suffered for us in the flesh" (1 Peter 2: 21; 1 Peter 4: 1). That I regard as being in keeping with the altar.

We are reminded of the judgment of sin in the altar, for the witness of it is in its copper covering, and also in the blood that was afterwards put on its horns, and poured out at the bottom thereof (Leviticus 4). But it does not speak only of the judgment of what was offensive to God. That was necessary as a moral basis. But it speaks of positive delight for God — the establishment of His pleasure according to the sweet odour of all the perfection in which Christ offered Himself. And this as the ground of God's approach to men in grace,

and man's approach in divine favour to God. The altar, as presented here, is seen in its relation to God's approach to us. He comes out, as it were, from the ark and mercy-seat to the altar, and He speaks with the Mediator and meets the children of Israel in the fragrance of the continual burnt-offering. In Leviticus the altar is more often viewed in relation to our approach in God.

I think we can see a moral connection between the altar and what follows — the court of the tabernacle, with its hangings, pillars, bases, etc. The altar speaks of Christ as great enough to bring in the will of God and to establish it on a basis of sacrifice. If that has its due place in our thoughts and affections it prepares us to take up that which is set forth in the hangings and pillars of the court. As having come under the influence of the Altar we cannot any longer tolerate sin; we must be here now for the will of God; we present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God with this in view. It is our intelligent service. And this, in a word, is the "twined byssus". In the presence of a world where every man glories in doing his own will, the Christian has learned that the will of the lawless man has come under the judgment of God. He therefore now refuses it. On the other hand, he has seen the will of God established through suffering and on a basis of sacrifice, and has found it to be a will of perfect and infinite blessing. The will of God is now to him "good and acceptable and perfect". But he cannot look to maintain it — to hold up his five cubits square of twined byssus — in a world marked by lawlessness without suffering. To find people set to do the will of God, and to suffer in doing it, is a remarkable testimony. It is something entirely different — indeed quite contrary — to the whole course of things here. The very base on which we stand, and which alone can give stability in such a position, is kindred with the altar; it is a base of copper. It is Christ known in His unyielding steadfastness to maintain the will of God on the line of suffering. If all had been right here, Christ would have reigned in glory, but instead of that He had to suffer. So the prophets spoke of the sufferings which belonged to Christ, and the glories after these. The purple cloth spread on the altar (Numbers 4: 13) speaks of the glories that will follow, but they rest on the sufferings.

In relation to all that is external we have to be firmly fixed on this base, that we stand in relation to Christ who has suffered here because He would not deviate one hair's breadth from the will of God, and who has suffered so that lawlessness might be judged, and the will of God established in the universe on the ground of sacrifice. We are to be firmly fixed on that basis so that we may be in moral accord with it; that no lawlessness may appear, but that everything which is the will of God in Christ Jesus may have its place with us; in this way we maintain righteousness; we hold up our five cubits square of twined byssus.

I have to maintain, first of all, what is due to my body as belonging to God. That is, I must not use my body for self-gratification, but as a vessel for God's pleasure. This is the first element in practical righteousness. Then I have to maintain what is due to others according to grace, and this carries one a long way beyond paying twenty shillings in the pound. Then I have to maintain right relations with my brethren, and a right spirit towards them. And all this involves suffering in the flesh, and will entail suffering for righteousness' sake, so that one can understand the need for finding one's support in a knowledge of Christ that is in keeping with His altar character.

The five cubits of twined byssus to each pillar, and five cubits the height, remind us again that it is in the place of dependent weakness that righteousness is maintained and manifested in the saints. This casts us ever upon grace which is all-sufficient and unfailing.

The pillars had "connecting-rods of silver". This is another suggestion that corresponds with the loops, clasps, and rings which have come before us in the previous chapter. It indicates again that there is no place in the divine system for independency, or for the voluntary association of believers in accord with their own thoughts. It is most important to recognize the divine bonds which link saints together. Sometimes the bond is looked at as in the divine nature — children in the one family of God; sometimes it is viewed as in the power of one Spirit by which we are baptized into one body; sometimes it is regarded as in relation to the one Lord, which involves the subjection of all to Him, and separation from iniquity. But in the "connecting-rods of silver" we see how Christ is entitled through redemption to connect *all* His saints together. He has redemption rights in regard to us, not only personally, but as to our links of connection together. Many would own His redemption rights as to themselves individually who have never seriously considered that He has redemption rights in regard to their links with their brethren. He is entitled to put us in line with our fellow-saints, and to connect us together in such a way that our standing together becomes the witness of His redemption rights, and practically excludes the will of man.

If I am not in the relations with my fellow-saints which are in accord with the will of God I am like an isolated pillar, or one out of line. The connecting-rods are out of place, and the twined byssus is not held up as it ought to be. I am not really righteous if I do not stand in relations with my brethren which are expressive of the redemption rights of Christ. I have no right to do as I like as to my connections with my fellow-saints. If I wish to follow righteousness I must own the Lord's right through redemption to put me into connection and line with other of His saints. In a day when most of the pillars have got

disconnected and out of line it is most important to recognize the Lord's rights. This is a very important feature of that "righteousness" which we are to follow. Those who really do so can walk together. It is clear that for saints to be divided cannot be for the pleasure of Him who died that He might gather them together in one. The way for saints to get into line with their brethren now is for each one to depart from iniquity and to "follow righteousness, faith, love, peace", and to see that the heart is pure in relation to the Lord. The connecting-rods can then be put on; they signify that the will of man is set aside by the recognition of the rights of Christ acquired through redemption.

From the divine side we *are* linked with all the saints. But practically other links get formed which are inconsistent with the divine links. If I have to say to any of my brethren that I cannot in faithfulness to the Lord walk with them, I ought, on the other hand, to be very much exercised that they should have no just ground to say that in faithfulness to the Lord they cannot walk with me. The fact that I *cannot* walk with many, and that they *will not* walk with me, keeps me always in mind of the broken and ruined state of the church.

Then "the gate of the court" speaks of Christ. It is by Him that there is entrance into every sphere of blessing, whether it be the court, the holy place, or the most holy. The pillars round the court represent the saints as in public witness; the holy place is the sphere of the priestly service of God; the holiest is the sphere of spiritual contemplation. The gate of the court is the same size as the door at the entrance of the tent and the veil — i.e., 100 square cubits — but it differs from them in being marked by greater width. It seems to suggest the availability of Christ for all; it carries something of the "whosoever" character. It is Christ as presented to men in the glad tidings — the evangelical testimony that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. I trust that we can see what an important and essential feature this is of the public witness of the saints.

The section we have been considering ends at verse 19. Then there is a command to the children of Israel to bring "olive oil, pure, beaten, for the light, to light the lamp continually". This is the first requirement of Jehovah from the children of Israel as to the service of the sanctuary. Here also is the first mention of "Aaron and his sons". It is to be noted that the first element in priestly service is the dressing of the lamps. The spiritual connection of all this is instructive and helpful. When the saints are right in the place that is set forth in the pillars and hangings of the court, there are conditions favourable to the bringing of oil for the light, and also for the taking up of priestly service.

Then in verse 21 "the tent of meeting" is mentioned for the first time. This is suggestive of a centre to which the people of God come by divine

appointment, and where God meets them in a collective way. It answers, I think, to the assembling of ourselves together. If saints come together in a divinely appointed way the light of Christ by the Spirit will be found there. It is the first exercise and service of the priesthood that it should be so. And in this chapter the light is maintained "before Jehovah". It shines not only, as we have already seen, that Christ maybe glorified in the affections of His saints, and that the saints may be in the shining of Christ as ministered by the Spirit, but for the pleasure of God. He has profound pleasure in it.

Bringing oil for the light implies the recognition in a practical way of the presence of the Spirit, so that there is real exercise individually and collectively to give place to Him. If each brother and sister gave more place to the Spirit, there would be brighter light when we come together. We belong to the most wonderful commonwealth that ever was — a commonwealth in divine light — made competent by the Father "for sharing the portion of the saints in light". In "the tent of meeting" we find ourselves in that blessed light. Christ is made everything of there by the Spirit acting through human vessels. I do not limit the light of Christ by the Spirit in the holy place to what is addressed in ministry to men. If a brother takes part in the power of the Spirit in prayer or praise, the saints are made conscious of the presence and shining of divine light. The light is "before Jehovah", but it illumines and edifies all.

EXODUS 28

Exodus 28

In chapter 28 we have the holy garments for Aaron and his sons. We see the blessedness and glory of priesthood first in Christ, and then we have part in it as being kindred with Him. It is an immense gain to the soul to have a clear view of the glory of Christ as Priest. Up to this point the types of the tabernacle have been rather on the side of God coming out in the way of grace to men, and that which is effected as the fruit of His doing so. But the garments and consecration of the priests clearly have service God-ward in view.

To take this up requires those who are "wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom" (verse 3). Only spiritual persons can apprehend what is characteristic of Christ as Priest and the assembly viewed as the anti-type of Aaron's sons. To be willing-hearted (Exodus 25: 2) is the result of having come under the influence of grace, but to be wise-hearted is the result of giving place to the Spirit. Only wise-hearted persons can make the priestly garments. All that the garments speak of has to be formed in the affections and spiritual intelligence of saints so that they may be able, as it were, to invest Christ with all the glory and ornament that rightly attaches to His Person and office as Priest. To be able to do this requires spiritual capacity and wisdom; it is presented here as the result of being filled with the spirit of wisdom. The Holy Spirit is "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah" (Isaiah 11: 2). If I have not wisdom it proves that I am not spiritual; one feels self-condemned in saying this, but it is the strict truth! Paul spoke wisdom amongst those that were full-grown. Many have the Spirit who have not given Him much place, and hence they are not spiritual; they have not grown up to wisdom; they are still babes. So that one feels inclined to pause and ask whether we are really "wise-hearted". Are we spiritually capable of understanding that of which these holy garments speak? They indicate what is characteristic of Christ as Priest, and God delights that His saints should take them up in intelligent affections so as to be able to invest Him with all that truly attaches to Him as Priest. Many know the Lord Jesus as Saviour and Redeemer who have very little apprehension of Him as Priest. But if we give place to the Spirit, He will enable us to put together in our souls these varied features and glories so that Christ may be invested with them in our apprehension and appreciation. This is wondrous enrichment of the heart and mind. From the breast-plate to the girdle of skilful workmanship each detail of the holy garments is full of precious meaning.

"Gold" is the first thing mentioned in connection with the making of the ephod. I suppose that the gold speaks of the *divine glory* of His Person. Its omission from the veil and the door, etc., might indicate that what is set forth there is rather the *divine grace* in which He came in flesh. But when it is a question of the place which He takes as Priest God-ward the glory of His Person is seen to be interwoven with every characteristic. God is fully revealed, and approach on the part of Man fully corresponds with that revelation. The divine glory of the Priest is equal to the divine glory of the Ark and the Mercy-seat, for it is the same Person who is the Ark and the Mercy-seat on God's side man-ward, who is the Priest on man's side God-ward.

"And they beat the gold into thin plates, and cut it into wires, to work it artistically into the blue, and into the purple, and into the scarlet, and into the byssus" (Exodus 39: 3). We have spoken before of the blue, purple, scarlet, and byssus, and I think we may see what answers to each in the epistle to the Hebrews, but the gold is worked into them all. He is THE SON, and the glory of His Person gives character to every feature that marks Him as Priest. He is, indeed, "a great priest". It is said of Melchisedec that he was "assimilated to the Son of God", and we are called to "consider how great this personage was". As "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling", we are exhorted to "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession". A very great effect would be produced if we did so; and one part of that effect would be that we should become intensely interested in the service of God. Because even what He does for us as the sympathizing and succouring Priest in all our weaknesses here, is with a view to our being free in spirit for the service of God. The Priest does not succour us merely that we may get through the wilderness, but that we may take up our holy privileges in relation to the sanctuary — all that pertains to us as sons of the true Aaron.

The word for "girdle" in verse 8 is only used of the high priest's girdle; it signifies "of skilful workmanship", and it indicates the unique perfection of the service of Christ as Priest. There is no service like the service of Christ. He ever lives to make intercession for us before the face of God. The girdle binds the ephod — the priestly robe — to Him, and it will never be loosed until all need for it has passed away. He will be eternally the First-born among many brethren, all conformed to His image and brought in sonship into His relationship with the Father. He will be Head then rather than Priest. The grace and love that come out in Him as Priest will abide in Him eternally; all that is moral and personal will be unchanged, but the priestly office will not be needed. We shall be in the Father's house as sons with Him who is Head and First-born. All the moral conditions which pertain to priesthood will abide — conditions suited to the holiness of God — but the priestly office, like the

kingly office, will come to an end. At the present time, priesthood is dependent upon sonship. It is so in Christ Himself. "Thou art my Son" is essential to "Thou art a Priest" (Hebrews 5: 5, 6). But at the present time it is also true that sonship will not be consciously known or enjoyed apart from the maintenance of moral suitability to God — that is, of priestly conditions.

It is blessed to contemplate Christ as One who bears us up before God in relation to every exercise which we have as born of God. That comes out in the shoulder-pieces of the ephod. The names of the children of Israel were engraved there "according to their birth". There are those in this world who are of divine generation, and who have an infinite variety of exercises and experiences which stand in relation to the fact that they are born of God. It is in relation to all those exercises that they are sustained on the shoulders of the Priest on the "stones of memorial". I have not an exercise nor a need as born of God the memorial of which is not kept before God continually. Is it not blessed to think of this?

If we were more truly priestly in our affections and mind we should always look at the saints as being of divine generation. Christ always does. We often look at them as we see them naturally, but a priestly outlook would always have them in view as of divine generation. Every converted person is born of God,

and has exercises and experiences which are the result of such a birth. The blessed Priest in heaven carries them all in remembrance before God. The consideration of this would, I am sure, encourage us to keep more on the line of what we are as of divine generation, and to view our brethren from that standpoint. I am afraid many of us live a good deal on the line of what we are naturally, and therefore we look at our brethren much on that line also. But it is most important that we should take account of ourselves and of other saints according to our birth spiritually. It is as on that line that our memorial is before God on the shoulders of the Priest, and that we get priestly support. We should ever remember this. Our true history stands in relation to what we are as born of God, and it is in that relation that we have a memorial before Him. And in this connection all the names are on the onyx stones. It is not the way saints are diverse one from another that is figured in the shoulder-pieces, but what is common to them all. "According to their birth" the saints are all morally alike — the children of God having the same features and moral character. John's first epistle enlarges on this.

In the breast-plate it is different. Each name is on a separate stone, and each one has a character peculiar to itself, and the names are "for the twelve tribes". This is an entirely different order of things. The "twelve tribes" were

the people of God viewed as ordered in the sovereignty of God in relation to His testimony. In this connection, as we know, Joseph and Levi drop out, and Ephraim and Manasseh take their places. Divine sovereignty allots to each his place in relation to the testimony; and each one is diverse from all the others; he has his own distinctive colour.

The breast-plate is spoken of as "the breast-plate of judgment". It indicates that the saints are represented there according to God's mind in regard to them. The word translated "judgment" is sometimes translated "manner" or "ordinance". The saints are borne on the heart of Christ according the manner in which God has been pleased to order them in relation to His testimony here. So that it becomes an exercise for me and every saint as to whether we are really answering down here to the place which we have in the breast-plate up there.

It is very precious and strengthening to know that we have a place on the heart of Christ before God. It appeals to us in a touching way, for surely I would like to know *how* Christ bears me, and all saints, on His heart! His affections are engaged in it, but it is "the breast-plate of judgment", for the saints are in it according to the divine mind in regard to them.

This makes it very solemn, for it necessarily brings the light of that mind to bear on the actual condition of things, and exposes everything contrary to it. In that way our place in the breast-plate becomes a test of how we are actually found in relation to God's testimony. Our memorial is before God continually on the heart of the blessed Priest according to our divinely ordered place in relation to the testimony. The mind of God is that His saints should be set together in the unity of the testimony, and Christ cherishes and sustains them in the character which divine sovereignty has given them.

The *twelve* stones suggest administration; it will be perfectly seen in the heavenly city, but it is the divine thought that it should be seen morally in the saints now. We are only precious stones as we have appreciated, and taken colour from, the preciousness that is in Christ. The different features of Christ — having taken form in the saints as the fruit of the ministry of the twelve apostles — will come out gloriously in the city which hath foundations. What determines our colour as stones in the breast-plate is our personal apprehension of the preciousness of Christ. "Living stones" are marked by "coming"; there is movement with them — the leaving behind what is connected with man after the flesh, and the coming to Christ. Saul's self-importance and self-righteousness were once very precious to him, but he learned to call them dross and dung, and Christ embodied everything that his heart esteemed to be excellent. How distinctly he took colour from Christ!

It is a great thing to find the assembly according to the divine thought of it. There is a place where it can be found, and that is on the heart of Christ. The breast-plate is there, and all the saints are there, I could not think of Christ cherishing the saints in His affections in any other way than according to the divine thought. If I see that on His heart it will put it on my heart. I think Paul had Israel on his heart according to the breast-plate when he said, "Our whole twelve tribes serving incessantly day and night"!

Each stone has its own distinctive colour and beauty. If we view the saints as of divine generation they are all alike; all have the same moral features; all are partakers of the same divine nature. But in the breast-plate the stones are all different, and it takes them all to bring into evidence the precious features of Christ. No one saint could be great enough to express Christ; He is so great that it takes all saints to express Him. To remember this makes us cleave to the thought of the assembly. I have to fill my own place and carry my own colour according to my individual apprehension of Christ, and according to the sovereignty which has set me in relation to the testimony, but I must not forget that all the other stones are essential. I must take account of them also.

I think we may see something of the diversity of the stones, and their place together in testimony, in the twelve apostles. We have their ministry in the writings of three of them, and we can see the diversity. Matthew is not like John, and neither is like Peter; there is a distinctive colour with each. The Lord gave each of them his place and ministry, but he put them all together in the unity of the testimony, and He held them together. The devil would have liked to get them apart, or into conflict with one another, but the Lord held them together in priestly grace. I suppose we can all see that it was essential for the testimony that the twelve should be kept in unity, and they were so kept by divine grace and power, that there might be the setting forth in their doctrine of the preciousness of Christ.

It has been said that it takes all the gifts to set forth Christ in ministry, and it takes all the saints to set Him forth in character. There is a statement at the end of John's Gospel which gives us the remarkable sense that John had of the greatness of Christ. "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they were written one by one, I suppose that not even the world itself would contain the books written". All that He did expressed Himself. Think of the greatness of it! And the assembly is spoken of as His fulness; she will be the adequate vessel for the display of Christ. The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily; He as Man in heaven is great enough to express the Fulness of the Godhead. But the assembly is the fulness of Christ, the vessel for the display of it all.

The twelve stones in the breast-plate would represent the saints as formed by, and taking character from, Christ as ministered by the apostles. We are formed in our affections in the appreciation of Christ as ministered through them. We are "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the corner stone". Each saint has some appreciation of Christ which is a spring of joy and praise and communion, and which is truly precious to his heart when he gets before God in secret. God delights that we should tell Him with glad hearts what we have found precious in Christ. That is the *impression*, and then the exercise is that it should come into *expression*, and as it does Christ is glorified in His saints, and His preciousness is presented here in testimony. And the Priest in heaven bears all His saints on His heart in relation to the special place which each one has with regard to the testimony. Any special service or gift has its own distinctive place on His heart; He sustains it all in priestly affections and interest. How the thought of it strengthens and emboldens each one to be whole-heartedly set for the furtherance of the testimony of the Christ!

God would have shining out now morally in the saints what will shine out by and by in Revelation 21. In Revelation 21 the precious stones are the foundation of *the wall*. That signifies that as we are formed in appreciation of the preciousness of Christ it becomes in our souls the basis of complete separation and exclusiveness. If people are careless as to separation from evil they have not much true appreciation of Christ. The foundations are not really there of "a great and high wall".

The twelve stones in the breast-plate suggest that the assembly is on the heart of Christ before God as setting forth the light of His preciousness in testimony here. The way we arrive at the truth of the assembly in a day of ruin is by considering Christ as Priest, and seeing the place the assembly has on His heart. If we see what the assembly is as borne on the heart of Christ, we cannot accept any other conception of that assembly. A spiritual man would wish his judgment to be formed by the thoughts and affections of Christ. Let us remember "the breast-plate of judgment", and seek to have our thoughts and affections in accord with it. It is the privilege of all saints to be in the light of what is in the breast-plate. As to practical correspondence with it we cannot say much, but one would wish to cherish what is on the heart of Christ, and thus to have wide church affections, but to be in holy separation from what is not after Christ.

The practical working out of things is our exercise as brethren walking together. "The breast-plate of judgment" tests us by raising the question as to how far we are in correspondence with the place which we have there. We

often find how little we are practically formed and fitted together according to the breast-plate. But it is very precious and strengthening to remember that Christ lives before God to carry us on His heart in relation to all that is in the divine mind. In seeking to be found in accord with that mind we are assured of the interest and support of Christ as Priest. All will shine out in the city as effected by divine power, but now it is being worked out morally through ten thousand exercises and through the love and support of the Priest in heaven. Think of all that is being developed here in the power of the Spirit — all the features of an entirely new order of man! For it is the different features of man in Christ Jesus which are seen in figure in the stones of the breast-plate. And it is the saints in that character who are sustained down here in the grace of Christ's priesthood up there.

The "chains of laced work, of wreathen work, of pure gold", and the "rings", and the "lace of blue" show how indissolubly the breast-plate is connected with the ephod. The saints can never be separated from the affections of the Priest. How it endears Him to us! He never lays aside His living interest in us; we are on His heart continually.

Then "the Urim and the Thummim" are in the breast-plate of judgment. The true Priest with Urim and Thummim has come, and all questions can be answered and all difficulties solved. If the divine mind as to the saints, and as to their relation to the testimony, is set forth in the breast-plate, there is also there *light* and *perfection* for the communication of the divine mind to the saints. In the days of Nehemiah there were matters which could not be settled until a priest stood up with Urim and Thummim. But we have such a Priest. The divine answer to every question that can arise in connection with the testimony can be found in the breast-plate. The last days are, indeed, difficult times, but such times cast us in a peculiar way upon the Priest, and the Urim and Thummim. It is in the apprehension of how the saints are on the heart of Christ that we find the answer to every question that can arise. They are on His heart as characterized by every feature that is essential to divine administration. Every departure from the divine mind is marked by the giving up of some feature that really forms part of the testimony. It is the giving up of that which one or more of the precious stones represent. Therefore the answer to it, and its corrective in divine light and perfection, is found as we look into the breast-plate.

It is instructive to note the order in which the garments are described in this chapter. The ephod — the official and characteristic garment of the high priest — was outside. Underneath was "the cloak of the ephod all of blue". This would suggest that the official character of Christ as Priest is sustained by

what He is personally as the heavenly One. Then beneath this again was "the vest of byssus"; what He is as the heavenly One is sustained by all that He was in His moral perfection as the righteous One.

We have seen the blue intermingled with other colours in the ephod, the girdle, and the breast-plate, but the cloak of the ephod was "all of blue". It calls special attention to Christ as the heavenly One. "If then indeed he were upon earth, he would not even be a priest" (Hebrews 8: 4). Priesthood attaches to Christ as in heaven (see Psalm 110). The epistle to the Hebrews largely insists on this; Christ in heaven is presented from first to last; and it is His being there that makes Christianity a system of heavenly things; the whole system takes character from the Priest. If people make Christianity into an earthly system they are consistent in having earthly priests, but if Christ is a heavenly Priest it constitutes the whole system heavenly. It makes an immense difference when Christ is apprehended thus; it takes the mind and affections of those who love Him off the earth. You will not make anything on earth, even religious things, your object, if you see Christ in that robe "all of blue". And if He is the heavenly One, those who are His are heavenly ones too; we belong to a heavenly company. We ought to ponder that very much. God would connect our affections with what is in heaven, and with the Priest who is there. This would keep us out of a thousand and one things that we get entangled with here. We are partakers of the heavenly calling.

The "pomegranates" and "bells of gold" being on the skirts of the cloak intimate that all true fruit and testimony is sustained by the priestly service and grace of Christ, and is heavenly in character. I think we are justified in regarding "the skirts of the cloak round about" as figurative of the saints down here, for it is through them that fruit is borne and testimony rendered. Psalm 133 shows how the priestly anointing runs down to the hem of Aaron's garments. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! Like the precious oil upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, upon Aaron's beard, that ran down to the hem of his garments". We are under the same anointing as the Priest in heaven. On the day of Pentecost the anointing of the Priest in heaven ran down to the hem of His garments, and brethren were found dwelling together in unity. "It shall not rend" (verse 32) gives a hint of unity, and the anointing ran down to the pomegranates and golden bells. Both were seen at Pentecost; precious fruits of heavenly grace were brought forth in the saints, and what a sounding of golden bells was there! And all in the power of the holy anointing — a living witness to Christ in heaven.

The Priest is in heaven, but the hem of His garment is down here. Would you not like to be a witness to the fact that Christ is alive in heaven? It is being evidenced in the lives and testimony of His saints — the heavenly company — down here. Unity and the energy of life are the fruit of the priestly anointing, and they are the witness that Christ is living. But the cloak is “all of blue”; it is the heavenly character that carries the fruit and the bells. How important is this! An old sister many years ago describing a brother said, “He is a nice man and a good preacher, but he is not what I should call a heavenly man”. I fear most of us would have to admit that the blue is not so distinctive of us as it ought to be.

“And it shall be on Aaron for service; that his sound may be heard when he goeth into the sanctuary before Jehovah, and when he cometh out, that he may not die”. The sound of Christ is to be heard while He is hid from the eyes of men — the sound of all that is connected with His going in, and of all that will be connected with His coming out! It is all to be maintained in testimony. It is evident that the words “that he may not die” could not refer to Christ personally; I understand them to be suggestive of the divine intent that He is not to die as regards testimony here. If there were no fruit and no sounding of golden bells, Christ would die as to testimony here. But God will not suffer this, and the exercise of every saint is surely that He should live. He is never to die as to His sound down here. He certainly will not when He comes out, for Psalm 72: 15 says of Him in that day, “And he shall live”, and the verse ends, “All the day shall he be blessed”. But now He has gone in, and while He is within the veil His sound is heard. The golden bells are kept ringing — the evidence of His blessed movements, and the support of His heavenly and priestly grace; the evidence, too, of the presence and power of the anointing. He cannot die in heaven, for He is there “according to power of indissoluble life” (Hebrews 7: 16), and, blessed be God, He does not die in the affections of His saints, nor in testimony here. The sound of Christ will never cease all the time that He is within the veil. His movements and grace, and the power, of the anointing, will keep the golden bells ringing. But exercise comes in as to how far each one of us may be available as a “pomegranate” or a “golden bell”. For this we must know, what it is to have the support of the Priest, and to be under His anointing, and to be carried by Him in His movements. It is not enough for any true heart to know that Christ’s priestly grace is sustaining fruit and testimony in others. In the affections of all who love Him there is desire to be personally fruitful, and to give a sound which will bear witness that He is living.

Think of the unselfish love that led all who believed to be together and to have all things common. “Not one said that anything of what he possessed was his

own, but all things were common to them". The natural selfishness of the human heart was displaced by the energy of divine love. I think we may see pomegranates there — fruit full of the energy of life. I do not know any fruit more packed with seeds — more full of productive power — than the pomegranate. There is nothing so energetic and fruitful as divine love. Then we are told that "with great power did the apostles give witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4: 32, 33). That would answer to the golden bells. They rang out first on the day of Pentecost, and they have been sounding ever since. The gospel is being preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and testimony is being given to all that is connected with Christ's presence at the right hand of God. Very soon He is coming out to introduce the world to come, and His sound is being heard as to that also.

The cloak "all of blue" was to be so made that "it shall not rend". That which is spiritual and heavenly, and which is sustained by priestly grace, does not rend. Rents amongst the saints are caused by earthly and fleshly influences. The Lord does not fail those who call upon Him out of a pure heart. It is still possible for saints to get near the Priest in whose breast-plate are the Urim and Thummim. And those who really have to do with the Priest, and get the mind of God from Him, will think alike. Of that there can be no question.

Difficulties and exercises amongst the people of God are often the way of rich blessing. They become the occasion for divine light to be given, and the Lord uses them to educate and enlarge His saints, and to give them an understanding of the truth which they would never have had otherwise. There is never anything of that kind which has not gain attached to it for those who go to the Priest about it, and our exercise should always be to secure that gain.

We have next the "plate of pure gold" engraved "as the engravings of a seal, Holiness to Jehovah". "And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all gifts of their holy things: and it shall be continually on his forehead, that they may be accepted before Jehovah". This clearly shews the possibility of there being iniquity even in our "holy things". "The children of Israel" in this passage would represent the people of God as they are actually found here, with varying measures of growth and spiritual intelligence, and with measures of feebleness and imperfection in their apprehensions of what is infinitely perfect in itself; for the "gifts of their holy things" would represent apprehensions of Christ brought in praise to God. So long as the people of God are here in what has been called "mixed condition" there is no *absolute*

holiness or perfection of intelligence in them, and there is always, therefore, on their side, the possibility of infirmity and imperfection even in their apprehensions of Christ, and in their expressions of thanksgiving and praise. Probably some element of this kind is nearly always present, and no exercised and sensitive heart could fail to take account of it. And it is easy to see how Satan might seek to use the consciousness of this to hinder liberty in approach to God. But God would have us to know that absolute holiness is before His face in a Man; that is, in Christ the blessed Priest in heaven. We are entitled to consider this, and to be engaged with it, in relation to our approach to God. It is there that we "may be accepted before Jehovah" in all our approaches, not because of any perfection in the way in which we can bring Christ before God, but because of the perfection that is before God in Him. There is that on the forehead of the true Aaron which our affections can take hold of in its blessed perfection — absolute holiness according to divine glory, and according to the purity of heaven; "a plate of pure gold ... on a lace of blue".

God would have us, in drawing near to Him, to pass away from occupation with the feebleness and imperfection even of our apprehensions of Christ, or of our expressions of praise and thanksgiving, to consider the infinite and blessed perfection of holiness that is before Him in everlasting beauty in Christ. As we take hold of that in our affections, and know that we are — through infinite grace — bound up with it, we leave in spirit what is connected with us as in "mixed condition" here, and we approach in the liberty of those who know what it is to be "accepted". We are entitled to be free in the presence of God as conscious of the blessedness of Christ, and of the absolute character of the holiness which is before God in Him. It is as having "a great priest over the house of God" that we approach. He is there for us. We are identified in the love and purpose of God with all the perfection and holiness that is in the Priest. So that when we come to God it is by Him, and as He is before our hearts we find ourselves perfectly free in spirit. We can come freely with our gifts and holy things, knowing that our acceptance is according to the perfection that is in our Priest.

Then underneath the cloak is "the vest of byssus". That speaks of all the perfection of Christ as the righteous One. His personal character was that He loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. And that character underlies all that He is as Priest; all rests upon that as its moral basis.

Finally, there are "vests", "girdles", and "high caps" for Aaron's sons "for glory and for ornament". We only get a proper thought of the blessedness and dignity of priesthood as we learn it in Christ. So the first 39 verses of this chapter speak of what pertains to Christ. But then we read, "Aaron, thy

brother, *and his sons with him*". If we appreciate Christ, and delight in all that we see in Him, it shows that we are kindred with Him. If we can truly say —

"Each thought of Thee doth constant yield
Unchanging, fresh delight", (151:4)

it is certain that we are kindred with Him; we are — to speak in the language of the type — His sons. Now what a blessed thing to know that we are identified with all that we appreciate! We, as the sanctified, are "all of one" with Him, the Sanctifier. If He has garments "for glory and for ornament", so have we as "his sons with him". If we see Him as the Anointed, we are anointed too; we share in His consecration and hallowing. It is not a question of what *we* are entitled to, but of what *He is* entitled to. He is entitled to have every saint *with Him* for priestly service God-ward, and we do not accord Him His due if we do not join Him as a consecrated company.. For the saints to take up such a position is not pretentious; it is really and simply a question of what is due to Christ, and of the pleasure of God. Christ is entitled to have the saints, as the priestly family, with Him for the service of God in the sanctuary, just as He is entitled to have the many sons with Him in the Father's house.

But to be priests to God necessitates holy garments. The vests and the high caps speak of righteousness and salvation. "Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness ... I will clothe her priests with salvation" (Psalm 132: 9, 16). Then, again, we read, "He beautifieth the meek with salvation" (Psalm 149: 4). It is really the moral beauty of Christ upon His saints — the beauty of holiness. It is as "the meek" — that is, those who have the Spirit of Christ — that saints can be clothed with His characteristics. Practically the garments are not always there, and when they are not, priestly functions cannot be exercised.

Christ has great delight in going in to God, and leading us in; when properly clothed we can go in with Him. But there must be conditions suited to a "holy priesthood"; it is certain that what is of the flesh must not appear there. "Thou shalt make them linen trousers to cover the flesh of nakedness". It is impossible that what was judged before God in the death of Christ should appear in His holy service. It came before Him in the sin-offering (see chapter 29: 10 - 14), and was utterly consumed. If we have really committed ourselves to that — leaned with our hands, as it is literally — we are under obligation never to let it appear in our service. That which is of the flesh is bad anywhere, but it is most of all out of place in the holy service of God. What could be more dreadful than for such things as vanity, jealousy, emulation, or desire to make something of oneself, to come into what should be spiritual

service? All that would be, indeed, "the flesh of nakedness": it is not to be seen.

The "vests" speak of righteousness; the priest's heart is purposed to maintain what is due to God.

The "high caps" suggest the dignity in which one can hold up his head who is in the power of divine salvation. What moral dignity attaches to one who has been set free in the power of God's salvation from every influence of evil that would have dominated him as a natural man! Then the "girdles" imply readiness and liberty for service. It is wonderful clothing, but it is the glory and ornament that is suitable to the holy priesthood.

My impression is that the ministry of reconciliation supplies the priestly garments. Reconciliation involves complete moral suitability to God, so that He can be complacent in those who approach Him. The saints as having received the reconciliation, and as in the good of the ministry of reconciliation, are attired in priestly garments, and suited to serve God according to His pleasure and complacency. Christ as the "Object of eternal pleasure" is ministered to the saints so that they may be consciously invested with Him in the presence of God, and be morally apart from every kind of imperfection. Such a ministry prepares one to be found in moral separation from everything that is not Christ. Indeed, a beloved servant of the Lord has said, "If I were really in the good of reconciliation nothing would be seen in me but Christ".

EXODUS 29

Exodus 29

We have not here, types of how a sinner can be cleansed from sin so as to be found amongst the people of God as forgiven and justified. We are reading of how *priests* are hallowed and consecrated.

The first thing is moral cleansing. "And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring near the entrance of the tent of meeting, and shalt bathe them with water". But this is done, we may say, in the light of all that Christ is as seen typically in verses 1 and 2. What a wonderful cluster of types of Christ is introduced there!

"One young bullock" — a large type of Christ as the One capable of being made sin and glorifying God in bearing its judgment. This is a most important apprehension of Christ in the soul. "Two rams without blemish" to set Him forth in His maturity and energy as the burnt-offering, and as the One wholly devoted to God and to His saints. "Unleavened bread" to speak of what He was as without sin in holy humanity. "Unleavened cakes mingled with oil", typifying what He was as conceived by the Holy Spirit. His humanity was such as could only have been produced in the power of the Holy Spirit. Then "unleavened wafers anointed with oil" speak of Him as the blessed Man anointed by the Holy Spirit. The bread and the cakes were all to be put "into one basket"; every feature of the holy humanity of Christ is to be held together. It was holy and sinless, produced in the power of the Holy Spirit, and found suitable to be anointed by the Holy Spirit after being tested in the circumstances of human life for thirty years.

As Christ in these varied aspects is before the heart, we are prepared to see the necessity for the complete setting aside of all that man is according to the flesh. The bathing, so far as Aaron is concerned, signifies that it is Christ as having gone through death that we know and are identified with. He went through death that the moral cleansing of His death might become effective in us; that is, that we might be cleansed in mind and affection from that for which He died. He came into death for all that in us which is contrary to Himself — and that means everything that we were according to the flesh — that the Spirit might give our souls to know the import of the water from His side. He "came by water and blood" (1 John 5: 6). The blood is put first in the Gospel (John 19: 34) because it meets the glory of God as to sin, but the water comes first in the Epistle because what John has in view there is moral cleansing. The order in 1 John 5: 8 is "the *Spirit*, and the *water*, and the

blood". It is as having the Spirit that "the truth" of the water and the blood can be in our souls.

The death of Christ effected sacrificially the complete removal of the man after the flesh from before God, but this may be known by the Spirit for moral purification. Christ has died as in the place of that man and is eternally free from him, but He died that His death might free us. We are entitled to be with God for His holy service completely apart from man after the flesh.

The new birth is, in one sense, the setting aside of all that we were according to the flesh, for it is the evidence that there must be an entirely new beginning for man if there is to be anything in him for God. The effect of the new birth is that there is a new "I" (Romans 7), and the soul begins to judge of things in a new way. Then when Christ comes into the view of a heart that can, through grace, appreciate Him, it becomes possessed of an entirely new standard by which to measure everything. What is not according to Christ will not do for God, nor for the heart that loves Him. Then the Spirit makes good to the soul the meaning of the water which, as well as the blood, flowed from the side of the dead Christ. All that we were according to the flesh must go; it has gone in the death of the Son of God; it cannot have any place in His service.

There must be some consciousness of this in order to be free to contemplate Christ as He is introduced to us here. We see Him invested with all the priestly characteristics and glory of which the holy garments speak; and we see Him as the One anointed. It is the glory of Christ as the anointed Priest in heaven that is here presented to us. God would enrich us in a blessed way with the unsearchable riches of Christ. One covets to be so enriched, and that saints should be so enriched, that when we come together Christ comes out because our hearts are full of Him. This is greatly to God's delight.

Then we see how "Aaron and his sons" are linked together; it is a very characteristic phrase of this chapter. It is God's pleasure that there should be a priestly family identified in affection with Christ; and it is due to Christ and to the blessed God that we should be available thus for priestly service in the beauty of holiness. God has brought into being a generation capable of appreciating Christ, and this could not be without a nature that was kindred with Him.

There can be no doubt that God is working in a special way to bring about priestly state and conditions in His saints. Priestly conditions and sensibilities were lacking at Corinth; hence the Apostle wrote the first Epistle to bring about self-judgment, that they might come into the good of the washing —

that there might be moral purification. Then the second Epistle is more like bringing out the priestly garments, and clothing the saints with them.

Then as clothed the priests “lean with their hands upon the head of the bullock” — a large type of Christ as sin-offering. This indicates the great sense God would give to the priestly company of the ability of Christ to deal with sin, and entirely to remove from before God what is offensive to Him. The dealing with sin must be according to divine holiness. And the priests have to identify themselves with it before God.

Then the bullock is slaughtered, and its blood put on the horns of the altar, and poured out at the bottom of the altar. The witness of death is there. Then the fat being burnt upon the altar speaks of the sweet odour of the personal excellence of Christ even as the One made sin. And the flesh, skin, and dung of the bullock being burned with fire outside the camp is the type of the solemn and consuming judgment which came upon sin when Christ was made sin. It answers to the three hours of darkness and the forsaking of God. A large apprehension of Christ in sin-offering character lies at the basis of all priestly service. There is no priestly service — no true note of praise to God — if that is not great in the soul.

Then the ram of burnt-offering comes next, speaking of the maturity and energy of Christ, and of all His inward perfections, the sweet odour of which was brought out when He gave Himself for us. It is not only that everything offensive has been removed, but everything that God could delight in has come in. His will has been established on an imperishable foundation. (See Psalm 40; Hebrews 10). Christ has been found in obedience and love in the place of sin and death, so as to become the ground of acceptance for us.

This leads on to the ram of consecration, which is typical of Christ in His devoted love as that which is to give character to the consecrated company, for its blood is put on the ear, thumb, and great toe of each one of them, and they have also to eat its flesh. Entire devotedness marked Him. What a pleasure to God to open that ear, and speak into it, when He knew that the One to whom He spoke was fully set at all cost to do His will! Every act of service and every step of His pathway spoke of the same character of devotedness as carried Him into death. There was the same unlimited self-dedication in it all. Now we are to come under the influence of that, so that the impression of Christ's devotedness may be upon ear and hand and foot. We should be prepared to ask at all times, Is this what Christ would be listening to, or doing? Is this how He would move? What a character this would give to the priesthood!

The blood is here the witness of absolute devotedness to God to secure the saints for divine pleasure. It comes on the ear, the thumb, the toe. Everything that passes into the heart and mind, and all service and walk, is to come under the influence of the devotedness of Christ. "The love of the Christ constrains us". I apprehend that the ram of consecration comes as near to "This is my body, which is for you", as any of the types in Exodus and Leviticus. Christ has loved the assembly and given Himself for it. He has gone into death that all the precious thoughts of God's love, and of His own love, might take effect, and that He might have His saints wholly for Himself and for the service of God. He would have them to take character from that love, and be nourished upon it, so as to be spiritually competent in intelligent affections for priestly service.

The blood and the anointing oil being sprinkled upon Aaron and his sons and their garments, would show how the Spirit is connected with all the value of the sacrifice of Christ. Indeed, the fact that there is a company under the priestly anointing is the most wonderful evidence of the value of that sacrifice. If God has anointed us it is because He delights to give this testimony to the value of what Christ has done. But here it is the Spirit as power to take up priestly relations with God. The death of Christ in its true import as known in the power of the Spirit is to mark the persons and associations of the holy priesthood. They are to be known as having died with Christ from the elements of the world, and as judging that if "one died for all, then all have died; and he died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died for them and has been raised".

Then the fat, the right shoulder, the loaf of unleavened bread, the cake of oiled bread, etc., are put in the hands of Aaron and his sons, and waved as a wave-offering before Jehovah. The fat was brought with *the breast* by the offerer of the peace-offering, but in the consecration-offering it was brought with the *right shoulder*. Does this suggest that when communion is in question the *love* of Christ is prominent, but that in view of consecration one is much occupied before God with the thought of His *strength* — His ability to carry out all that is in God's pleasure? The hands are filled with this: the holy nature of His humanity, His anointing with the Spirit, His perfection under testing; all sustained by His Person and His strength. All this is put in movement before God in the hands of the priests.

A company having such features as we have considered can give affectionate movement before God to the preciousness of Christ. How delightful it is to God to see Christ engaging the affections of a company that has true and divine thoughts of Him and His love! It is greatly to God's pleasure that we should

have true thoughts of Christ, and that they should be held in priestly affections, and put in movement before Him. Satan is ever seeking to obscure the thoughts of saints as to the Person of Christ — the true character of His humanity, and of His love, and of what that love has effected. Thus the service of God is enfeebled. But if Christ and His love are before us there is no limit to the spiritual expansion that is possible. It is love which surpasses knowledge.

Then that which has filled the hands of the priests, and been put in movement by them before God, is received from their hand and burnt upon the altar "*over the burnt-offering*, for a sweet odour before Jehovah". If the burnt-offering speaks, as it surely does, of the sweet odour before God of that offering in which Christ devoted Himself to accomplish the will of God, this must be the basis of all that is for His pleasure. But the burning of the consecration-offering over the burnt-offering seems to suggest that there is added pleasure for God in having before Him the sweet odour of Christ as having passed through the hands of His priests, and having been waved by them in affection before Him. God loves to see Christ in our hands, to use the language of the type, and to receive Him from our hands.

Moses was to take the breast of the ram of consecration and wave it before Jehovah; "and it shall be thy part". The ram of consecration had a peace-offering character, and what marks the peace-offering is the participation of all concerned. Jehovah had a portion, the priest had a portion, and the offerer had a portion; it spoke of communion. And I think we have a type here of the portion which Christ as Mediator has in relation to the consecration of the priesthood. As Mediator He has brought the love and mind of God to us; that is the divine side. But the breast of the ram of consecration is, if I understand it aright, the love disclosed in death which will ere long be the main-spring to set the whole reconciled universe in movement responsively to the love of God. That love is known today by the assembly, and it has become there the living spring of all that is pleasurable to God. And I think the Lord finds, and ever will find, His peculiar and personal satisfaction in having brought in the powerful impulse of His own love to quicken in the priestly company, and eventually in the vast universe of bliss, affections appreciative of, and responsive to, the love of God. The love of Christ which surpasses knowledge gives impulse God-ward to all that comes under its power, and I believe it is His peculiar satisfaction that it should do so. It is very blessed to think of the love of God being perfectly revealed, but it is also most blessed to think of full response to that love being secured. There is something for God in that. The love of Christ will yet fill the universe of bliss with affections responsive to God. At the present time His love is the spring of all priestly affections and

service; it sets all in movement God-ward. And He has His own portion in having secured it by His love for the pleasure of God.

We find here that the breast and the shoulder of the ram of consecration give character, as it were, to all that follows, so that Jehovah passes without drawing any definite line of demarcation from the ram of consecration to the wave-breast and heave-shoulder of the peace-offerings which were to be the priests' food "as an everlasting statute". This suggests the thought that this chapter covers in principle the whole period of priestly service, and I think this is confirmed by the fact that there were "seven days" of consecration — typically a complete period. There were seven days of the feast of unleavened bread in connection with coming out of Egypt, and now there are seven days of consecration in connection with going in to the tabernacle for priestly service.

And bringing in here the food of the priestly family is very important as connecting the strength of the priesthood with the communion of the people of God. Priestly vigour is dependent on right conditions of christian fellowship. It is an instructive connection. The more energetic and faithful we are in promoting fellowship, the more nourishment will there be for the priests.

The first character of the peace-offering was that it was "for a thanksgiving" (Leviticus 7: 12). This would correspond with "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of the Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10: 16). As brought into the common joy of the love of God made known in the blood of Christ, believers can have fellowship in thanksgiving. So we bless the cup together. Then, further, the peace-offering might be "a vow, or voluntary" (Leviticus 7: 16).

This implies more energy in the affections, and it involves the devoted recognition of what is due to the Lord. It is not only that He has been for us, but it is due to Him that we should be for Him. It is essential to christian fellowship that we should maintain together what is due to the Lord. Whatever is inconsistent with the rights of the Lord is an offence against christian fellowship, and if it is allowed there is not the true character of christian fellowship, though there may be a believers' meeting. A vow is an evidence of devotedness in the affections. We read of some that "they gave themselves first to the Lord, and to us by God's will" (2 Corinthians 8: 5). If you have really come under the influence of the grace and love of God it becomes a joy to dedicate yourself. J. N. D. used to say that in Romans 6 God sets a man free, and then the question is, What is that free man going to do? He yields himself to God. We are to present our bodies a living sacrifice. What has once been dedicated cannot be withdrawn. If a man who has yielded himself to God

is afterwards found doing his own will, Scripture would regard him as a fool. For it says, "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed" (Ecclesiastes 5: 4). Fellowship is greatly promoted by devotedness. We are to be *for the Lord* individually and together.

That involves a third thing. "If anyone touch anything unclean ... and eat of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace-offering, which is for Jehovah, that soul shall be cut off from his peoples" (Leviticus 7: 21). There can only be true fellowship on the principle of exclusiveness; the "touch" of what is unclean cuts a soul off from his peoples. This is very searching,

but it is really a question of what is due to God who loves to dwell among His people, and to have all their joys connected with Himself. To be "cut off from his peoples" means that he is severed morally from all that constitutes the true fellowship and joy of saints. People might think that a "touch" could not matter very much, but it imperilled everything that a true Israelite would value.

These are the conditions of christian fellowship, and as they are maintained there will be food for the priests. The question for each one of us is, Am I really in the fellowship, and true to it? We might be breaking bread with certain Christians, but it does not follow that we are truly in the christian fellowship. And if not, we are not contributing to what is priestly.

In the first five chapters of Leviticus we get a series of offerings which end in the sin-offering. The different presentations of Christ in those chapters lead to true self-judgment. Then in chapters 6 and 7 we have the law of the offerings, and the order is changed so that the peace-offering comes last. The course of instruction in the law of the offerings leads to the truth of fellowship. Then the consecration of the priesthood follows in chapter 8. The first course of instruction brings us to self-judgment in the light of the death of Christ; the second course brings us to the truth of fellowship; and then we have the priesthood. There is a moral order in these things.

It is important to see that the supply of food for the priesthood is dependent upon peace-offerings being brought. That is, the strength and energy of what is priestly depends on saints being true to the fellowship. 1 Corinthians is largely to adjust the fellowship, but 2 Corinthians brings us to what is priestly. The ministry of the new covenant and reconciliation bring in priestly conditions. Paul did not open up these things in the first Epistle because many things had come in to compromise the fellowship. A great many believers now walk professedly according to the principles of christian fellowship, but if they are not really true to those principles the priestly element will be either feeble

or lacking altogether. Things will be taken up from man's side, and not in relation to God's pleasure. There will be no wave-breast or heave-shoulder for the priests, and the service of God will be enfeebled. But if the fellowship is maintained it will greatly support the service of God. The love and strength of Christ will be so known and appropriated as to give priestly vigour, and the service of God will go on in spiritual energy.

Priestly service covers a variety of things; it should be in exercise whenever saints come together, and in their households too. It is a pity if incense does not ascend from the households of the saints — the interests of Christ presented before God in prayer. If a man is not a priest at home, how can he be a priest in the meetings? Saints take a priestly place even in giving thanks for their food, "for it is sanctified by God's word and freely addressing him" (1 Timothy 4: 5). No one but a priest could freely address God. It is because God has spoken to me in infinite grace that I can speak to Him in priestly liberty. It is the true and holy dignity of man to do so. It is God's way to connect His testimony with households, and it is important to remember this in days when the tendency is to confine religious things to what is congregational. People increasingly connect what is pious and religious with church, chapel, or meeting-room, and let it drop out of the household. But this undermines everything.

If the gospel is preached as Paul preached it there is a priestly character about it because it ministers to the pleasure of God. Paul spoke of "carrying on as a sacrificial service the message of glad tidings of God, in order that the offering up of the nations might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15: 16). He preached for the good of men, but it was to secure a holy result for God. He was a sweet savour of Christ to God in all his gospel service. He could say, "God ... whom I serve in my spirit in the glad tidings of his Son". It was priestly service taken up in his spirit for God's pleasure.

Of course "the tent of meeting" is pre-eminently the place of the service of God. It answers to the coming together of saints as sanctified persons for the service of God. Many come to the meetings to get comfort and food, and I am sure they find both, but we should think more of the service of God.

The love of Christ is seen in the wave-breast, and the strength of Christ in the heave-shoulder. If these are appropriated they give strength for priestly service whether in the household or in the assembly. There is often weakness for such service, and one would desire to be exercised as to maintaining the conditions of Christian fellowship, so that there might be more food to nourish and energize what is priestly among the people of God.

Verses 29 and 30 suggest the thought of the continuance of the service. Generations may pass, but the priestly character and service is to go on. In the religious world things are kept up formally and mechanically by a fixed round of services, but there is no priestly element in this. We have to see to it that the service is maintained *spiritually*.

Then Aaron and his sons have to eat the flesh of the ram and the bread "at the entrance of the tent of meeting". It is feeding on Christ in relation to approach. It is suggestive of the fact that if saints are to come together for the service of God they must come as sustained by priestly food. Manna sustains one in the path of God's will in the wilderness, but feeding on the ram of consecration is in view of the service of God in "the tent of meeting". It is feeding on Christ in relation to approach. I take it that "the tent of meeting" answers to God's assembly as the place where He is served in a priestly way. The very entrance is marked by feeding on Christ as the One who came in devoted love and has gone into death that He might secure a sanctified company, all of one with Himself, for the pleasure and service of God. That is, we are engaged with what Christ is, and what His love has effected, and His love becomes the spring of response in our hearts God-ward. It is a question of what the love of Christ has secured for God. We are often taken up with what Christ has secured for us, but the ram of consecration presents Him in relation to what He has secured for God. It is the death of Christ as the ground on which He has taken up His place as Head — a place on our side, so that He can say, "In the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises" (Hebrews 2: 12).

As we appropriate the love of Christ as it is set forth in the ram of consecration, the same character of response to God is produced in our hearts as was in the heart of Christ. He loves to take His place "in the midst of the assembly" — in the midst of those who can respond to God in tune with His singing. That is the highest character of the service of God.

Then you will notice that nothing of "the flesh of the consecration, and of the bread" is to remain until the morning. On each of the seven days there was to be an entirely new beginning, a new sacrifice — a product of renewed spiritual exercises and affections. As to the Person and the facts they are ever the same; it is the same blessed Christ each day, and all the precious facts connected with His Person and work are unchanged; but as to taking them up in view of service God-ward they have to be new each day. The soul's apprehensions and appreciations and appropriations are to be renewed and living so that all is as fresh in our affections as the first time we touched it. You cannot keep over what you enjoyed with God last Lord's day for next; no

mere remembrance of what you enjoyed then will do. Things cannot be kept over; they have to be spiritually renewed. When we have had a good time there is a tendency to hold it in remembrance, and perhaps try to have another like it without the renewal of spiritual affections. But God is the living God, and He can only be served by what is living and in freshness. We need never be afraid of things getting stale if we “worship by the Spirit of God”. Living springs flow there!

Approach now must be at a cleansed, anointed, and hallowed altar. It is the first time in Scripture that we read of a cleansed and anointed altar. Previously the altars were according to the measure of the one who approached, but now approach must be cleansed from every feature of human imperfection — cleansed in all the efficacy of the sin-offering. So that there is “every day a bullock as a sin-offering”. The bullock is a large apprehension of Christ; there must be a large sense in the soul that “the man of sin and shame” has been removed sacrificially so that we might worship by the Spirit of God. There is no other true approach to God. If we worship at all now it is in spirit and in truth. And for souls who love God no other way is desired. The altar is “most holy” (literally, holiness of holinesses, a strong Hebrew expression to intensify to the utmost the idea of holiness); nor would we have it otherwise. We give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness, for though it shuts out all that is of the flesh it makes room for all that is of the Spirit and of Christ.

The character of priesthood which we have been considering is capable of having to do with a cleansed and anointed altar. God is not served now by what man in the flesh can contribute. You might have a hymn sung most beautifully as to the musical part of it, and yet nothing for God in it because it was the man after the flesh who did it — the man that was removed in the sin-offering! We sing our hymns to known tunes simply that we may sing together; it is to secure fellowship; but the true melody is spiritual; it is in the hearts of the saints, not in the tune.

What is offered upon the altar is in keeping with the character of the altar, so we get now the morning and evening lamb of the continual burnt-offering. God would encourage us to renew in our affections continually the terms on which He is with us. He would have every day to begin and end with a fresh sense of being with God, and having God with us, in the sweet odour and acceptance of Christ. He never places His saints on any other ground before Him than that of Christ — the One who has perfectly glorified Him, and done all His will, and in whom He has infinite delight. He never departs from that; He never meets His saints on other or lower ground than that. And He would have the consciousness of it continually renewed on our side.

The meat-offering goes along with the burnt-offering — a true sense of the holy and perfect humanity of the One who offered Himself. Then it is taken up not as mere doctrine, or as truth to which we assent, but in joy with God, of which the drink-offering speaks. While this must be taken up individually, the fact that it is at “the entrance of the tent of meeting” would indicate that it has in view the coming together of saints. We should always come together in the holy consciousness of the ground on which God meets us; it would promote priestly conditions. What we take up in our thoughts and affections morning and evening has in view our coming together for the service of God. A meeting to read the Scriptures is not exactly the service of God; we come together as learners for instruction, to gather up His mind from Scripture. But if we come together for prayer it is to take up the interests of Christ in intercession, and this is priestly service.

Do we understand what it is to have to do with God’s assembly, where everything is hallowed by His glory, where He meets us according to His own appreciation of Christ, and makes us conscious of His presence? The tent of meeting, and the altar, and the priesthood are all hallowed. What could be greater joy than to come together in priestly conditions, and to find ourselves where all is hallowed by divine glory, and where God is served according to His pleasure in Christ?

There is a kind of climax reached at the end of this chapter. God has secured a consecrated priesthood, a cleansed altar, a continual burnt-offering, a hallowed tent; an order of things where all is suitable to Himself — the abode of His holiness, as Israel sang in Exodus 15: 13. Now He says, “And I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am Jehovah their God, who have brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, to dwell in their midst; I am Jehovah their God”. God’s presence is the blessing, joy, and glory of His people; and He finds His rest and pleasure in dwelling among them.

EXODUS 30

Exodus 30

We next have the "altar for the burning of incense". The order in which these types are presented is full of instruction. God begins with the ark and the mercy-seat, and He moves outward until the gate of the court is reached in chapter 27: 16. Then we have the holy garments and the consecration of the priesthood in chapters 28 and 29. It is God coming out in the revelation of Himself, and of His wondrous thoughts, but all in view of man going in, and the incense altar is clearly connected with the latter. So that the golden altar forms an appropriate conclusion to the series of types which commence at chapter 25: 1.

It may be remarked that each distinct section of this part of the book is introduced by the words, "And Jehovah spoke to Moses". There are seven consecutive sections which begin thus from chapter 25: 1 to 31: 17, leading, like other consecutive types of Scripture, to the sabbath — the rest of God.

God has set up a wondrous system of grace and glory in connection with which He dwells amongst men, and in which He can be served according to His pleasure. And it pleases God that the whole system, and the service connected with it, should be characterized by dependent and confiding affections. The incense altar is suggestive of this; it speaks of priestly intercession. "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense" (Psalm 141: 2). Everything that is for God's pleasure is sustained in this spirit; it gives character to the prayers, the service, the praises, the worship of the holy priesthood. It finds its full and perfect expression in Christ — the priestly Head — glorified at the right hand of God. He "intercedes for us" (Romans 8: 34); He always lives to intercede for those who approach by Him to God (Hebrews 7: 25). But what characterizes Him necessarily characterizes the whole sanctified company who are "all of one" with Him.

We see in type the divine system in Exodus 25 - Exodus 29. The next thing is to see what characterizes it and how it is sustained, and Exodus 30 gives us this. Christ sustains everything relative to the divine system, and to the service of God, by His intercession. The horns of the brazen altar speak of His power man-ward, and in relation to all that He had to meet here, but the horns of the golden altar speak of His intercessory power with God. "Of itself shall be its horns". All that He is personally gives Him power with God. John 17 is one of the most wonderful chapters in Scripture; we see, in principle, the golden altar there. Think of the power of that intercession! We are privileged to stand

by and hear it, that we may know the character of His intercession, for any service which we take up at the golden altar must take character from His.

The golden altar speaks really of what He does at the right hand of God, and of a service in which the saints — the priestly company — can take part. "Part with me" in John 13 would probably include part with Him in this. The fact that Aaron only is spoken of in this chapter as burning incense shows that the service of Christ is specially in view here. But the fact that it says elsewhere, "*They* shall put incense before thy nostrils" (Deuteronomy 33: 10), shows that others have part in it also. See also 1 Chronicles 6: 49, where the sons are linked with Aaron. Revelation 8: 3, 4 refers to a day still future, but it speaks of Christ as giving efficacy "to the prayers of all saints at the golden altar which was before the throne".

The "border of gold" links the altar with the ark and the table of shew-bread. The ark presents Christ as the One by whom all the will of God is established; the table speaks of the saints as sustained before God in accord with His holy thoughts; while the altar suggests how everything in the divine system is sustained in the power of priestly intercession.

We have already noticed, in considering the candlestick, the intimate connection between the dressing and lighting of the lamps and the burning of fragrant incense on the golden altar. The maintenance of the light could never be dissociated from the service of the altar. The ministry of Christ in the power of the Spirit can only be maintained, and the saints kept in the light of it, by priestly intercession — "a continual incense before Jehovah throughout your generations".

"I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men", etc. (1 Timothy 2: 1). That is priestly service at the golden altar, and it connects itself with the fact that the altar was "square"; it has a universal bearing; we are to pray for "all men", and "all the saints" (Ephesians 6: 18). Restricted liberty in prayer often arises from making oneself so much the subject. Do you ever consider how much your prayers are in relation to yourself? It is quite true that you have your own exercises and needs, and have the privilege of bringing all to God, but that is more like the Israelite praying in his own tent. It is another thing to offer incense as a priest at the golden altar. We think there of Christ's interests and service, and of exercises connected with the testimony, and this gives prayer an entirely different character. As one's heart moves on that line there is great expansion and liberty; the Spirit of Christ is free.

Think of the incense that went up from Epaphras, "always combating earnestly for you in prayers, to the end that ye may stand perfect and complete in all

the will of God. For I bear him witness that he labours much for you, and them in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis" (Colossians 4: 12, 13). He had the saints in his heart in reference to all the will of God. Anna was a prophetess, but she carried on priestly service also; she "did not depart from the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers".

Verse 10 is, I believe, the only direct allusion to the day of atonement which can be found in Exodus. It is therefore peculiarly significant. "The blood of the sin-offering of atonement" was sprinkled once upon and seven times before the mercy-seat, and then it was put on the horns of the golden altar and sprinkled seven times upon the altar itself. The blood upon the mercy-seat speaks of God being glorified in His holy nature, and in all His attributes, as to sin, so that He can act in supreme mercy to all. The blood sprinkled seven times before the mercy-seat indicates the ground on which the reconciliation of all things — whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens — will be effected. But the blood sprinkled on the golden altar shows that God's thought was to have a heavenly priesthood to approach Him in the holy place. The approach of an earthly people is at the brazen altar, and is in the acceptance of the burnt-offering. But the approach of Aaron and his sons — typically the heavenly company — is at the golden altar, and is in all the value of the blood of the sin-offering as that which secures them a place *within*. The blood of the sin-offering on the mercy-seat meets the glory of God as to the whole question of sin so as to become the vindication of His righteousness in view both of the heavenly blessing into which the assembly is brought, and the earthly blessing which will be known by Israel when the true Aaron comes out. But it is to be noted that the blood of the sin-offering on the day of atonement does not go outside the holy place; it is all *within*, whether on the mercy-seat or on the golden altar. It speaks of the approach of a heavenly company, who are privileged to draw near *within* before the earthly company is blessed *without*. This is confirmed by the fact that there is no golden altar in Ezekiel's temple, nor any mention of service *within*. But the altar of burnt-offering is very large, and the service connected with it is dwelt upon with much detail. The priests "minister in the gates of the inner court, and *towards* the house", but it is not said that they enter. Indeed the only thing mentioned as being within, so far as I know, is the altar of wood of which the man with the measuring reed said, "This is the table which is before Jehovah" (Ezekiel 41: 22). I have wondered whether this might be a testimony to Israel that a nearer place than theirs was occupied by men of another family, for there is no intimation that they rendered any service there. The true and distinctive blessing of the present time is taken up within by Aaron and His sons. That is, we are privileged to go in with Christ to the holy place, and — now that all the

mind of God is made known — even to the sanctuary, the holiest of all. Alas! have not many of us to confess that we do not honour God by rising to the greatness of our calling? How many are content to know that their sins are all carried away, and that they are under God's favour as men on earth! But this is what an earthly people will know and enjoy. *Our* calling is to things which are within — a spiritual and heavenly order of blessing — sanctuary privilege in association with a risen and heavenly Christ.

How wonderful to think that we can be presented before the Fulness of the Godhead "holy and unblameable and irreproachable"! Does not this give a very blessed sense of complete detachment from everything that belonged to us as "alive in the world"? It is not only that our sins are carried away by the scapegoat, but we have been removed from the ground and position where sins attached to us; that is, the ground of men living in the world. Israel will be on that ground; they will not be risen with Christ, nor have heavenly blessings *within*. They will be men on earth, and as such will need and value the Scapegoat, and they will take up their relations with God at the brazen altar on the ground of the Burnt-offering for acceptance. But the blood of the Sin-offering is *within*. Christ has so completely glorified God in the removal from before Him of the man after the flesh that God can give us a wholly new footing in His presence as *risen with Christ*. He can set us before Him in new creation blessedness in Christ where "the old things have passed away; behold all things have become new: and all things are of the God who has reconciled us to himself by Christ" (2 Corinthians 5: 17, 18).

It is fitting that this marvellous assemblage of holy types should conclude by introducing the sin-offering of the day of atonement as the ground of approach at the golden altar. It gives the privilege of a heavenly company. Not that we have here "the image itself of the things"; we have "a shadow of the coming good things", but we have to add the light of the heavenly from the New Testament. Ephesians 2 gives us the full height of the heavenly position, and it is in the light of that we who were Gentiles in the flesh "are become nigh by the blood of the Christ", and both Jew and Gentile are reconciled to God in one body by the cross, and through Christ "we have both access by one Spirit to the Father".

The second section (verses 11 to 16) is important as bringing in "the sum of the children of Israel". In the first section all was voluntary; "of every one whose heart prompteth him, ye shall take my heave-offering". God put this in the foreground, as it were,

but He does not leave things altogether to that. He could not be content that there should be so much as "one" amongst His people without a memorial

before Him in the tent of meeting. He would only have His people numbered as a ransomed people; only as such could they be in relation to the tabernacle, or have a memorial there. In this there are no distinctions. Divine grace and faithfulness, acting through redemption, have connected all the people of God with the tabernacle — with the divine system. Every Israelite was privileged to say, "I have a memorial there before Jehovah". Now the question is, Where has divine grace and faithfulness given me a memorial? Is it in this sect or that? Or is it in the glorious divine system of which the tabernacle is the type?

And what kind of memorial is it? Ten gerahs of silver. It speaks of the redemption rights of Christ, and of their being owned by all the people of God. This is, in a word, christian responsibility — that we should own, and answer to, the rights of Christ acquired through redemption. If people profess to be in relation to God — are "numbered" in that way — without owning those rights, there will be a plague. He cannot sanction it. As ransomed I belong to Christ to have a memorial before God in His system. Ransom suggests that Christ has freed His saints from the bondage of the world system in order that He might set them in relation to the divine system.

Every Christian is under obligation to own where his memorial is before God. He is divinely claimed for "the service of the tent of meeting". To own the redemption rights of Christ, and be true to them, is our ten gerahs; *ten* — as we all know — is the number of responsibility. Believers think of ransom on the side of what it has freed them *from* more than they do on the side of what it frees them *for*. The fact is that by ransom and redemption Christ has acquired rights over us, and He is entitled to the recognition of those rights by us in a practical way. If we do not do so we shall suffer from some sort of plague. The present divisions and scattering of the people of God, and all those things which are the result of the will of man working in connection with divine things, are truly a "plague".

I suspect that when David purposed to number the people he was thinking of his own glory, and did not consider their moral state as before God. Joab probably discerned this, for he was a shrewd, though an unspiritual, man.

Then the third section (verses 17 - 21) refers to the laver. It emphasizes the abiding necessity — "an everlasting statute ... throughout their generations" — for practical purity on the part of those who take up holy service. Aaron and his sons were to wash their hands and their feet when they went into the tent of meeting, or when they came near to the altar to serve. There must be clean hands and feet on the part of those who approach.

The fact that the laver was made of copper would suggest a moral purity in keeping with the altar. Nothing can be allowed in the service or walk of the holy priesthood that is inconsistent with the death of Christ. At the laver we get the application of the death of Christ in detail by the word for the purification of service and walk. James calls upon some to "Cleanse your hands", and in Psalm 24 it is the one who has clean (or blameless) hands who ascends into the mount of Jehovah and stands in His holy place. Paul says that the men are to "pray in every place, lifting up pious hands" (1 Timothy 2: 8). "Pious hands" are hands that have touched everything in the pathway here with reference to God. They have brought God into their things, and can therefore be in simplicity of confidence before Him.

Then the feet must be washed. John 13 shows how necessary this is if we are to have part with Christ. We get careless sometimes and neglect the laver, and the hands become unsuited to the handling of holy things, and the feet are not in keeping with

"the unsullied way
Which His own hand hath dressed". (79:6)

Then priestly service ceases. How solemn! It says twice over in this short section, "that they may not die". We might well fear the allowance of any soil on hand or foot that would bring in death morally upon the service of God. How it necessitates constant exercise! Paul says to the Corinthians, "Let us purify ourselves from every pollution of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in God's fear" (2 Corinthians 7: 1). Whatever might move in one's spirit that is not in accord with divine holiness necessitates washing. When Paul says, "Let a man prove himself, and thus eat of the bread, and drink of the cup", I think it involves that he takes account of the state of his hands and feet, and washes at the laver before he comes near. "Washed as to our body with pure water" (Hebrews 10: 22) may be a reference to the laver, but most likely to the washing of Aaron and his sons at their consecration.

The fact that the laver was made "of the mirrors of the crowds of women who crowded before the entrance of the tent of meeting" shows that when the women got interested in the tent of meeting they did not want their mirrors any longer for purposes of vanity. So that the very material of the laver spoke of surrender, and a willingness to part with what might make something of self, in order that conditions of holy purity might be maintained.

In the laver we have a type of the removal of what is unsuitable; it is negative in character; but the anointing oil in the next section brings in what is positive. Every part of the tabernacle system was to come under the anointing, and

also Aaron and his sons. It speaks of the Spirit of Christ as that which is to give character to everything under the eye of God. The Spirit of the Man of God's pleasure is to be everywhere.

The "best spices" represent all those features of grace which were so perfectly blended and harmonized in the Spirit of Christ. "Liquid myrrh" comes first, and is in large quantity — five hundred shekels; it speaks of suffering love. Then "sweet cinnamon" and "sweet myrtle" — of each two hundred and fifty shekels; I do not attempt to define the significance of each, but sweetness is their predominant characteristic. "And of cassia five hundred". Nothing is of greater interest to the spiritual mind than to trace the different features of the Spirit of Christ as we may see them throughout Scripture. We may discern them in Old Testament saints, for the Spirit of Christ was in them; and we may see them prophetically revealed in rich abundance in the Psalms and the Prophets. Then what a study for the heart to ponder the varied excellencies of grace and faithfulness which were disclosed in Him as come in flesh! See the character of what He enjoined! And be assured that He enjoined nothing that was not perfectly exemplified in Himself. What must the Spirit be in which all can be carried out? In considering all this we may get some idea of the import of those sweet and fragrant spices all blended in "the holy anointing oil".

Then take the exhortations in the Epistles! To how many do they present themselves as a higher kind of law — an unattainable ideal! But how attractive do they all become when we discern in them the sweet fragrance of the Spirit of Christ! And that which expresses itself thus is *the very Spirit which we have* if we are of Christ. If we are of Christ and have His Spirit there is power to pursue that line, and no other line is in keeping with the anointing which we have received. The assembly is at the present time the anointed vessel. "All the members of the body, being many, are one body, *so also is the Christ*" (1 Corinthians 12: 12). The time will come when the sweet fragrance of the Spirit of Christ will be everywhere in the reconciled universe. No selfishness left, no hatred, variance, emulation, no back-biting! Every one and everything in the universe of bliss will come under the anointing. What pleasure for God! What peace and love and unity throughout the whole vast scene pervaded by the perfume of the holy anointing!

"Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured". The holy anointing cannot be connected with man in the flesh. It is the Spirit of another Man — even of the Man who is at God's right hand. It is not given to add something to man after the flesh to improve him, but on the ground that that man is wholly set aside.

Then there is a solemn warning against compounding any like it. I am afraid that there is a great deal which is simply an imitation of the Spirit of Christ —

man in the flesh restrained and cultivated, and led to adopt manners and deportment which look very like the fruit of the Spirit of Christ. We may even as believers be in danger of the same kind of thing in a modified way, but I trust there is with us a desire to be genuine, and not to be merely imitating in the flesh that which can only be real under the eye of God as in the Spirit of Christ.

The “incense”, which occupies the next section, is most important, for I understand it to typify how the Spirit of Christ expresses itself God-ward. It is an intercessory Spirit — a Spirit of prayer — that which was to be burned on the golden altar, “a continual incense before Jehovah throughout your generations”. I think that whatever is of the Spirit of Christ in saints will express itself first God-ward in prayer.

It is a wonderful thing to have the Spirit of Christ. It is just what marks off the saint from every other kind of person in the world. Let us be more than ever concerned that the Spirit of Christ should be in evidence, *and first of all in secret with God*. I feel sure there would be great expansion in holy and affectionate exercises God-ward if we laid ourselves out more to promote the freedom of the Spirit of Christ. It is very blessed to remember that there *are* spiritual affections in saints — they *have* the Spirit of Christ — but often those affections, and the desires proper to them, get trammelled and fettered; things are allowed which check their free flow and activity. And the first thing to be hindered generally is the free outgoing of the Spirit of Christ God-ward in prayer. The soul cannot then go on in the true power of the divine anointing, nor is there ability to give practical effect to that which we know to be the will of God.

What a delight to God to have the fragrance of that incense before Him! Saints appreciating all that is fragrant to God in the Spirit of Christ, so that they express in heart-breathings before Him desires and aspirations which are all on that line! The prayers of the saints are delightful to God because they voice the exercises, desires, and true dependence and confidence which mark the Spirit of Christ. I do not attempt to attach a specific meaning to each of the “fragrant drugs” of which the incense was compounded, but the fact that there were *four* seems to suggest the completeness with which spiritual exercises in relation to the interests of Christ are developed before God in the dependent affections of His saints.

Individually it may be taken up in detail. The scripture speaks of some of it being beaten “to powder”. Some feature of Christ impresses and attracts your heart; you long to be in the grace and power of it; your desires as to it are breathed out before God in holy confidence. Do you not think it is fragrant to

Him? It is the Spirit of Christ in you which thus in secret with God discloses itself, seeking from the only Source the grace and power which will enable you to express that which your heart cherishes. That is your grain of the "powder". But many hearts are taking up in similar exercise other grains, so that there is an answer "before the testimony" to all that the testimony means.

It is blessed to think of the Spirit of Christ in the saints coming out in the very nature and character of their prayers. True prayer is "most holy", for it is the expression to God of His own will and purpose as having become by the Spirit of Christ the desire of His saints. The first effect of a true appreciation of the moral glory of the Lord Jesus is that His graces and perfections become fragrant before God in our prayers. The very thing in which God delights comes back to Him in the affectionate desires and prayers of His saints. See a striking passage as to incense "among the nations" in Malachi 1: 11.

Then the incense was to be "salted, pure, holy". I think this speaks of true and godly exercise which would preserve us from formality and unreality. It is ever necessary to have salt in ourselves (Mark 9: 50), and in our prayers, and with all our offerings. It signifies a sincere and upright desire to be in the reality of things with God, and to be true to the ground which we take with Him. It is "the salt of the covenant of thy God" (Leviticus 2: 13).

The answer to this comes out in the next section, where we find spiritual ability conferred to construct the tabernacle. That is, there is ability by the Spirit of God to give effect to that which is made known to us, and this for the pleasure and glory of God.

EXODUS 31

Exodus 31

This is an important chapter, for it shows how provision is made for the carrying out of all that had been commanded. We do not get here the making of the tabernacle; that comes later in the book; but we see here *the calling and competency* by which it could be made. That is, we see here, typically, the assembly as a divinely called company of intelligent persons having wisdom and spiritual ability by which every feature of that which was set forth in the tabernacle can take form so as to be available for the service of God.

That there are such persons is the fruit of divine calling, and the names introduced here — like Old Testament names generally — are very suggestive. Bezaleel means “God is protection”. It is only as under divine protection that anything can be worked out in this world to a spiritual result that is pleasurable to God. Every saint and servant, and every bit of spiritual exercise and labour, is under divine protection. If it were not so, how quickly would the enemy get rid of it all! Whatever the lawlessness of the world may be, everything connected with the service of the true tabernacle will always be under divine protection. Then Uri — “Enlightened” — and Hur — “Purity” — indicate two great necessities in connection with that service. Aholiab means “The Father’s tent”; it speaks of the Father’s care in wilderness conditions. And Ahisamach is “A supporting brother”; this, too, is an element which must be present if things are to be worked out in a practical way.

Judah and Dan are brought together; the royal tribe, and the tribe that was to take the lead in apostasy. Such a selection speaks of divine sovereignty. God has taken pains to show by many examples that He acts from Himself, and that He does not find His motive in the character, conduct, or genealogy of those whom He blesses. It is a comfort to see that a man comes in from Dan as well as from Judah. It shows the principle on which *all* really come in; that is, as “vessels of mercy”.

Everything is to be brought about in the power of the Spirit of God. “I have called by name Bezaleel ... and have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge”, etc. I do not know anything more wonderful than the fact that provision is made for all the saints to be filled with the Spirit. So that we are exhorted to be filled (Ephesians 5: 18). The widow’s pot of oil never stayed until every vessel was *filled*. There is a vast supply available, so that the question may well be raised in each heart, Why am I not filled with the Spirit? It is a matter for real exercise. In connection with the tabernacle it is not a question whether we have great

natural abilities or not, but have we the Spirit of God? And are we cultivating and exercising our spiritual abilities? To be "wise-hearted" is to have the affections controlled by the Spirit of God, and furnished with the preciousness of Christ.

In connection with the Spirit there is great diversity "in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in every work". There is capability to handle every precious thing (see also Isaiah 11: 2). There is never anything unintelligent about what is of the Spirit. The simplest saint walking in the Spirit would be intelligent; he would not go beyond his depth, nor talk about what he did not know. The man in John 9 was, as we should say, a very young convert — a babe in Christ — but he made no mistakes. He did not go beyond what he knew. If it was only "one thing", he held to it. And as one ray of light after another came to him, he walked in it; he took steps in light.

The teaching of this chapter is that God makes provision for the working out of all that He has before Him, and of all that He puts before us, so that it may take form in the intelligent affections of His saints so as to be for His pleasure in them. He provides all the material; He enriches His people with Christ and the Spirit — with all that the gold, silver, copper, etc., speak of — so that it may be given back to Him as found in the affections of a willing-hearted people. But now all has to be fashioned through the skilful labour of those who are "wise-hearted", so that it may take the form under their hands which it had in the pattern shown on the mountain — that is, as it was in the mind of God.

There is a wondrous system of heavenly things, of which the tabernacle was "the representation and shadow" (Hebrews 8: 5), all connected with Christ as having come in flesh, and as having died and risen and gone to heaven as a glorified Man, and as having His saints identified with Him whether in privilege God-ward or in testimony man-ward. The tabernacle was "an image for the present time" (Hebrews 9: 9).

The pattern shown in the mountain is the whole system as seen in divine purpose. The wondrous types we have been considering may be looked at as representing what is true in Christ personally, or in the system of heavenly things viewed abstractly. But when we come to the *making* of them there is an added thought. It suggests Christ, and all that stands in relation to Him, as having taken form through holy exercises, and in the power of the Spirit, in the affections and spiritual intelligence of His saints down here. That this would practically exclude all fleshly and worldly elements is obvious, and it would result in a suited dwelling-place for God.

I think we can see in the apostles a God-given competency which corresponds with that conferred upon Bezaleel and Aholiab. They had their own special place in relation to the making of things in a spiritual sense. "And he has put in his heart to teach, he and Aholiab" (chapter 35: 34). The mind of God in regard to Christ and to the saints took shape in the souls and in the ministry of the apostles. They ministered what had been indelibly impressed on their souls in the power of the Holy Spirit. What precious conceptions of Christ were made good in Matthew and Mark and Luke and John! And all put together, too, in divine order in their souls, so that they could minister it, and write it, in perfect accord with the divine mind! You may say that their writings were inspired! Undoubtedly they were; thank God for it! But they wrote what they knew; they wrote what had really taken form by the Spirit in their minds and hearts. And why did they write? That the very apprehensions of Christ which they had might be in your soul and mine through divine teaching, and in the power of the Spirit of God.

Then take the Epistles! I suppose none of us doubts that what the five writers of the Epistles wrote had been made good in their own souls in the power of the Spirit of God! If we could have known Peter we should have seen and heard a man in whose heart and spiritual intelligence the things which he wrote were a living reality in the power of the Spirit of God. Those things characterized the man, and gave their impression to everything in his life and service. And it was so also with James and Jude and Paul and John. And they ministered, whether by word or pen, that Christ and all the precious things connected with Him might take definite form in the affections and spiritual intelligence of the saints — in those to whom they ministered, and in us and all saints.

The ascended Christ has given gifts "for the perfecting of the saints; with a view to the work of the ministry, with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ; until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ". The saints being brought to this would answer, in a way, to the construction and putting together of the tabernacle.

But it is not only apostles and special gifts who can make things; there is definite work for "every one that is wise-hearted". "And in the heart of every one that is wise-hearted have I given wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee". This would, in principle, include every one who has the Spirit, for such are viewed in Scripture as "intelligent persons" (1 Corinthians 10: 15). God has many wise-hearted ones endowed with ability to make things — to give definite form to precious spiritual realities. There is

great variety in the distribution of the Spirit. "There are distinctions of gifts, but the same Spirit But to each the manifestation of the Spirit is given for profit. For to one, by the Spirit, is given the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit; and to a different one faith, in the power of the same Spirit"; etc. (1 Corinthians 12: 4 - 11). It is to wise-hearted ones that Paul says, "Let the word of the Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another" (Colossians 3: 16).

There is work for sisters, too, for "every woman that was wise-hearted spun with her hands, and brought what she had spun" (chapter 35: 25, 26). Sisters may not minister the word publicly, but they can do much to draw together the different fibres of divine teaching in souls, so that things may be strengthened in view of all being woven together. The great thing is that in our intercourse with one another what is of God should be confirmed and consolidated. We should always be working on spiritually constructive lines — spinning and weaving, not pulling to pieces!

Each one of us has to make something for the tabernacle. One might say, How can I know what my bit is? Well, you arrive at it by way of the exercises outlined in chapter 30. One who holds himself as ransomed, and keeps his hands and feet clean at the laver, and gives place to the anointing, and who prays in the Holy Spirit, will not lack intelligence as to what he should make. It is indicated to us by our exercises in relation to what comes before us as divine light, and by being "filled with the full knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so as to walk worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by the true knowledge of God" (Colossians 1: 9, 10). This comes through prayer; the fact that it takes that form in Scripture indicates the way to arrive at it. "The full knowledge of his will" would include every part of the tabernacle.

It is in the making of the things that we are tested as to the state of our hearts, and as to whether we have wisdom by the Spirit. The end in view is that what is before the mind of God should come into being in such a way that it affords pleasure to God as formed in the souls of His saints, so that they can serve Him in relation to all the precious spiritual realities of which the tabernacle types were a figure. But what this chapter presents is not exactly the making of the things, but that there is divinely given competency to make them. The actual making comes later in the book.

In the seventh and closing section of this part of Exodus (verses 12 - 17) we come to the sabbath, the appropriate conclusion to which all tends. Provision having been made for giving effect to everything that was in the will of God,

the thought of divine rest is introduced. The sabbath contemplates the making of all that God could delight in — the completion of the whole tabernacle according to the heavenly pattern. It was after “in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth” that “on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed”. But the sabbath of Exodus 31 is greater than that of Genesis 2: 1 - 3. For *this* sabbath comes in consequent upon the thought of the whole will of God as set forth in the tabernacle being brought into effect. When all is made there can be a holy rest. God can rest, and His hallowed people can rest with Him.

There is that being made now in which the perfect rest of divine love will be secured. The saints “are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood”. “All the building fitted together increases to a holy temple in the Lord”. All that was in the mind and will of the blessed God is being made good in His saints in the power of the Holy Spirit that the whole system of grace and glory which was figured in the tabernacle may be brought into being for His pleasure and rest.

All that God has in His mind for Israel and the nations, and their service to Him, will be carried out in a coming day so that there may be a sabbath of holy rest. But it will be carried out in the light of what is heavenly, and all that is heavenly is being brought about now through spiritual labour and exercise in the assembly. The tabernacle was “the representation and shadow of heavenly things”, but we have to do with “the heavenly things themselves”. As they take form in our souls by the power of the Spirit of God we can serve God in relation to them, and conditions will be brought about suitable to His dwelling.

I think it is in the light of the tabernacle system, and of its taking form for the pleasure of God, that He adds the words — “and was refreshed”. God was refreshed because even in the material creation He was forming a sphere where all His own blessed thoughts of grace and glory in Christ could be worked out. Those thoughts first came to light in a definite, though figurative, form in the tabernacle, and in the light of them all being brought into effect God could, as it were, carry back into Genesis 2 a secret not before revealed. When God made the heavens and the earth He had “the holy universal order” of the tabernacle in His mind. He was making a material universe, and this in itself could not afford Him refreshment. But He was making it so that it might be the scene for the introduction of “the holy order of the tabernacle, which represented the vast scene in which God’s glory is displayed in Christ” (see note in New Translation to Hebrews 9: 1). And in view of the introduction of this He “was refreshed”.

As all that comprises the order and furnishing of the tabernacle takes form with us in a spiritual sense,

there is rest and refreshment for God, and His people participate in it. It means that the wealth and blessedness of Christ, and of the will and glory of God in Christ, have taken form in the affections and spiritual intelligence of His saints. Every bit added to that affords God pleasure. It is the working out of what He has given, by persons divinely called for this very purpose, and in a power and competency that is wholly of Himself. In result God will "rest in his love".

The sabbath speaks of things being brought to completion, so that there is no more work to be done; all is finished, and there is holy rest for God and for His people. We have not yet reached the sabbath, but we are going on to it, and every bit of work for the tabernacle is in view of it. In the meantime it is a refreshment for God to see His blessed will in Christ getting more place with us, and taking definite shape. The work is going on; the earthly being displaced by the heavenly; the natural by the spiritual; what is of self and of the mind of man giving place to what is of Christ and of the Spirit!

EXODUS 32

Exodus 32

It would be happy if we could pass directly from what has been before us to the construction of the tabernacle. But to do so would be to ignore matters which, though sorrowful and humbling, are necessary to be known. If there were nothing to consider but the pattern shown in the mount, and the divinely given ability to make things according to it, all would be simple. But there are other elements of a very contrary nature: the power of Satan, and that upon which he can work even in the people of God; that is, the flesh. The result of this is that much has been brought into evidence which has no resemblance to the tabernacle system, but is positively idolatrous. And this has not been done in a corner, but so as to characterize the mass of those who are nominally Christian.

We must all have felt that there is a tremendous contrast between what we have been considering in the types of the tabernacle, and what goes on in the public profession of Christianity. God has given the light of the true tabernacle — the heavenly system — but if we look at the public result in this world we see a state of things which corresponds with the sad history in the chapter now before us. We can see the danger anticipated when Paul warns the Corinthians against idolatry (1 Corinthians 10: 7, 14), and when John exhorts the whole family of God to “keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5: 21). And we know that there was idolatry in assemblies in Asia while John was in Patmos (Revelation 2: 14, 20). If idolatry had already come in while the apostles were here, we cannot wonder if it has developed since.

Christ has gone on high, and His people are left without a visible leader. But before He went away He said, “Ye believe on God, believe also on me” (John 14: 1). He is the Object of faith, though unseen, and it was getting away from that which led to idolatry coming in amongst the people of God. There were soon to be found those who might well have said of Christ, “We do not know what is become of him”! The affections and interests that should have been bound up with Christ in heaven, and with the whole system of heavenly things of which the tabernacle was a type, became engaged with material objects on earth.. Religious leaders, too, caused the people of God to err. It is sad to think of Aaron — the one marked out for such honour as priest — lending himself to the making of the molten calf. It shows how even good men can come under evil influences. I suppose that much that is idolatrous in its nature has been furthered in christendom by good men — true saints of God.

Jehovah was Israel's glory — God their Saviour — but how soon they forgot Him, and "changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass"! (Psalm 106: 19 - 21). We see here what the flesh is. Ready to forget everything that has come in as light and deliverance from God, and instead of making a sanctuary for God to dwell amongst them, making a calf to shut Him out completely!

The tabernacle was "the figurative representations of the things in the heavens". It set forth in figure what is connected with Christ in heaven. As soon as that system came into view the enemy was busy at work to introduce elements of idolatry and man-pleasing. His object was that Christ in heaven should be forgotten, that men should rejoice in the works of their own hands, and that material things should displace what is spiritual. He would have men to carry on religious services — burnt-offerings and peace-offerings — and he would connect God's Name with it all (see verses 5, 6), but all to please men, not God. "The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to sport"! How many things are carried on as the service of God, and His Name connected with them, which are done to please men, and which are really idolatrous in character because they serve to shut out what God is as revealed in grace in His beloved Son!

Now, we may ask, Why is all this brought before us? Well, in the first place, that we may learn what we are according to the flesh; and that we may see that the flesh is not changed even in those who have had the most remarkable opportunities of knowing the true God and experiencing His saving and sustaining power and grace. This casts faith entirely on God, and brings about a thorough ceasing from man whose breath is in his nostrils. It prepares the exercised soul to see that all must depend on what God is, as known in the sovereignty of mercy, and on what He effects in His people by His own work in the power of the Spirit. It results in the learning of God's ways and glory much more deeply than before. So that He may have a truly devoted and intelligent people who can make the tabernacle "according to all that Jehovah had commanded".

None of the precious thoughts set forth in the tabernacle could be established in connection with man in the flesh. That order of man could not make the tabernacle. Indeed this was clearly intimated in chapter 31 by the fact that divine calling and endowment, and a God-given state of heart, were essential to that work. A new order of man characterized by the presence of the Spirit and by divine teaching could alone give effect to what was in the will of God.

Then there is also much instruction here as to the peculiar exercises which faith has to take up in presence of conditions amongst the people of God

which are dishonouring to Him. We see the course which faith takes, and by which God is honoured, under such circumstances. This is viewed in several different aspects. We see, too, the faithfulness of God to His promise, but also His dealing in righteous government with that which displeases Him.

God has come out as a Saviour-God that He might be the "glory" of His creature once fallen and lost. A head bowed to glorify Him as God, and a heart uplifted in thankfulness to Him, will preserve us from idolatry (see Romans 1: 21). But "a stiff-necked people" (verse 9) will not bow, will not glorify God as God; there is *will* at work. This ever marks the actings of the flesh. But if I do not bow in subdued thankfulness before God I shall inevitably bow to something that is of the creature, and lose my true glory. We have adversaries who love to see us stripped of our gold (see verse 25). It is what is of God that is our gold — our true glory — and we give it up if we become idolaters. It would be good for us to cherish our true glory more. Everything that I can glory in according to the flesh is really a shame to me. People glory in their self-will, but that is truly their shame. Man is only in honour when God has His place with him. How careful should we be not to corrupt ourselves! If God is not before us as the One whom we love to glorify, and towards whom we are thankful, and if Christ is not a present reality to us as living in heaven, you may depend upon it that some form of idolatry is not far off.

The intercession of Moses is very beautiful. He would not accept Jehovah's proposal to make of him a great nation. He reminded God of the great deliverance which He had effected for His people. Then he reminded Him of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, His servants, and of the promise that the seed would be secured for the inheritance. He put all on the ground of redemption and promise. That could not be suffered to fail whatever the people were. In Moses we see one who would view the people from the standpoint of God's actings and promises, and not from the standpoint of what they were according to the flesh; and this is where faith comes in. He knew God; it says he "besought Jehovah *his God*"; he addressed One whom he knew personally; it is a beautiful touch. We can always fall back upon what God has done, and upon His promise and purpose, and faith views the people of God in the light of that. It connects them with God; "*thy people*"; and what a difference that makes!

What a contrast there is here between Aaron and Moses! Aaron afraid of the people and, instead of protesting against their idolatrous wishes, actually making the calf; and then excusing himself in a way which is just a sample of the kind of excuses people make for doing evil (verse 24). Moses comes down in an energy that could take a stand single-handed against six hundred

thousand men, that could execute judgment on their sin, and maintain what was due to God. It is just the contrast between the servant who is *with men* and the servant who is *with God*. If a man acts *with God* he always acts in power. He may have plenty of exercise as to his own weakness in secret, but in public he acts in power and with no uncertainty or hesitation.

"Jehovah repented of the evil that he had said he would do to his people". He would not consume them. But it was evident that the people as in the flesh could not bear the law. It must have utterly condemned them. So it was permitted of God that Moses should shatter the tables, as a striking figure of the fact that, so far as man in the flesh is concerned, His law is a broken and dishonoured thing. But Moses had been told on the mount of the Ark of the testimony. He knew that God had in His mind an Ark in which those tables would be cherished and secure. Before the breakdown of the people God had made known that He had Christ in reserve, and that the Ark and the Mercy-seat were the centre of *His* system. His will would be secured in Christ, and would be available in pure mercy for the blessing of men. The utter failure of the people was to teach them, and us too, the absolute necessity for this.

Moses coming down from the mountain to expose and judge what was going on in the camp is very much like the Lord's attitude in Revelation 2, Revelation 3. He takes His place in the midst of the seven lamps to pass judgment upon what is evil and idolatrous, and also to take account of such faithfulness as might answer to what was found in the sons of Levi.

Moses "took the calf that they had made, and burned it with fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it on the water, and made the children of Israel drink it". This is very solemn. If I make an idol I shall have to drink it in bitterness; I shall have to taste what it really is. God is set on reality with His people, and if we play with things of an idolatrous nature God will teach us, sooner or later, the real character of what we have played with. "Whatever a man shall sow, that also shall he reap. For he that sows to his own flesh, shall reap corruption from the flesh; but he that sows to the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap eternal life" (Galatians 6: 7, 8). In thinking much of God's *grace* we must also remember His righteous *government*; it is as certain and inexorable as His grace is rich and free. I suppose there are few saints who have not, at one time or another, had to drink the consequences of idolatry. We got an object before us which for the time displaced God, and we had eventually to taste its true character. This is to make us flee from idolatry. God does not deal with us merely in a punitive way, but as instructing us in love that we may "profit, in order to the partaking of his holiness" (Hebrews 12: 10). He wants us to be as far apart morally from everything that is evil as He is Himself.

Then there is a further thing — a call for action. “Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, He that is for Jehovah, let him come to me. And all the sons of Levi gathered to him. And he said to them, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: Put every man his sword upon his hip; go and return from gate to gate through the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his neighbour”. In a day of departure if we would have the Lord’s approval we must be overcomers. This is manifest in Revelation 2, Revelation 3. The sword must be drawn against every influence that corrupts the people of God, even though it may have place in those nearest to us. It might seem very severe to treat brethren, friends, neighbours in this way, but it was the only way to be consecrated to Jehovah, and to secure His blessing. When what is due to the Lord is in question it is with those nearest to you that you have to be most decided. There is no particular consecration in drawing the sword against people you care nothing about. But to take a definite stand for the Lord against influences which are not of Him even in those that you regard and truly love secures great blessing. See the wonderful blessing Levi got in Deuteronomy 33: 8 - 11!

If I am going on with something that does not recognize the rights of Christ, or maintain what is due to God, the kindest thing you can do is to take a definite stand against it. I may *now* call you narrow, uncharitable, bigoted! But when I meet you in the light of the judgment seat of Christ I shall thank you for it!

But if we speak of drawing the sword in this way, let us remember that the same man who said in the camp, “Slay every man his brother” went up to Jehovah and said, “And now, if thou wilt forgive their sin ... but if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book that thou hast written”. It was the same Spirit of Christ which led him to take a decided stand in public against those who had allowed what was contrary to God that led him to go up and pray for them in secret with such intense yearning for their good. He went as far as it was possible for man to go in the way of self-sacrifice. He could not be made a curse for them; only the Blessed One could go to that depth; but he was truly in the Spirit of Christ. It might be thought that slaying the people and interceding for them were not consistent. But the same Spirit of Christ that would stand for Jehovah even against the nearest and dearest was the Spirit that would plead with God to be blotted out rather than that they should not be forgiven. The man who takes the strongest ground against me when I am wrong, and when I have set aside what is due to the Lord, is probably the one who prays most for me.

There is a solemn word here as to the government of God. Jehovah's Angel would go before Moses, "but in the day of my visiting I will visit their sin upon them". It was more than seven hundred years before the sin was visited in the captivity (see Amos 5: 25 - 27). The wheels of God's government go round slowly, but very surely.

EXODUS 33

Exodus 33

God could not go up in the midst of a stiff-necked people, and when the people heard this "they mourned; and no man put on his ornaments". If God's people find that He is not with them it is well to mourn. To take the low place is always open to them, and it is the first step to blessing. The way divine light has come in as to what is suitable in the present state of things is through the people of God taking a low place, and putting off their ornaments. All around us Christendom is putting on as many ornaments as possible, but the wisdom of faith is to take a low place and put them off. They put off their ornaments at Corinth when they got the first epistle. When we do that He opens up a path for those that love Him.

"And Moses took the tent, and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp; and called it the Tent of meeting. And it came to pass that every one who sought Jehovah went out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp". Moses realized that the holiness of God required separation from the camp which had become characterized by what was idolatrous, and that each individual who sought Jehovah must go out to the tent of meeting. It is a striking picture of present-day conditions. There is the "camp" today — the outward and public order of Christianity — but it is marked under the eye of the Lord by men rejoicing in the work of their own hands. The Lord is not in the midst of that, and it is realizing this that moves those that love Him. I doubt whether realizing the evils and departure ever, in itself, moves persons in a spiritual way. But when a heart that loves the Lord realizes that it is in conditions which the Lord cannot countenance, the desire is awakened to be where He can be. "Every one who sought Jehovah went out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp". It ought to be wonderfully good news to everyone who loves the Lord that we can "go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Hebrews 13: 13).

The Lord is awakening the hearts of His people everywhere to seek Him. Nothing but affection will set us in movement. I suppose that every believer on earth is conscious of the evils that have come into the Christian profession, but how many remain in the camp! Moses pitched the tent, but it was the working of affection with each one that made them go out. It raises the question with each one of us individually as to whether we know what this means. It is not that they saw a nice few together, and joined them, but each one went out because he sought the Lord. It is going out to seek Him whose presence cannot be known or enjoyed in the camp. "Let every one who names

the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity". Those who find the Lord will find one another, for Moses called it "the tent of meeting"; it suggests a divine rallying point. One would like to raise the question with every believer, Have you sought the Lord, and found Him, "outside the camp"?

It would appear that there were not many who went out. The majority stood at their tent doors, interested in Moses, and looking after him, and seeing the pillar of cloud stand at the entrance of the tent, even worshipping, but not going out! They seem to represent those who have reverence for divine things, and are interested in the truth, but who remain in the camp. God-fearing persons, but not knowing the presence of the Lord in its attractive and satisfying power. There is no satisfaction for the Lord in tent-door worship; it does not go beyond our side of things. He wants us in *His* tent! "Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God" (John 20: 17). There were face to face communications at the Tent of meeting. It makes one think of John 20, when the Lord came into the midst. Each heart there was seeking Him, for they had been gathered by the message He sent His brethren, and they found Him. Is not such a privilege worth going in for? It is the Lord as having gone through death, and in the character of One ascending to the Father, who was known in the midst of His own. How completely it puts one outside all that is connected with "the camp"!

This section closes with a double type — Moses returning to the camp, and Joshua departing not from within the tent. Moses represents the energy of love that would serve the people of God. It is a man with whom Jehovah has spoken "face to face, as a man speaks with his friend" who can return to serve the people of God in all the holy separation of the spot where he has been, and of the communications which have been made to him. Such a man would not compromise the truth, nor would he allow himself to be entangled with what compromised the truth, but he would be in readiness to serve all in grace and faithfulness in relation to the will of God. But such service ever has as its attendant the spirit of Joshua. Whatever activities of service there may be, *in spirit* the servant does not leave his sweet retreat; he is always in spirit "outside the camp". His affections have their abiding place there; his satisfaction and rest is in the Lord.

From chapter 32: 1 to 33: 11 is one section. It stands in relation to the camp, and the divine judgment of the idolatry which displeases and displaces God, and it shows the action of faith in relation to the camp as marked by idolatry. But chapter 33: 12 begins another section which stands connected with Moses as the man who has found grace in God's eyes — typically Christ.

In chapter 32 we have painful evidence of what the flesh is, and of how Satan can work upon it even in those who are the people of God. And the flesh never comes out in a sadder or more humbling way than when its activities appear in those who profess to know God. To recognize this, and to know how faith acts so as to maintain what is due to God with reference to it, is very essential.

But it is refreshing to the spirit to turn from the enemy's workings, and from that which shows what the flesh is, to see what God is about, and the ways by which He reaches His own ends. One could not for a moment suppose that God would allow Himself to be baffled by the enemy, or that what he purposed should fail to be accomplished. And, indeed, it is in seeing God's ways in presence of man's utter failure that we get to know Him. And in becoming the subjects of those ways we become such as He can take for His inheritance, and such, too, as can make the tabernacle.

This brings us to the consideration of a distinction which it is most important that we should understand. That is, the difference between Israel according to flesh and the true "Israel of God" — "the children of the promise". Our attention is called to this in Romans 9, where the scripture now before us is quoted. Israel according to flesh represents those who are in outward relation with God as His people. Persons baptized and partaking of sacraments (see 1 Corinthians 10), but with most of whom God is not pleased. Many will say to the Lord, "We have eaten in thy presence and drunk, and thou hast taught in our streets; and he shall say, I tell you, I do not know you whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity" (Luke 13: 26, 27). To be in outward relation with God by profession and by sacraments is one thing; to be truly "children of the promise", "vessels of mercy", and to be found among the "remnant according to election of grace" is another. If we do not see this clearly we may attribute an efficacy to what is outward which it does not possess, and be grievously deceived, perhaps to our eternal ruin. And we may delude ourselves into the belief that things are of God because they are held in veneration by the mass of those who profess to know Him, when they may be really as idolatrous as the worship of the golden calf.

From chapter 33: 12 what is in view is "the Israel of God" — Israel viewed by Moses as "the children of the promise"; though he knew well what they were according to flesh. Jehovah had said to Moses, "I know thee by name" (verse 12). This carries our minds back to the thorn-bush in chapter 3, for it was there only that we read of Jehovah addressing him by name. He there made Himself known as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and He declared that He was come down to deliver His people, and

that He would be with Moses, and that the sign to Moses that God had sent him would be that they should "serve God upon this mountain". God having pledged Himself to this, it must be accomplished for His own glory, whatever the contrariety of the people might be. Indeed that contrariety presented itself to Moses in this chapter as an occasion for the development of God's ways, and of the knowledge of Him. And therefore he prays, "If indeed I have found grace in thine eyes, make me now to know thy ways, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thine eyes; and consider that this nation is thy people"!

God had made promises, He had sworn by Himself, and His promises ensured that there should be a "seed as the stars of heaven". Now Moses looks to know the ways of God in relation to His people. His *ways* are the course which He takes in faithfulness in order to give effect to that which He has promised. Could any other but God move in such a matter as this? Moses might well say, "Thou dost not let me know whom thou wilt send with me". He knew well that no other but Jehovah could go with him in such a way as to secure the fulfilment of divine promise.

Jehovah answers, "My presence shall go, and I will give thee rest". He undertakes to go — not because of one good thing in the people, but — in faithfulness to His own promise, and to give rest to every desire in the heart of the one who had found grace in His eyes — typically Christ. How wonderful to consider the place that Christ has with God! A blessed Man in the unclouded sunshine of divine favour! And One who delights to identify Himself with His saints — "I and thy people" (verse 16) twice repeated. All turns now on the place that Christ has with God, and on the fact that He identifies the people with Himself. If we believe on Him we are entitled to the comfort of knowing this. The Lord Jesus has identified us with Himself before God unalterably and eternally.

Jehovah going with His people, as identified in pure grace with Christ, secures their being distinguished "from every people that is on the face of the earth". It ensures that instead of being consumed because of our stiff-neckedness we shall be disciplined and brought under divine teaching, so that the stiff-neckedness may be all set aside, and that we shall be brought into conformity with God so as to become His inheritance. God going with His people involves this — His ways all lead to it — and thus are they distinguished "from every people that is on the face of the earth".

Jehovah promises to do this in grace, and this leads Moses to the further request, "Let me, I pray thee, see thy glory". He rises to the blessed thought that God's glory is the glory of grace, and he longs to see it. But that glory

could only come into view when man in the flesh was altogether hidden. It could only be seen as having passed by that spot where man was covered "in a cleft of the rock". "I will make all my goodness pass before thy face, and I will proclaim the name of Jehovah before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy".

The goodness of God; and His sovereign grace and mercy, are the only source and security of blessing for man, or of satisfaction for God in the accomplishment of His promises and the purposes of His love. All must be dependent on what God is, and He has caused that to shine forth in a wonderful way. Moses being put "in a cleft of the rock", and covered with God's hand, is man being put out of sight. It is a figure of Christ being found in death, that in His death man after the flesh might disappear from view, and that God might be revealed. If God had not "passed by" that way we never could have known Him. We cannot, as it were, meet God on His way, and anticipate what He will do. It is only after He has "passed by" that faith can see how perfect, and how worthy of Himself, are His ways. No one could have apprehended beforehand such things as the incarnation, and the accomplishment of redemption by the death of the Son of God. But when God has passed by that way we can see the beauty and perfection of it, and can, like Moses, bow our heads and worship. Promises there might be which showed that God had the end before Him from the beginning, but on man's side it could only be apprehended when it was past. God's ways are known in Christ, and by the death of Christ, and in result His glory is seen in the face of the Mediator of the new covenant. And that glory is now a conforming power that brings those who behold it into correspondence with it. God thus secures that His people, under new covenant conditions, are taught to know Him, and they become expressive of what He is. "This people have I formed for myself: they shall show forth my praise".

EXODUS 34

Exodus 34

The parallel between this chapter and 2 Corinthians 3 is obvious to every reader. Both chapters begin with a reference to tables prepared to receive divine writing, and end with glory shining in the face of the Mediator. 2 Corinthians 3 is the New Testament counterpart to Exodus 34. The tables here differ from those which were broken, inasmuch as these were fashioned under the hand of one who was in the blessedness of divine favour, and they were taken up by him to God.

God having made Himself known as acting in sovereign grace and mercy, and having one before Him who had found grace in His eyes — typically Christ — the thought could be introduced of the fashioning *down here* of tables suitable to be divinely written upon. In 2 Corinthians 3 the saints are seen to be the tables upon which there is divine writing. These are not “stone tables” but “fleshy tables of the heart”. It indicates that men have become the subjects of a divine work sovereignly wrought, so that, as in relation with Christ, they may take divine impressions and answer to them.

The first tables were broken to indicate that in connection with man as in the flesh all was hopeless. But then God falls back, if we may so say, on His own sovereignty as that by which alone His promises could be made good, and a people secured for His pleasure. And this leads to the thought of other tables being hewn on which the covenant might be written. It is a figure of that which will take place as to Israel in a coming day, when Ezekiel 36: 24 - 28 will be fulfilled. “And I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your uncleannesses and from all your idols will I cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and keep mine ordinances, and ye shall do them”. In new covenant conditions there will be new tables, for men will become the subjects of a divine work, and as such they will be capable of receiving and retaining divine impressions and answering to them for God’s pleasure, as having His Spirit within them. Jeremiah 31: 31 - 34 shows what God will write in the tables which He has formed.

Now *the spirit of all this* is made good in the saints today. There are “fleshy tables” under the hand of the Mediator. Hearts made tender and impressionable so that what God is in the grace of the new covenant can be written upon them. Simon said, “I am a sinful man, Lord” (Luke 5); the

woman of Luke 7 wept at the feet of Jesus, attracted by the forgiving grace of the Creditor; Saul of Tarsus, subdued in the presence of the glorified One, said, "What shall I do, Lord?" We see in each of these — and in how many others! — hearts made impressionable God-ward. Who could bring this about, in those whose hearts are naturally as hard as the nether mill-stone, but God? It is effected in the sovereignty of His mercy.

The saints at Corinth had been "manifested to be Christ's epistle ministered by us, written, not with ink, but the Spirit of the living God; not on stone tables, but on fleshy tables of the heart". Their hearts being made impressionable by divine working, Christ could write upon them, using Paul as a pen, and making every mark in the power of the Spirit of God. But what is written is the knowledge of God as revealed through the Mediator in the grace of the new covenant, so that it might be true in the hearts of the saints — "They shall all know me". Then Paul goes on to speak of himself as made competent by God to be a new covenant minister, "not of letter, but of spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit quickens ... Now the Lord is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3: 6, 17. Note that verses 7 to 16 are a parenthesis). This brings in a very blessed thought. We have to do with One who not only makes known to us perfectly in Himself the grace and love of God, but who quickens those who believe on Him so that they *live* in the knowledge of God, and are in liberty with God as having the Spirit of the Lord. He thus secures a living response to God. That is the character of what is going on now.

I need hardly say that we do not get the new covenant in Exodus 34. The time had not come for that. It was *literally* the ministry of death and condemnation, and the glory had to be veiled. But it had an "end" (2 Corinthians 3: 13) upon which the children of Israel could not fix their eyes. They will see that "end" in another day, but in the meantime we are privileged to read the old covenant without a veil,

and to see that Christ is the Spirit of it all, and that it had in view that which could only have its fulfilment under new covenant conditions.

In the light of what Jehovah proclaimed Himself to be, "Moses made haste, and bowed his head to the earth and worshipped"; he appealed to Him as Adonai (Lordship in blessing) to go in the midst of them. He fully owned what the people were, but counted upon the One who was supreme in mercy and grace to go with them. His going with them would involve the pardon of their iniquity and sin, but "take us for an inheritance" would involve His discipline — His dealing with all stiff-neckedness so as to remove it — and formation in all that was pleasurable to Him. It was a great request. But if Moses knew the people he also knew his God. He knew the promises; he knew what the

people must be if they were to be God's inheritance; and he counted on God to bring it all about. His prayer will yet be answered in the day when Jehovah will say, "Blessed be ... Israel mine inheritance!" (Isaiah 19: 25).

But through what a course of discipline under God's government will Moses' prayer be answered! Jehovah said, "Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels that have not been done in all the earth", etc. I think this has in view, not only the driving out of "the inhabitants of the land", but all that God would do with Israel in order that they might be truly an inheritance for Him. Just *because* God has chosen His people, and known them, and wrought in them, and, made known His grace and the purpose of His love to them, He must deal with all the stiff-neckedness of their flesh in His government and discipline.

For it is to be noted that His government goes on alongside His mercy and grace (see verses 6, 7). We must never forget this. In the kingdom of God mercy and grace are supreme, but there is government there also. "Whatever a man shall sow, that also shall he reap" (Galatians 6: 7). "He that does a wrong shall receive the wrong he has done, and there is no respect of persons" (Colossians 3: 25). The word of Amos is very striking as to this; it is addressed to "the whole family that I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities. Shall two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 3: 1 - 3). All these governmental dealings are to displace from God's people the things of which He cannot approve. He must have us in agreement with Himself, and if we allow that which displeases Him He must make us feel that He is displeased, and that the fruit of our stiff-neckedness is bitter.

Then God would have His people to consider that their course will affect their children. I think He intends that to touch them in a tender spot. A man must be hard who can go on indifferently in a course which he knows will have baneful consequences for his children. If a parent gets away from the Lord, and out of touch with his brethren, what kind of crop is he sowing for his children to reap? It is one of the saddest things in connection with spiritual decline and departure that the children suffer.

But a people walking in the Spirit find the government of God always in their favour. It is "glory and honour and peace to every one that works good" (Romans 2: 7, 10). "Knowing that whatever good each shall do, this he shall receive of the Lord, whether bond or free" (Ephesians 6: 8). God's government ensures that we shall be compensated for any suffering or loss that may be entailed by faithfulness and obedience.

David displeased Jehovah, and to the end of his days he suffered in the government of God. But he bowed to it, and then it was turned to good account, so that his last days were his best. As disciplined and subdued he received by the Spirit the pattern of the temple, and of all the service connected with it (1 Chronicles 28: 11 - 19). And he devoted all his accumulated treasure to the house of Jehovah. The flesh being practically rebuked and subdued under discipline, the true devotedness of his heart came out.

God produces in His people that which He can work on, and He goes on with them patiently in mercy and grace, in government and discipline, and continually ministering Christ to them. He works in a thousand ways to rebuke and set aside what is of the flesh in them, and to bring them into correspondence with Himself, so that He may have pleasure in them. "Take us for an inheritance" suggests that God is to have His portion and satisfaction in His people. What could bring it about but His own power, and the sovereignty of His mercy?

The covenant in this chapter is made with Moses and with Israel (verse 27), That is, it is made with the Mediator — typically Christ — and with the people as identified with Him. "Behold, I make a covenant": God engages Himself unalterably, and He will carry through that which He has before Him.

The great elementary and foundation principles of covenant relations with God are briefly touched on again, but in a new connection. All stands now in relation to the fact that One Man has found grace in God's eyes, and that the people are viewed as identified with Him. In His death — typified by Moses being put in a cleft of the rock — man after the flesh has been hidden, as it were, from God's sight, so that in verse 3 no other man is in view but the One who has found grace. And He comes out of the cleft to be the Mediator with glory shining in His face. Now if all that God is, as made known in Christ and through His death, is before us, we shall realise that our true happiness for time and eternity is bound up with the knowledge of Him. If I allow an idol to come in I rob my heart of its true joy as well as robbing God of what He values.

Jehovah pledges Himself to deal with all the enemies of His people, but on their part they were to make no covenant with them. There must be absolute separation from all that would rob God of His place in their hearts. Everything that would displace this blessed God must be demolished, shattered, and hewn down (verse 13). People often ask, What is an idol? We have no list of idols because each one has to find out for himself what his idol is — what it is that displaces God from His due place in his heart. Break it, whatever it is! If I

allow an idol to steal my heart away I am a loser, but what about His side? I know nothing more touching than what we get here, "Jehovah — Jealous is his name — is a jealous God" (verse 14). How it expresses the love of God for His people! It is as much as to say, I love my people so intensely that I cannot bear to be deprived of their affections. Have you really thought that God values your affections?

Then the feast of unleavened bread must be kept; God has provided us with it in Christ. He has brought in a new character of Manhood that we might feed upon it, and purge out all that is contrary to it. We see everywhere in the world an inflating principle, giving importance to that which has no true value before God. But in Christ we see One marked by purity, holiness, sincerity, and truth; all that is delightful to God; and nothing inflated — nothing appearing to be greater than it really was. When they said to Him, Who art thou? He answered, "Altogether that which I also say to you". That is unleavened bread, and as we appreciate it and feed upon it, we shall become unleavened; we shall hate and purge out every kind of leaven.

The claim of God over the first-born is to be owned. What is sheltered must be hallowed, and only held as ransomed. And in this connection we get, "None shall appear before me empty". How, indeed, could a ransomed one appear empty? He must surely have an appreciation of Christ — a note of praise!

Then the rest of the seventh day must be observed, and the distinctive feature of it in this case is that "in ploughing time and in harvest thou shalt rest". It intimates the necessity for recurring periods in which we cease from activity to contemplate in rest what God has done. The sabbaths must be kept, no matter what the needs of the Lord's work may be; for I suppose that ploughing time and harvest might typify the most exacting and strenuous times in His work. The soul must know what it is to lay aside its activities, and have its rest with God. I am afraid we do not always keep our sabbaths. We are either doing something, or occupied with what we are going to do. There is not enough restfulness with God.

Observing "the feast of weeks" comes next. That is Pentecost; it typifies all that is connected with the presence of the Spirit on earth. At Pentecost the Spirit came down, and "the first-fruits of wheat-harvest" appeared — a company here on earth after the order of Christ. The wave-sheaf of the first-fruits (Leviticus 23: 10, 11) is Christ Himself in resurrection (1 Corinthians 15: 23), and that would be a sheaf of barley, for barley-harvest came before wheat-harvest. Barley only appeared in the offerings as the "oblation of jealousy, a memorial oblation, bringing iniquity to remembrance" (Numbers 5: 15). It might speak of Christ as having come under all the consequences of

His people's unfaithfulness and sin. Barley was also paid as the price of the adulteress whom Hosea had to take — another figure of the unfaithfulness of Israel (Hosea 3). But Christ, having charged Himself with all the sins of His people, has died for them, and the wave-sheaf of barley is the risen Christ, clear of all the sins that He died for, and of death itself, so that His people are no longer in their sins, but in Christ the risen One.

But wheat represents what Christ is as the Pattern or Parent-grain of an entirely new order. He is the Grain of wheat who fell into the ground and died that He might bring forth much fruit after His own order (John 12: 24). To observe "the first-fruits of wheat-harvest" is to apprehend what the assembly is as being, by the Spirit, in the life of Christ, so that He is reproduced and continued in them for the pleasure of God and for testimony here.

We must first learn Christ as the One who has died for our sins. He has borne the judgment due to His people for their unfaithfulness. The waving of the sheaf of first-fruits "on the next day after the Sabbath" indicated that everything had been cleared away connected with their unfaithfulness, and the risen One was accepted for them (Leviticus 23: 11). Then we can learn Christ as the Grain of wheat who fell into the ground and died that there might be much fruit after His order — that saints as having the Spirit might be "the first-fruits of wheat-harvest".

Ruth and Naomi "came to Bethlehem in the beginning of the barley-harvest" (Ruth 1: 22), and Ruth "kept with the maidens of Boaz to glean, until the end of the barley-harvest and of the wheat-harvest". The end of it was that she became united to Boaz, and brought forth a son who was named Obed — "Worshipper". We are permitted to "glean even among the sheaves" in the field of the true Boaz, and if we learn with God what the wave-sheaf of barley and "the first-fruits of wheat-harvest" really mean, we shall know what it is to be married to Another, who has been raised up from among the dead, and there will be true service and worship for God.

Then "the feast of ingathering at the turn of the year" looks on to the accomplishment of every divine thought in the dispensation of the fulness of times. Everything will be gathered in that is for God's glory and man's blessing! Not a single proposal of divine love that has not come to fruition! We anticipate it as knowing Jesus glorified. Everything has been gathered in, not yet on earth, but in a glorified Christ in courts above. And the Spirit has been given to bring the joy of it into saints on earth, so that it might flow out in refreshing power to others. John 7: 37 - 39 is our "feast of ingathering". We anticipate by the Spirit what will ere long be a public and universal joy.

All this is deserving of much consideration as giving the tenor of the covenant. It is obvious that these things, viewed in their typical import, were dependent on the coming of Christ, the accomplishment of redemption, and the gift of the Spirit. They could only be brought about under new covenant conditions. And it is striking that it should be said that it was "*through his talking with him*" that the skin of Moses' face shone. God had talked with Moses, and had unfolded what He was, and had brought out in a typical way all that His people were to be as identified with Christ for His pleasure. He had talked, in figure, of conditions in which His people, as loving Him, should be responsive to Him, and intelligent as to His ways and glory in grace, keeping the feasts with God, and responding to His will in happy obedience. No wonder that the skin of Moses' face shone!

But the people could not bear to look on that shining face. "The children of Israel could not fix their eyes on the face of Moses, on account of the glory of his face, a glory which is annulled". "Moses put a veil on his own face, so that the children of Israel should not fix their eyes on the end of that annulled". All that God had spoken, as applied, in the letter of it, to man in the flesh could only condemn him, for he did not answer to it. However blessed it was *typically*, it was *literally* a ministry of death and condemnation, for Moses was not a quickening Spirit, nor could he give his spirit to the people, nor could the glory of his face bring them into conformity with himself as the Mediator. Hence the veil had to be on his face, and for Israel "unto this day the same veil remains in reading the old covenant". Moses is still veiled for them, for when he is read "the veil lies upon their heart".

The veil on Israel's heart is self-sufficiency, which makes them still refuse to submit to God's righteousness. But when Israel's heart turns to the Lord the veil will be taken away. What a wonderful chapter Exodus 34 will be to them then! For they will see that CHRIST is the Spirit of it all. What they *will* see, we are privileged to see now. All this had an "end" on which *we* can, through infinite grace, fix our eyes. The "end" was the glory of the Lord as the Mediator of the new covenant. He has come out of death and gone up on high, and the glory of all that God is in grace is shining in His face.

There is no veil now either on *His* face or *our* hearts. He makes those who believe on Him to *live* in the knowledge of God, and in response to God, for He is the quickening Spirit. And He gives His Spirit to those who believe. We have the Spirit of the glorified Man in whose face the glory of God shines. Is it not surpassingly wonderful? One has to ask oftentimes, Do we really believe it? "But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the

Lord the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3: 18). If we had not His Spirit we should have no liberty to look on the glory of the Lord, or to see Him as the Spirit of these marvellous types. But we have liberty to look on it all, and there is transforming power in it. Saints under new covenant ministry are transfigured. (It is the same word as in Matthew 17: 2 and Mark 9: 2).

This is "the surpassing glory" which could not be seen or known until it shone in the face of Him of whom Moses in Exodus 34 is so distinctly a type. The whole typical system was temporary, but its Spirit abides, for CHRIST was the Spirit of it all. Now we have to do with the ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness, and all is abiding. The ministry of the new covenant subsists and abounds in glory.

EXODUS 35

Exodus 35

It is as in the rest and blessedness of all that is typically presented in chapter 34 that a willing-hearted people can devote themselves to the work of the Tent of meeting. Hence the first thing that the Mediator with the glory shining in His face speaks of to "all the assembly" is the Sabbath. This is the last of seven different connections — if we include the sabbatical year — in which the Sabbath is brought before us in Exodus. And here I think it indicates the restful condition of soul which is essential as preparatory to making the tabernacle. It was "a man of rest" (1 Chronicles 22) who could alone build a house to Jehovah's Name.

A distinctive feature of *this* mention of the Sabbath is "Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your dwellings upon the Sabbath day". I think that speaks of the absence of consideration for one's own comfort in a natural way. In keeping a true Sabbath one is neither occupied with one's own activity nor with one's natural comfort. It implies complete freedom from labour on the one hand, and from self-consideration on the other, to be perfectly restful God-ward.

One is free to contemplate what God has effected, and what He is for men as set forth in the face of the Mediator. It suggests that men are brought into suitability for tabernacle service by being in rest God-ward in the blessedness of new covenant conditions. We shall not work with God if we have not known what it is to rest with Him. It is like David going in and sitting before Jehovah in presence of all the blessed communications which had been made to him (2 Samuel 7: 18). Mary was keeping her sabbath when she sat at Jesus' feet and listened to His word. This kind of sabbath must be recurrent with us if we wish to take up the service of the tabernacle. But "six days shall work be done" would teach that nothing connected with one's life of responsibility here is to be neglected.

This is a most attractive section of the book because it shows "all the assembly of the children of Israel" moved in response to the pleasure of Jehovah, and equal in their affections and capabilities to all that He had proposed. Wonderful things had been presented in the way of light, but now they had all to take definite form for the pleasure of God. That is the exercise we have to face at the present moment. The whole system of things which centres in Christ at the right hand of God has been revealed as heavenly light. Now the question is, Are our hearts moved that these things should take such definite form with us that they come before God for His pleasure? "Every one whose heart moved him, and every one whose spirit prompted him ... brought

Jehovah's heave-offering" (verse 21). Everything came about as the result of movements in the affections of the people. It was "Jehovah's heave-offering"; it suggests a preparedness in heart to move energetically, and at some cost to ourselves, to further the testimony of God. It is the powerful influence of God revealed in grace and love in the Mediator of the new covenant that moves the hearts of the people of God. For their hearts are quickened by Him who is the Spirit that they may respond in a living way to all that shines upon them.

God has enriched us, as brought under the new covenant, with all that Christ is. No saint can say, I have no material for the tabernacle, for he has Christ. Paul says to the Corinthians, "In everything ye have been enriched in him". I suppose they hardly knew it, for they were carnal, but they were enriched in the Head, and they had the Spirit. There is plenty of material, but it has to be found by each one, and brought forward by movements of spiritual affection. Each saint has something that is essential to the tabernacle, and it is for each one to take account in spiritual exercise of what he has, and to bring it forward.

The gold is spoken of as "a wave-offering of gold to Jehovah". The silver and copper were "Jehovah's heave-offering". There is a similar distinction between the wave-breast and the heave-shoulder. It would seem that the most excellent and valuable thing is *waved*. When the copper is looked at in the mass (chapter 38: 29) it is called a wave-offering. Does the wave-offering suggest the divine appreciation of what is offered because of the excellence of what it is in itself, while the heave-offering indicates rather the energy in the affections of the offerer?

Then all was "a voluntary offering". The thought of pressing or urging people to do something is entirely absent. If the known love of God, and all the glory of His grace as shining in the face of the Mediator, do not move us to something "voluntary" it is a pity. Indeed we see here what is exceedingly beautiful — that the voluntary offerings exceeded all that was required. "The people bring much more than enough". "For the work they had was sufficient for all the work to do it, and it was too much". "Israel was holiness unto Jehovah, the first-fruits of his increase" (Jeremiah 2: 3). It was a lovely moment; God has never forgotten it. He will cherish that moment in His memory until it is realized in a fuller and more glorious way in the Israel of the future. But He is working so that it may be realized in *our* hearts today!

There is nothing for God's pleasure outside Christ, the Spirit, and the saints as marked by spiritual affections. The saints are enriched in Christ, they have the Spirit, and they have spiritual affections in the inward man. It is a comfort to remember that the saints *have* spiritual affections. What is needed is that

those affections should be allowed to move freely. You have not to strain after being somebody else, or to try to bring what you have not got; you have simply to bring what you have, and allow your spiritual affections liberty.

“And every woman that was wise-hearted spun with her hands”. They did not provide the material, nor did they put it into its final shape, but they did useful service in an intermediate stage. They took the raw material, and put it in a shape that prepared it for the weaver. It serves to bring out very clearly the principle of co-operation. And while the spinning did not seem anything very great, the strength of the fabric depended on the way it was done. Not even Bezaleel or any of the wise-hearted men could have made the curtains or the coverings as they ought to be if the women had not done the spinning properly. There might be many gifts in a meeting, and much spiritual material available, but if the sisters were gossips and tale-bearers there would be a poor result for God! Spinning is binding the fibres together so that when they are woven there is a firm texture. The New Testament speaks of building together and knitting together, and we have seen in the tabernacle the thought of loops, and clasps, and rings, and couplings — the idea of all being held together. And the spinning is what we may call the fundamental process; if that is not done right, nothing will be right. Every sister can do a little spinning — can do something in the direction of getting the saints drawn together in the appreciation of Christ. To say a word or bring an influence to bear that promotes this is a valuable service. What we appreciate in Christ will characterize us. The more I appreciate what He is as the heavenly One, the more heavenly I shall be. That is the “blue”, and it is so with the other colours also. All that Christ is has to take form in the affections of saints, and they have to be held together in the appreciation of Him. No other bond has any divine value.

“And all the women whose heart moved them in wisdom spun goats’ hair”. Sisters can greatly help to maintain holy separation. Indeed it was a sister who was told that if any one came to her and did not bring the doctrine of Christ she was not to receive him into her house, nor greet him (2 John). The goats’ hair typifies the holy separation which must characterize the tabernacle. The Ark of the covenant and the Mercy-seat were to be enshrined there. The Person and work of Christ, and the revelation of God in Him, are very holy, and they have to be cherished and safeguarded by holy separation.

Then “the principal men brought the onyx stones, and the stones to be set, for the ephod, and for the breastplate; and the spice, and the oil for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the incense of fragrant drugs”. These are things which require spiritual stature and wealth. Anyone who has a true appreciation

of what the saints are as sustained on the shoulders and in the breastplate of the High Priest deserves to be called a "principal man". The principal men in the assembly are not those with most money, or highest social position. They are those who know most of Christ, and of the mind of God, and who apprehend most of what the Spirit is here for in connection with the light, and the anointing, and the incense. Those who can supply what is here typified are indeed principal men! Let each one of us covet to be amongst them in a spiritual sense! Desire earnestly to be great in the knowledge of Christ, and in His thoughts of the saints, and in the appreciation of all that the Spirit is here for! There have been and are, "principal men" who have contributed much to further the tabernacle, and we thank God for them. It would please God if *all* His saints desired to be "principal men" in this sense.

Another important principle comes into view in verses 30 - 35; that is, the divine sovereignty which gives special gifts. The voluntary principle of verse 29 leaves it open for every one to contribute, but the calling by name in verses 30, 34 shows that there are special gifts which it is our privilege and wisdom to acknowledge. We do not need to be jealous of any gift, for they are all *ours* (1 Corinthians 3: 22), and all given that the truth of Christ and the assembly may take form in our affections, and that we may be perfected and built up as His body. They are all given that we may "arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ" (Ephesians 4: 13). When that is reached the tabernacle will be complete!

EXODUS 36 TO 39

Exodus 36 - Exodus 39

It will hardly be necessary to go again into the detail of the various types which we had before us in considering chapters 25 - 31. But it is noticeable that the order in which things are presented is different when it comes to the construction. That is, we have first the tabernacle with its coverings and boards, sockets, etc., and the veil and entrance curtain, before we have any of the furniture. The structure is introduced first, and afterwards the precious things — the ark and mercy-seat, the table, the candlestick, and the incense altar — which are to be enshrined there. The first exercise of "every wise-hearted man" was that, in figure, the saints should take character from Christ, and that they should come into relation to one another in a divine way, so that there may be suitable conditions for the cherishing and safeguarding of all that God has made known of Himself in Christ, and of all that He has secured for His own delight, and for the blessing of His saints and of the universe, in Christ.

The saints are, in the mind of God, the spiritual structure in which all this is enshrined so as to become pleasurable to Him, whether in priestly service or in testimony.

The spinning and weaving, and the work of the embroiderer, and all the coupling together of the curtains and of the boards, indicate how much spiritual exercise and labour are requisite that saints may be formed in the appreciation of Christ, and brought into true unity. "So that the tabernacle became one ... that it might be one" (verses 13, 18). Whatever each one of us appreciates in Christ is characteristic of that one before God, and it is really because we have the Spirit of Christ that we can affectionately appreciate Him. And it is in cultivating those appreciations that each divine fibre is drawn together and strengthened, and believers are knit together and unity is promoted. What is of Christ in one saint will easily and naturally link itself with what is of Christ in another. It is as being in the life of Christ morally — that is, in obedience, and dependence, and separation, and the love of the saints (see Psalm 16) — that we can come into true contact with one another.

Spiritual labour is to the end that the saints may be enlarged in the appreciation of Christ, so as to take character from what He is, and that they may be drawn together in that appreciation. There is nothing more distressing than to see how easily saints can get apart from one another. It indicates that the spinning and weaving have not been well done, and the fabric is not firm in texture! Paul delighted to recognize what was in the Philippians — comfort

in Christ, consolation of love, fellowship of the Spirit, bowels and compassions — but he laboured to add some threads, as it were, to bind them together. “That ye may think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking one thing” (Philippians 2: 1, 2). Two brothers might be able to say Amen to all that each other prayed for, and yet there might be personal feelings between them. They know the “fellowship of the Spirit” but are not “joined in soul”. Then the two sisters in Philippians 4: 2 needed to be brought closer together, and in exhorting them to be of the same mind in the Lord, Paul was doing “the work of the tent of meeting”.

Now the question is, Have we *made* anything for the tabernacle? The things have *to be made*. That is, the mind of God in Christ has to be taken up in wisdom and spiritual understanding so that, through self-judgment, it takes form with us for the pleasure of God, and we really contribute something that is the product of our own exercises. The smallest thing mentioned, perhaps, is a “peg” or a “clasp”. Making a “peg” would typify that you so hold the truth in love that you help to keep others from being “carried about by every wind of that teaching which is in the sleight of men” (Ephesians 4: 14). Making a “clasp” would indicate such a formation in the divine nature that your presence amongst saints tends to hold them together according to God.

All is looked at here as the product of wisely directed spiritual diligence and labour. Everything that we really *make* involves some displacement of the fleshly and the natural by the bringing in of what is spiritual and according to God. A brother may be a trial to me; I may even have a just complaint against him; my natural patience is exhausted, and I feel I want to have nothing more to do with him. But if I take up the exercise of this with God, and give place to the Spirit of Christ, I learn to judge the self-importance which is generally at the root of our irritations and annoyances with one another. And as “bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering” come in there is ability to forbear one another and forgive one another “even as the Christ has forgiven you”. Something is really *made* which is in accord with the mind of God, and which can be incorporated in the divine system.

When we come to the veil, the curtain for the entrance, the ark and mercy-seat, etc., we come to what is typical of Christ. The *making* in reference to these things is figurative of Christ being so known by the saints in the different characters thus typically set forth that they can serve God in a priestly way in relation to it all. It has taken such definite form with them spiritually that they can serve God with intelligent affections, as those who have by the Spirit apprehended His mind in Christ. All spiritual labour and exercises in the assembly are to this end.

At least some part of the divine system has taken form in each believer who has the Spirit. But it needs *all* the varied parts of that system to complete the tabernacle — to constitute a suited dwelling place for God. Therefore it should be a continuous and progressive exercise with all saints that no part of “the labour of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting” should be left incomplete; that it may not have to be said of us, as the Lord had to say of the assembly in Sardis, “I have not found thy works complete before my God”.

Chapter 37 gives us all that is within, then in chapter 38 we come to things which are more external or public — the altar of burnt-offering, the laver, and the court. We have already considered these things in detail, and have only to note that *here* the things are seen as actually made. It typifies that what is set forth has taken definite form with saints so that it gives character to their walk and testimony. It must be left with each one to say how far this has really come to pass. I trust that the consideration of it may lead to more spiritual diligence and labour with each one of us!

Then all the things were numbered and counted (verse 21). It was the work of the Levites under priestly direction to take account of all, and to see that nothing was missing. This is important. There has been a great lack of this. Many things which are clearly the commandment of the Lord are often missing. The Levites have failed to count, and things have dropped out. But every detail of the divine system is part of the glory of Christ, and is really essential to the true knowledge of God; we cannot afford to lose account of anything. If we let one detail drop out of account we have lost a ray of the glory of Christ and of the glory of God. People talk of essentials and non-essentials, but when they do you may be sure they are only thinking of man’s side. Every detail of the divine mind is essential to the glory of God in Christ. A missing peg would mean a slack cord, and a slack cord would mean a curtain out of place, and so the disorder would spread. Indeed the whole tabernacle would suffer if one detail were out of place. How often do we find the words in these chapters, “As Jehovah had commanded Moses”! A brother who can put in a word to prevent things getting slack, and a Levite who can count and see what is missing, render valuable service. When the remnant returned with Ezra from Babylon, the silver and the gold and the vessels were numbered and weighed at the river Ahava, and again when they came to Jerusalem. It was a day of weakness — a remnant time — but they regarded the principle of numbering and weighing, and they were exercised that nothing should be lost by the way.

Then the gold and silver and copper were all taken account of by *weight*. It suggests to me that we should not be content with terms and statements, but

that we should have in our souls the true value and weight of things. We may have a good deal to say in relation to Divine Persons, but there needs exercise that all such things should have their due weight. So that what we say represents not merely what we have heard or read, but what we truly know of God. This alone has weight "according to the shekel of the sanctuary".

Chapter 39 is largely taken up with the "garments of service ... the holy garments for Aaron". It sets forth divinely-given ability to take in God's thoughts as to Christ as Priest, and to have them so definitely in our souls by the Spirit that we can affectionately and intelligently clothe Him with every glory and ornament that rightly belongs to Him. There are many antichrists today doing their utmost to unclothe Him, but there are those, thank God! who take pleasure in tracing, by the Spirit of God, every feature of personal or moral or official glory that belongs to Him. And as all those features take form in the skilful affections of His saints they become able to invest Him with them. Do you not covet to have Him before your heart in all His priestly grace and glory, and to know the character of His priestly service, so as to be able to hold Him in your affections as invested with all that these holy garments speak of? What must it be to God to have those in this world who can do so!

The last thing mentioned is the thin plate of pure gold, here called for the first time "the holy diadem", inscribed with "Holiness to Jehovah" (chapter 39: 30, 31). The "diadem" was a mark of absolute authority, and on the brow of a man it spoke of the subjection of all to his despotic will. But on the brow of Christ it speaks of His power to maintain all that is in accord with the holiness of God. It will be so in that coming day when as Priest upon His throne He will so secure "Holiness unto Jehovah" that it will be on the bells of the horses, and every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be "holiness unto Jehovah" (Zechariah 6: 13; Zechariah 14: 20, 21). He will "reign in righteousness"; that is the Kingly side; but as Priest He will maintain holiness — a character of things suited to the sanctuary. Holiness gives character to the whole order of things where the dignity and glory of Christ as Priest is recognized. So He presents Himself to Philadelphia as "the holy", and the overcomer will take character from Him. He is supreme in holy power; everything that stands in relation to Him must take character from Him; He is able to bring about that it shall.

It seems to be very fitting that this figurative representation of the divine system, viewed as having taken form in the intelligent affections of spiritual persons, should end with the diadem on the brow of Christ!

It is of deep interest to see the place which Moses holds in these closing chapters. When all the labour was ended it was brought to Moses that he might appraise it. He represents the Lord as acting with priestly discernment as to what is suitable to God. Everything that forms part of the true tabernacle must pass His scrutiny.

But what we find here is that there had been no disobedience and no inadvertence. "And Moses saw all the work, and behold, they had done it as Jehovah had commanded — so had they done it; and Moses blessed them". All had been brought about under divine conditions. The people, as subjects of mercy, had been made willing-hearted under the influence of the covenant, and wise-hearted as having the Spirit. Every part of the will of God had been considered, and carried out in obedience by a people acting, typically, in the Spirit of Christ.

It is a blessed picture of what can be wrought by the grace of God and the power of His Spirit. A faithful and obedient people responding in divinely quickened affections to God, and endowed with spiritual competency to take up all that is in His will, and to give it form for His pleasure and glory! Such is the assembly viewed normally as composed of those quickened by the Lord as the Spirit of the new covenant, and indwelt by the Spirit of God. May we learn under divine teaching, and through spiritual exercise, the true import of all this, and be found in our measure answering to it in affection and faithfulness!

EXODUS 40

Exodus 40

We have had before us *the faithfulness of God* to His promise as the security of everything for His people. He acts in the sovereignty of mercy and grace not only *for* them but *in* them, that they may answer to His pleasure under new covenant conditions. Then we have seen, in type, the result of this divine acting in a people devoted in their affections to Him, and made spiritually competent to give effect to all that He commanded. That is, we see *the faithfulness of His people* in doing His will. Now, finally, in chapter 40 we have brought before us, in figure, *the faithfulness of Christ*. These three things must each have its right place with us; together they form a threefold cord not quickly broken. The tabernacle in its completeness was clearly the product and fruit of the faithfulness of God, and of the faithfulness of His people by His grace, and of the faithfulness of Moses.

The only actor in this chapter is Moses. He is seen here as the one who sets up the tabernacle, who puts everything in its right place, who brings all under the holy anointing, and who inaugurates every feature of the service. Until at last it can be said, "And so Moses finished the work" (verse 33).

I have no doubt that the Holy Spirit refers to this chapter in Hebrews 3: 2 - 6, when He speaks of "Jesus, who is faithful to him that has constituted him, as Moses also in all his house. For he has been counted worthy of greater glory than Moses, by how much he that has built it has more honour than the house. For every house is built by some one; but he who has built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house, as a ministering servant, for a testimony of the things to be spoken after; but Christ, as Son over his house, whose house are we, if indeed we hold fast the boldness and the boast of hope firm to the end".

How blessed to think of the faithfulness of Christ as Son in relation to those "things to be spoken after" of which the tabernacle was a testimony! He has told out all that God is; He has declared the Father's Name; He has sanctified His brethren; He has anointed them with the Holy Spirit; He has pitched the true tabernacle, and become Minister of it. He has set up a holy order of things in which God can be known in the full light of revelation, and in which He can be approached and served by a holy priesthood, purged and perfected in conscience, and responsive in affections and intelligence to God as fully revealed. God would have us to consider Him in His faithfulness, and all that holy order which He builds, and over which He is as Son.

HE never deviates in the smallest particular from the mind of God; the pleasure of Jehovah prospers in His hand; and He is Son over God's house. And we are that house "if indeed we hold fast the boldness and the boast of hope firm to the end". "The boldness and the boast of hope" are connected with the apprehension of how faithfully Christ as Son has established the will of God, and set up a spiritual order that is in every respect according to God's pleasure. That order is not visible or material. It is only known as divine light enters the soul, and all that which, as to display, is yet future becomes a present reality to hope. In the face of the departure and disorder and apostasy which are the outcome of the unfaithfulness of men, we are to hold boldly to the revelation of God, and to all that which has been established spiritually by the faithfulness of Christ to God. Those who do so — and, of course, this includes, in principle, all true believers — form God's house, over which Christ is as Son.

It is our privilege to come to the substance and reality of what the tabernacle figured. What Christ builds and what He orders must be in every detail in accord with the mind of God, for He "is faithful to him that has constituted him". I trust it is an exercise with every one of us to apprehend those things which subsist spiritually as the result of the faithfulness of Christ, and that we truly desire that they should take form with us so that we may be, as it were, under His hand for the service and pleasure of God.

The different spiritual features and elements which make up the true tabernacle are now taking form by the Spirit in the saints, and under the ordering of Christ as Son over God's house those elements get rightly put together. He alone can put every board, curtain, and peg in its place. If we consider Him in His faithfulness to bring about the pleasure of God in His house, I think it will have the effect of subduing us to Him, so that He may be able to put us each in our right place in relation to the service and testimony of God. Each will then contribute, and the contributions of all will be found in divine unity.

In verses 17 - 33 everything is set up and put in its place. The repetition seven times in this section of "As Jehovah had commanded Moses" shows how perfectly all was completed according to the mind of God. In figure every divine conception had been brought to fruition — not an element wanting. "And so Moses finished the work".

Several New Testament scriptures come before the mind as we think of a divine structure set up for the pleasure and glory of God. "On this rock ["The Christ, the Son of the living God," known in the soul by the Father's revelation] I will build my assembly, and hades' gates shall not prevail against it"

(Matthew 16: 18). Here we see Christ's assembly as a divinely built and invulnerable structure — the product of divine purpose and faithfulness. "To whom coming, a living stone, cast away indeed as worthless by men, but with God chosen, precious, yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2: 4, 5). Here the stones are viewed as giving evidence of the vitality that is in them by "coming". It is spiritual movement on their part, answering to the activity found with the people in making the tabernacle and bringing it to Moses. "So then ye are no longer strangers and foreigners, but ye are fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the corner-stone, in whom all the building fitted together increases to a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2: 19 - 22). The whole structure will be surely brought to completion.

"The tabernacle of the testimony" speaks of all that is in the mind and will of God being brought into testimony before it is known in display. All the features of that divine system which was represented figuratively in the tabernacle are now taking form spiritually in saints of the assembly so as to be known in testimony. But what is now in testimony will be in public manifestation in the world to come, and this is a necessity for the glory of God. He will completely set aside the present world-system, and introduce His world — the moral features of which are set forth typically in the tabernacle. At present all is in testimony; in the world to come it will be in display. Both the testimony and the display are for the glory of God in Christ in a scene where He has been dishonoured. But the display will be God's complete and public triumph in the very scene where sin and death and Satan's power have been.

"And so Moses finished the work. And the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle. And Moses could not enter into the tent of meeting, for the cloud abode on it, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle" (verses 34, 35). Moses finishing the work, and the glory filling the tabernacle, carries one's thoughts forward to the completion of all that was figured there. When there will be glory to God "in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen" (Ephesians 3: 21). "And he carried me away in the Spirit, and set me on a great and high mountain, and shewed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, having the glory of God ... And the city has no need of the sun nor of the moon, that they should shine for it; for the glory of God has enlightened it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb" (Revelation 21: 10, 23).

Every part of the tabernacle is viewed in Exodus 40 as brought to completion under the faithfulness of Christ as Son. He has not left a single thing to be added. God can dwell complacently, and His people can surround Him in rest. And this may look even beyond the world to come, to the final issue of God ways when He will be all in all. It is a brief vision of conditions suggestive of the eternal state.

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea exists no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice out of the heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God. And he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall not exist any more, nor grief, nor cry, nor distress shall exist any more, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21: 1 - 4).

In the meantime God is dwelling in the midst of His people, and their spiritual journeyings are regulated by the cloud over the tabernacle (Exodus 40: 36 - 38). Many look for providential guidance in their pathway here, and God does not fail them. But we need guidance as to our spiritual movements also, and these have all to be with reference to the tabernacle. If we want spiritual guidance we must have our eyes on "the tabernacle of the testimony"; the divine system must have a great place in our hearts. The guiding "cloud of Jehovah" is over the tabernacle, and His people must move with reference to it.