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OF GOD



RICHARD GLOVER, D. D.

1016. 163





The Comforts of God

LECTURES ON THE
FOURTEENTH CHAPTER OF THE
GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

BY
RICHARD GLOVER, D.D.
Bristol

SECOND EDITION

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PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION. .

THOUGH I feel profoundly the unworthiness of my treatment of the great consolations given us in this chapter of St. John's Gospel, I offer them to my fellow disciples, in the faith that He who uses weak things to confound the mighty may use what I have written to their comfort.

I add a word as to the text I have followed. Where I have preferred the readings followed by the Authorised Version to those adopted by the Revised Version, or have ignored other readings commended strongly by critical editors, I have not done so without careful examination and deliberate anxiety to follow exactly what was in the original Gospel as written by St. John.

RICHARD GLOVER.

BRISTOL,
March, 1906.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

I AM thankful to be asked to issue a second edition of this little book, and pray it may be used of God to bind up some broken hearts, and to restore in some the faith that has been shattered.

RICHARD GLOVER.

BRISTOL,

January, 1910.

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THE COMFORTS OF GOD.



I.

THE KEYNOTE OF ALL CONSOLATION.

*Let not your heart be troubled;
believe in God; believe also in Me.—*

JOHN xiv. 1.

I INVITE you to a fountain of consolations. We go to sufferers for solace; they can comfort us with the comfort wherewith they themselves are comforted of God. Jesus is confessedly the consoler of men, shedding light of hope on all sorrow, grief, weakness, and death. We go to Him in the hour of His keenest woe, "the hour and power of darkness," and from the serenities of His sorrow we gather comfort for our own.

This chapter does not contain within it all the comfort of God, for every act and word of Jesus yields comfort. Words of infinite value have preceded these, regarding His body broken and His blood shed for us; and words of strengthening and prayer

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follow, that have healed and helped the hearts of men. But it so happens that this chapter is a cluster of richest consolations. There is no other lode in all the mines of Scripture so rich in the pure gold of peace-giving truth. And therefore I limit myself to "The King's Garden," here set open for our use.

I begin with the first word which strikes a great Keynote, which is amplified and enforced by all that follows. It consists of three precepts. For the word translated in the second clause, "ye believe," and in the third clause, "believe," is, in the original, the same and should be translated the same, either as an indicative or imperative in both clauses. Most commentators prefer, and I think for cogent reasons, the translating it in both clauses as an imperative. So we get three commands—"Let not your heart be troubled," "Believe in God," "Believe also in Me." Take them successively. Mark, first of all—

I.—The Command of Peace:—"Let not your heart be troubled."

Some might pass this by as a common word, of conventional soothing, uttered glibly to those who have little trouble by

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those who have less. But such is not the case here. It is spoken to men in the deepest conceivable grief; to men losing the best friend man ever had; overwhelmed by the treachery of a trusted colleague and by being forewarned that their bravest leader would deny his Lord and they all would forsake Him. All faith in themselves is shaken, and all faith in God is lost. It is to them enough to destroy all faith in Providence, that God does not lift a finger to save Him who trusted Him. All hope for man melts away in the disablement and rejection of Jesus Christ. They were patriots, and had hoped for their nation's deliverance; and behold their nation is to sink in the perdition of the inexpressible guilt of slaying their Saviour. Every dream of brighter things, and every gleam of heavenly love and purpose, fades away from their souls; and in the swirl and tumult of their unexpected woes, all hope and all purpose are swept away. And yet to hearts blighted, stripped, bewildered, and in complete and manifold despair, Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled."

If the word is wonderful and noteworthy because addressed to those whose lot was

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the very type of woe, it becomes still more marvellous when we mark that He Himself is in calamity deeper still. All the hatred of man had centred on Him, and was working its evil will. All shame of opprobrium and contumely gathered on His head; all grief at Jerusalem's refusal to be saved pressed on His heart. All bodily pains were to meet to slay Him with a torture such as others, protected by their coarseness, could not feel. And clouds were gathering about the face of God. And yet to those in bitter woe, Christ, in woe still deeper, says, "Let not your heart be troubled."

So it is not conventional soothing, the friendly deprecation of grief that has a little emollient comfort, but it is a word of responsibility, of valour, of faith, that contains within its precept vast affirmations of the rightness of all God's orderings and vast prophecies of gracious issues from the unutterable woe. And it is a command to be calmly, thoughtfully, at rest. It is not such a call as the Epicurean was accustomed to give: one to flee sorrows, and by forgetfulness or pleasure or thoughtlessness escape its pangs. Nor is it such a precept as the Stoic of all lands has given: one to harden

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the heart against all feeling, and with a selfish victory to defy our melancholy and anguish. Such precepts were repugnant to the soul of Christ, as alike destructive of manhood by the levity they induced, by the coarseness they wrought, and by the despair which they sanctioned. But the Saviour's precept is the command of one who has in His grief touched bottom, and found it the rock of everlasting love. It is a precept imparting the vital serenity of those who, "walking in darkness and having no light," yet "stay themselves upon the Lord, and trust in the Name of the Lord." What follows shows this explicitly, for it gives the way of victory.

But before studying that way, mark that He who had sounded every woe bids us be at rest, whatever the sorrow, the weakness, the fear, the regret, of our life may be. Before He adds anything else, this lofty, victorious command begins to allay the storm and impart some of the peace from which it sprang.

"Let not your heart be troubled."

Mark next that, bidding us be at rest, His second precept helps us to obey the

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first, by showing how we may go safely through all trouble.

II.—He bids us lose our trouble by linking ourselves to God.

“Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God.” The second word prescribes a link between us and God—the only link that can be made: Faith. He does not expect us to quell the tumult in our bosom, or to ride by skill of our own upon the storm of grief. He bids us lay hold on Another—on One who can infuse strength, give grace, turn all adverse things into mercies, and grant our heart’s desires when these seem most impossible. For the word, “Believe in God,” does not demand merely intellectual credence in the existence of God, but it demands action. It requires us to seek, find, face God, and to commit ourselves to His love, claiming His help, accepting His guidance, and confiding in His gracious desire to bless all that He has made. If there were no Helper of larger dimensions than ourselves, despair would be lawful, and perhaps even wise; and if there were no link with that Being possible, then despair would be lawful, and perhaps even wise. But the Saviour tells us that there

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is a God, who is our Father, and bids us link ourselves to Him. He bids us claim His help, and take shelter in His heart, and "lay hold on His strength." He knows God will not decline our trust, or refuse the charge of our weakness, or disown our claims. He knows that all the forces God possesses are at the command of whoever needs and asks them. So He bids us in our weakness and woe link ourselves to the omnipotent and all-gracious God; that when in ourselves we are impotent to disentangle life's perplexities, or free ourselves from the grip of our mistakes and sins, He to whom we link ourselves may set us free. He lays down Faith as the secret of all deliverance and all consolation.

Some who look at matters with a hasty glance object to the doctrine that attributes such importance to Faith. But all religions that have possessed any vitality have preached the efficacy of faith. They have bidden men pray, which is an activity of faith. They have bidden men believe in an over-ruling Providence, which is the rest of faith. They have encouraged men to believe that the consecration of their lives to God would not be presumptuous, adding thus

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another principle of faith. If faith were only the reception of a creed it would not necessarily possess any particular force, for it might be simply the passive consent of an unthinking and unrealising mind. But faith is the noblest action of the soul. In it a man rises and comes to his Father, and commits himself into God's hand, claims His help, and grasps His mercy. It is a vital link; hence its power. It is in touch with the love and omnipotence of God, and by linking our lives to His saves us. And by linking our lives to His, Faith comforts us and prevents the heart being troubled. Take thou no comfort but this; but see thou hast this. Build no hopes on probabilities or on thy merits; seek no rest in pride of strength or indifference. Live not uninsured in a world of storms, but lift up thine eyes unto the hills, and draw from thence thy help. The infinite God waits to be held by thy feebleness, and He that has all resource of wealth waits and welcomes the claims of thy poverty. Believe in God; trust Him; trust thyself to Him; trust thy soul to the moulding of His grace; trust thy steps to His leading, and the preferences of thy heart to the wiser love that knows what is best for us.

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The first precept bids us be at rest, and the second shows us how that rest may be reached, namely, by the vital link with God which Christ calls Faith.

But the Saviour adds another precept—
“Believe in God; believe also in Me.”
Ponder lastly,

III.—The precept that helps to perfect our faith and our comfort.

For “Believe also in Me” is not a superfluous addition. It is added because it was needful to be added, and because it makes the other two precepts more precious and more easily obeyed. This word rises from the Saviour’s consciousness of love and of power to help, a love and power that are Divine. “He thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” and so with all simplicity brackets His name with God’s. He felt identity with God: “the Father being in Him and He in the Father.” And He knew that there would be no confusion of mind produced by the effort to believe in God and also in Him; but that the two faces and forms would blend in one great and quickening vision, like two pictures in a stereograph, and both be animate by blending

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with each other. So in love to us He adds, "Believe also in Me."

Some, perhaps, have found these words augment the mental embarrassment of understanding God. Possibly they do so. It is not surprising that, as all being rises in complexity just in the degree in which it rises in dignity and faculty, the highest Being of all should have manifold mystery in His personality. But if the addition of this precept augments the embarrassment of the intellect, it relieves the embarrassment of the heart in a much greater degree. Some could not obey the word, "Believe in God," till this second word came and helped them. They tried to believe in God, but found difficulty in finding Him, in understanding Him, in laying hold on Him; for He is vast, is a God that hideth Himself, and they cannot focus His glory.

But when Christ adds, "Believe also in Me," they see God in seeing Him, and find God in finding Him. They venture to come nigh. They are able to understand Him; love rises and gives power to faith, and while they had despaired of ever knowing or enjoying God, they now do both, and with the rapture of inward assurance confide them-

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selves to Him, exclaiming "My Lord and my God!" This is so universally the case, that belief in God and belief in Christ habitually go together. Whenever we realisingly believe in God and feel the greatness of His love and the energy of His omnipotence, we look expecting that love and that power to embody itself in action, especially in saving action. We somehow expect to find Him where need is greatest and woe is darkest. That He should come as nigh to us as He can get, is what we expect from a Father. And so we recognise Him in the lowliness of Bethlehem and on the Cross Throne of Calvary. We feel it is Godlike to stoop and suffer in order to save.

And on the other hand, they who begin with the Christ and believe in Him find Him grow on their adoring gaze, till they see Him able to save, filling the Throne of all things, their Master, their God, their All-in-All.

So the second precept of faith helps the first, and the faith effectual for salvation and for all consolation is that which awakes at the call, "Believe in God; believe also in Me." Brethren, ponder these things. Mark that One who has sounded every depth of sorrow charges those steeped in perplexity

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and grief that they be not troubled. Mark that He charges every man to link himself by faith to God, that, so moored, he may ride out in safety every storm; and mark that, to help us to make that link, He bids us believe in Himself.

We all have troubles. Many of these are bigger than we think them, with deeper roots and apt to grow more unendurable instead of less. Remember, it is not imaginary troubles Jesus takes away, but the greatest. Has your life been a mistake? Have all its worst impulses been obeyed? Have your best joys been taken away? Have your children disappointed you? Have the decays of life begun? Is age lonely and poor? Has your creed broken down, so that you no longer know what to reckon on? Does guilt renew its burden and memory run into regret? Even when all this, and worse, is true, you will find Peace, Liberty, Blessing, and Hope, when you believe in God, and in Jesus Christ, whom He has given.

II.

THE CONSOLATION OF THE HEAVENLY HOPE.

In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

Thomas said unto Him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?

Jesus saith unto Him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.—JOHN xiv. 2—6.

THE keynote struck in the first verse had taught the disciples—
That Perfect Consolation for every trouble was possible;
That the Secret of it was Faith that links us to God; and

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That Faith in God is perfected by Faith in Jesus Christ.

He now proceeds to enlarge this general secret of all consolation, and to give detailed solace on many necessary points. He dwells successively on the Heaven awaiting them; on the Perfect Revelation of God which they could enjoy; on the abundant Power they would find for all their work; on the power of Prayer; on the gift of the Holy Ghost; and on the victorious Peace which is His final legacy to all who love Him.

The section that we study now is that relating to the Heaven of Rest which awaits and rewards the true disciple. When friends leave us, as He was leaving them, the first comfort that we need is as to the sequel of their departure. Their going away naturally awakes our fears for them and for ourselves. Death seems so final; its experiences are so humbling and distressing, that to our timid hearts it looks like the end of existence. And in the shadow of an experience so crushing and final, we wonder why God has given us a life so casual and disappointing.

We are not without some glimmering of comfort.

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For men have said to one another in all lands and ages that death is not The End, and that a second stage of existence must begin when this first stage ends. They have argued that the soul is not involved in the body's wreckage; that God is just, and cannot leave men to be the sport of death; that He is wise, and will not waste the precious ointment of developed worth; that He is loving, and will save us from the fate we fear. But there is no demonstration possible for these thoughts, and in the face of death, bereaving or threatening us, life is belittled, soured, made worthless, and we ask in our grief, "Why hast Thou made all men in vain?" These thoughts fill all souls. The young are startled by their first acquaintance with death; and the old feel the distance from the dark river lessening daily, and murmur, Does Christ forbid us to be troubled by the thought of death? And can the faith He prescribes cast out the fear of it? He will not deceive us. If there is no Heaven, He will tell us plainly the worst, as He reminds us here. Mark, then, that the first lesson of comfort is a great affirmation of a glorious Heaven. Consider what He says of:—

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I.—The Awaiting Home.

It is described in various terms. Its sweetness is suggested in the name, "My Father's house"; its spaciousness and freeness in the phrase, "many mansions"; and its special charm in the words, "I will prepare a place for you." So the cloudy void of the future changes beneath the illumination of Christ, and takes clear and alluring form. Mark these points in succession:—

(1) Beyond the grave there is a Home. God is our Father, and He has a family home. Love in the heart of God or man is always bent on making a home. Solitariness pains. Love wants dear ones round it, and can never enjoy anything till it shares it. God's love seeks companionships. If all creatures were mortal, the solitariness of God would be unspeakable and unendurable. And if God was destined to see every heart whose love He had awaked and enjoyed wither and die, who could conceive the blight of that boundless, universal, and ceaseless bereavement? Whatever stateliness and splendour His abode might have, He would yet be a broken-hearted God, whose dwelling was among the tombs of all He would have

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liked to live. If God loves, He must seek to keep that which He loves alive, as you and I do.

Our consolation begins thus — with the Heart of God. It is full of love, that settles on human hearts and elicits and enjoys their responsive affection. He is not a Rachel, doomed to weep for His children, and refusing to be comforted because they are not; but a Father to whom His children are dear, who has no pleasure in the death of any, and who cannot consent to the extinction of those who love Him. So because there is a Father's heart, there is a family Home above, where God will gather and enjoy all His dear ones.

(2) And this Home is of amplest dimensions. There is no shortness in God's provision anywhere. He giveth liberally to all things He has made. So God is not sorely tried to find space and comfort for the souls dear to Him. But in the Father's house there are many mansions. There was "no room for Him in the inn." But there is room for all of us in His house above. "Yet there is room," is a word true always of Heaven; and "Compel them to come in," is a word that will always express the

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Father's feelings while any wandering souls remain outside.

And as there is a Home so ample, mark next—

(3) "The place is prepared," is suited for men in general and for each soul in particular. What marvels of adaptation has the Creator of all things shown in the matter of preparing places for all that He has made! The callow nestling, or the infant child—what "places" they find prepared for them on their arrival here: such guard, such cherishing, such love, such suitability of every kind to let them be at home and thrive in all their growth. And Heaven is prepared for each soul with the same exquisite suitability; everything adjusted so that there shall be not strangeness, but the sense of Home. So each finds a place prepared.

Places vary according to needs. There are places for the lowly and places for the heroic; places for those who need cherishing, and for those who have gotten them a great victory; a place for every soul, as perfectly suited for its antecedents and requirements as the infinite wisdom and love of Christ can frame it.

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This is the first consolation of the future—that there is a Home of our Father waiting for us; where all His children will find His love; that in it there is ample room for all; and for each some place is so prepared and suited that he will be at home with God and with God's other children gathered there. He has more to add.

There is a Heaven. He proceeds to teach us next that every needed help for reaching Heaven is abundantly provided. His further comfort is this:—

II.—He is both Way to Heaven and Help to reach it.

We needed this further comfort, for our doubting hearts would at once have misgivings as to whether there was any way by which we could reach it, and we would be anxious as to how we should find the way; and most of all anxious as to whether, when we had found it, we should be able, in spite of weakness and difficulties, to keep the way to the end. What we want is Way; Light upon that way, and on the Lord and the end of it; and Strength to follow it till the Home is reached.

Our natural misgivings come out in

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Thomas's anxious declaration of ignorance. Christ had said, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know"; when Thomas, like all of us, knowing much more than he thought he did, says, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" Then Christ replied in a word conveying all the light that Thomas asked, and more: "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." This word contains much, and has suggestions of precious value in all directions; but for Thomas it carried with it these intimations—that not only was there a Home, but a Way to it. Truth to illuminate both way and end is embodied and given to us; and the Life to believe that truth and follow that way is given us in Himself, who is and has the fulness of the Godhead.

(1) It is a wide experience of men that Christ is the way to everything that the pure heart longs for. If you want solution of life's problem, Christ is the way to it; if you long for Peace, Christ is the way to it; if you want to reach God, Christ is the way to reach Him. And the doorway to the heart of man is still—Christ. If you want to wake

men to philanthropy, or content, or progress, or freedom, the shortest way to reach and quicken the inmost souls of men is still through Jesus Christ. Here the loftiest destination to which He conducts us is given. He is the Way to Heaven, for He is the Way to God. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me," is a word full of significance. And it is a truth we all need to learn: that we reach God through Christ, and God's heart through Christ, and the enjoyment of His love through Christ. We reach the help of God through Him; and when our sins block the way, barring out His blessing and choking our prayer, it is through the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, borne for us, that we can plead for and obtain pardon.

(2) He is, besides, all the Light we need for traversing the way. "I am the Truth," He says. All the light on God and duty that we need we find in Him, who not merely taught truth, but embodied it in His very Being, so that His every act and word and look revealed what God is and what man should be; what we have to trust, or seek, or fear, or hope.

(3) And being our Way to God, and the

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Light that lighteneth every man, He adds, "I am the Life"—our life within the heart; a power and a taste for better things; a force of potent repentance; a well of life within; a force of refreshment and renewal and persistence, so that our life does not die down, and the difficulties we meet with do not turn us back, but we follow the light and keep the way to the end. So we are furnished with every needed means of reaching our everlasting rest. "Of those given to Christ, not one is lost." "They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." "The Way" is safe. The redeemed of the Lord walk on it with songs, and everlasting joy on their heads. "The Truth" imparts itself, carrying meaning, understanding, and conviction to all believing hearts, for it radiates vitally from Christ. And "the Life" insinuates itself into the soul, and keeps it fresh and purposeful till it reaches the everlasting rest. Admit the cumulative comfort: There is a blessed Home; and a Way to it; living Truth ever imparting itself to the soul; and crowning all there is "Life," such that even we may say, "I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me." Mark next—

III.—A strange light on Death.

Many who have hopes of the issues of Death are yet afraid of the dying, of the pain and darkness and struggle of departure. He who died on Calvary does not make light of the sufferings of the last hour, nor of the temptations that may assail us then. And He adds a word that all feel can hardly have any other meaning than that, in the last stage of life, He will be especially present to our souls. "I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am there ye may be also." The individual character of the consolations given forbids us to understand this coming to be anything else than a personal coming to each one of us. It is a promise of a rod and a staff in the valley of the shadow of death—a pledge that when we go through the waters He will be with us. It takes the article of death from the list of the wounds of an enemy and puts it into the list of God's benefits. He does not say Death will come and bring you to Myself, though that would be the apparent fact; but I will come and take you. Death is only, according to this,

A frowning Providence,
That hides a smiling face.

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In fact, Death is Christ Himself, in His robe of darkness—the Wrestling Angel that seems as if it would slay us, but who has the blessing of a nobler name and a higher nature for us when the morning breaketh. Be not too much afraid of death's handling of you. It is Christ touching and blessing us, and landing us safely where night and fear come not to disturb our rest.

One more word of solace He adds.

Mark lastly—

IV.—The Everlasting Outlook.

There being a home and a living way and help in the crossing, the Saviour adds one other article of consolation, that covers the questions "Where and how shall we live eternally?" "Where I am, there ye shall be also." "Because I live, ye shall live also." However much our curiosity would like to have more detailed statements as to the whereabouts of Heaven and the conditions of life there, we cannot have them. The vocabulary of this world could not express the facts and the arrangements of that world; and besides, each answer to each curious question would wake ten other questions more curious and clamant still.

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But if you ask, "Where shall we be?" this one word, "Where I am," gives all you need desire to know, assures you of all suitable environment, all happy fellowships, all contentment of a vital soul.

And, similarly, no one can define the life to come—what may be the force that maintains its progress; what the nature of that "house from heaven" which will succeed this mortal tabernacle; what the secret of that power that makes us become like Christ when we see Him as He is, none can tell, and if told, none could understand. But here we have all the assurance needed, and have a secret that grows ever more luminous, when Christ says, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

Here rest. And seeing there is such blessedness possible, let us fear lest we come short of it; let us make our calling and election sure, and join the children of the light and of the morning, in working and waiting for the Rest that remaineth for the people of God.

III.

THE CONSOLATION OF THE LIVING REVELATION OF GOD.

Philip said unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

*Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father: and how sayest thou, then, Show us the Father?—*JOHN xiv. 8, 9.

IN this great chapter of consolation, we have already dealt with the first verse, in which the Saviour taught that a Faith in God, completed and perfected by faith in Himself, was the effective cure of all trouble of the heart. We next dwelt on the solace given in Christ's disclosures of Heaven; that it is a Home, with ample room, and each part fitted for the occupant; that, moreover, the Way thither, and the Light to cheer us in the way, and the Strength to follow it, are all provided—He being the Way, the

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Truth, and the Life. We saw that while the locality and conditions of Heaven are not noted, yet all we need to know is told us when it is said, "Where I am, ye shall be," and "Because I live, ye shall live also," these words being sufficient to assure us of the everlasting well-being of all who follow Him. And the hope is made perfect by the word that teaches us that to every believing soul Death itself is a private, helpful advent of the Saviour. "I will come and take you to Myself."

To one of these words Christ had made an addition that thrilled Philip's mind with solicitude and surprise. When He had said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me," He added, "If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also; and from henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him." Philip was one of the earliest, one of the most believing, and one of the most thoughtful of the disciples. What was to be seen, he thought he had seen. "Come and see," was his remark to Nathanael when the latter said, "Can any good come out of Nazareth?" Yet Christ's words suggests to him that he has missed a great apocalypse, lost the heavenliest opportunity of his life.

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Probably the greatest hope he had of the Messianic days had been that given in the word, "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." And now Christ speaks of that vision of the glory for which he had longed, as if it had long ago come! had shone round about him, and was shining still! And yet he feels he has missed it! Others might hope something else from the Messiah, such as Liberty, or Empire, or Abundance, or Harmony amongst mankind. He wanted God—the sight of Him, and the joy of Him. It had been the first thing, and was still the last thing, for which he longed. And so he says, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Evidently here is the word of a profound soul. Higher longing cannot easily be expressed, and higher honour could hardly have been shown to Christ than to bring this prayer to Him. So Philip's word and the Saviour's reply to it both deserve our thought. Consider them. Mark first:—

I.—The great longing of the human heart.

The more profoundly anyone speaks, the larger the number of whom he is the spokesman. And this longing of Philip's heart is

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the longing of the universal heart of man. Wherever man is found, in some form or other he is saying, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

Far and wide, though all unknowing,
Pants for Thee each human breast.

Everywhere man is blessed or haunted by a shadow of the Almighty; something too impalpable to satisfy, it is too real to be ignored; producing our thought and consciousness of God. Everywhere man feels that his fate is in God's hand; and to know himself and his future, what to hope and what to fear, he must know his God. Every question about duty and destiny seems to run up into a question about God. So everywhere man wants to be shown the Father. Nothing will suffice him till that is reached. Mankind is everywhere "a generation of them that seek God's face."

Man is first a dreaming Jacob, having visions of possible intercourse with Heaven and of finding blessing there. And, later, when guilt and fear oppress him more keenly, he is a wrestling Jacob, bent on knowing God and being blessed by Him. All religion grows out of the desire to see

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The Father. As it made Jacob cry, "What is thy name?" so the same desire made Moses pray, "I beseech Thee show me Thy glory"; and the soul of the Psalmist "long, as in a dry and thirsty land, to see God's power and His glory." There is no deeper distress than that felt by souls that cannot get a hold on God. The deepest and commonest wail amongst men is, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him." In every race, class, and age of men this distress is felt; not amongst Christians only, but widely amongst those that are in heathen lands. About a hundred miles from the headquarters of our Mission in Shansi is the Buddhist Lamasery of "The Five Towers," or Wu-tai-Shan. Behind the monastery is a high mountain, and multitudes make sore and lengthened pilgrimages thither, for it is said that if their hearts are right and they climb the summit, by looking through a small aperture into a great cave they will see gradually clearing itself in the darkness the face of Buddha. The thousands that go thither have a feeling akin to that which is expressed here. They, too, say in effect, "Show us the Father."

It is the deepest, the oldest, the worthiest

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longing of the human heart, and it naturally utters itself to Jesus Christ. It is not cherished as it should be. Some want someone to show them the place of Wisdom, or the place of Gold, or the secret of Power; but every nobler heart lifts itself upward to the great Christ, and cries, "Show us The Father." They know nothing less will satisfy them. They know this would. Join those who seek the face of God, for to all who sincerely do so there comes in some form or other their heart's desire. And if you have been visited with this longing and blessed distress, bring it, as Philip did, to the great Illuminator, and He will comfort your heart with His light, as He did Philip here.

Consider next—

II.—The comfort of Christ's reply.

"Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

In all, even the best, words of man, mistakes are mixed, and it was so in Philip's word. And accordingly, Jesus has to give a slight reproof before giving the all-illuminating truth. Philip thinks it more easy than

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it is to get the vision of God; perhaps expects some radiance filling heaven and earth with glory such as Isaiah saw; or perhaps he expects, more wonderful still, "that likeness of the appearance of a man" which Ezekiel beheld, seated upon the Sapphire Throne. But these visions did not give exactly what Philip wanted, and what we need, viz., the sight of God's essential Nature and Feelings and Power. They were signs and suggestions, but not the face of God visible to mortal eye. For it is the soul of man that sees the soul of God. It is not desirable that man should with bodily eye see the out-gleaming of God's glory. It is in mercy God softens the light that falls upon us. We should be overpowered and coerced, bewildered and paralysed, by the radiance. It would take away power of thought, and would be so disproportioned to our ordinary knowledge as to take away that freedom of spontaneous action without which there is no merit in the best performances. Philip also had not learned that there are many different sorts of revelation, and that he had enjoyed and profited by one of the best, viz., the sort that blends itself with the working of the

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mind and heart, so that, as it were instinctively, we feel that necessarily God must be loving, and have a conviction of the fact stronger than any argument could have produced. But if the rebuke that corrects his reason and his crude imaginations of the externality of God's self-manifestation gives a little pain, how wonderful is the consolation of the word that follows the gentle censure!

There is, perhaps, no word ever spoken to man which is more wonderful than this: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Its claim is wonderful. Mere man cannot speak thus; it would be blasphemy. It affirms that Christ is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of the Father's person. It declares that the fulness of God's nature and character is perfectly displayed in the glory, the speech, and the action of Jesus Christ—that for all time men may study Christ, and the fulness of the Godhead in Him will keep everlastingly disclosing fresh meaning to the adoring hearts of men. The consolation of this word is infinite. It substitutes for a God of terrors, whom we had pictured to ourselves, a God of infinite charms; One whose glory is not His strength, but His

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gentleness; One who desires not the fear, but the trust and the love of men; One whose whole desire is to bless all that He has made; One who belongs to us, whose life is bound up in our life; One fit for the sovereign place of the universe; a God who becomes His throne, being touched with the feeling of our infirmity, loving all He rules, able to succour because Himself has suffered, bent on saving men at any sacrifice to Himself.

And if for Philip this was a word of wonder, it brings to us, as to him, the richest affluence of consolation. For there is inexhaustible comfort in marking that the Centre of the universe is the Tenderest Heart in it; that our destiny depends on One who loved us so much as to die for us; and that whoever has seen Jesus blessing children, or weeping over Jerusalem, or welcoming sinners, has seen God in all His grandest glory. And the meaning is enhanced when we put the proper accent on Christ's word, "From henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him." All along, the apocalypse of God has been at hand. But "from henceforth" it is to be richer in radiance than ever. It is as if He said,

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“To-morrow, on the Cross, you will know God and see Him.” Calvary is the Shekinah of heaven and earth, where, only, God can be fully known. There, His hatred of sin and love for the sinner meet. There the full reach of God’s capacity for sacrifice is disclosed, and the force and passion of mercy that fills His soul. His purity is there, and His hunger for human love, and His sympathy with all human suffering.

Seek not elsewhere to know God. Distrust all elaborate definitions of His attributes and principles. Niebuhr, the great historian, in a significant sentence once wisely remarked, “I have said over and over again I will have no metaphysical Deity, but the God of the Bible, who is heart to heart.” Believe in no metaphysical Deity, imagined of theologians; still less, conceive a scientific Deity patronised by materialists; but let the “God manifest” in Jesus Christ be “your Lord and your God.” Make use of this great word in every part of your religious life, intellectual and practical. Begin with this in forming your theology. Do not begin to form your creed at the circumference, leaving the heart of God unrecognised till at the last you conclude something about that

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heart, from the rules you think He acts on and the principles of sovereignty you think He should observe. But begin with the heart of God, as it has been revealed in the life and death of Jesus Christ. Try every doctrine by the test whether it harmonises with the character of God as revealed in Christ. That is false which does not fit the infinite graciousness of Christ. That is true which is worthy of the Lord of Calvary.

And in all the practical activities of religion, still remember this fact, that "he that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father." In action, let your obedience not be such as you would render to a hard master, but the loving obedience due to Him who died for you. And when you pray, pray to your gracious Saviour, as very God of very God. Your prayers will be small and hopeless, unless you remember you only see God when you see Christ in the Throne of all things.

There is one other word in the chapter that deals with this doctrine of God's self-revealing, and seems to be connected with this word to Philip. Christ promises to return and visit and "manifest Himself to them" (ver. 21); whereupon Judas, the brother of James, asks, "How wilt Thou

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manifest Thyself to us and not to the world?" He is embarrassed by the idea of a glorious Presence visible to some and not to others, and cannot understand how there can be a private manifestation of God. Something of Philip's feeling is in him, that God's glory must always be an outwardly resplendent thing. The Saviour makes a reply that answers Judas and at the same time completes the lesson given to Philip. He says, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." This furnishes further light.

Consider this last lesson:—

III.—The indwelling Christ enables us to understand the God revealed without us.

Christ within us enables us to see the glory and sound the depths of Christ without us. Christ, within, is Sight, while Christ, without, is Light. Christ, within, is Strength, and gives the daring needful to believe. Christ, within us, quickens the feelings and sympathies akin to His own, that enable us to understand His feelings. Happy is the man with Christ within him as the heart of his

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heart, and Christ, without, as the heaven of his heaven. Christ the sphere inside of which we live, and Christ its centre and our own. Christ within, Life; Christ without, Light. None, perhaps, ever have God manifested to them till He is thus within them and without.

We all need to know God. There is no rest till we know Him. Let us take the great teaching here given, and admit Him to our heart, and then gaze upon Jesus Christ, and ever increasingly we shall learn what God is in all the fulness of His glory, here and throughout that eternity which will never exhaust the disclosures of the glory of God's surpassing love.

IV.

THE CONSOLATION OF PROMISED USEFULNESS.

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also ; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto My Father.—*JOHN xiv. 12.

ALREADY we have marked the successive lines of consolation which the Saviour opens up to the disciples. He has taught them that Faith in God and in Him will cure every trouble that affects the heart; that there is a Home above, and perfect provision for all believers reaching it; that God is what they have seen Himself to be; that their memory of Him will be a perfect Apocalypse, growing ever richer in its revelation, an apocalypse which His indwelling presence will enable them to enjoy.

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We now advance to another great promise. Amidst the tumult of misgivings and dismays that distressed their souls, there was one fear felt strongly by all of them, though probably not formulated. They had a depressing sense that the loss of Him would involve the disabling of themselves for any worthier part in life. While He was with them, every finer feeling and nobler quality within them had been continually stimulated to fine activities. They had looked forward to lofty careers in which they would be used to build up the Kingdom of God. But to lose Him will be, they think, to lose motive and hope and work of life; and all their future will be common, spiritless, useless to God and man. Their only virtue will be a resignation that bids farewell to every higher ambition and hope of life, a dull contentment, indistinguishable from despair. Perhaps even the hope of Heaven hardly reconciled them to the dissipation of all better hopes of earth. But the Saviour has comfort for every fear, and for this as well as others.

He is going away—but so far from His departure enfeebling, it will enrich their nature; and so far from their work and joy

in life being enfeebled, both will be grander than they ever dreamed. He restores their earthly hopes with high additions, and gives, what some would deem the richest comfort possible, in promising a usefulness like His own. He sends them into the world as His Father sent Him, and they shall have the bliss of realising grander ideals of life than they had ever cherished, and of doing a work which will make them well content alike with His death and their life.

Mark this new Consolation, in which, first:—

I.—He gives the promise of richest usefulness to cheer their hearts.

“He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto My Father.”

Usefulness is the supreme glory of human life. They who understand life are “proud to be useful, and careless to be more.” By the amount of usefulness in them, we assess the value of the days that are gone, and count whether the flight of time has robbed or has enriched us. Usefulness in pre-eminently the Master’s joy. His meat and

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drink was doing the will of His Father in heaven. It is the reward and the bliss of heaven. There is no joy more rich than that of successfully serving others. To do something effective for child or for friend, or for the community in which you live, is the source of purest and most vital joy. Here, the richest promise of usefulness ever made to men is made to the disciples: The works that Christ did, they shall do, and greater.

So that, so far from life being emptied of usefulness and joy, it is to be fuller than even they had ever prayed it might be. For Christ's "works" were such that they made every sort of wilderness to blossom as a rose, and gave joy where there was absolute despair. Yet He declares, the works He does they shall do, and adds further, "And greater works than these shall they do, because He goes to the Father." The sublimity of their heavenly hope is matched by the sublimity of the earthly career promised to them here. It is a promise that His anointing to heal the broken-hearted and to give sight to the blind and liberty to the bruised shall be shared by them. Their faith in Him will be a connective channel with Himself, through which all His forces

will stream into their lives. He speaks as if all that was possible to Him became possible to those linked to Him by faith. Even the miracles are not excepted, though they did not carry the importance in the Saviour's mind they do in ours. And they will do greater works than He did, for He goes to the throne of all things; and, for His reward and crown, "all power is given to Him in heaven and in earth." So that His power to inspire and support them is enlarged by His departure. "It is expedient" for them that He goes away. He, present, they are content with the pleasure of His human friendship; but when He is risen, their soul stretches upward, and, linking itself to the Divine Friend above, is able to admit a larger charge of the Holy Ghost.

Another thing tends to enlarge their usefulness. The completion of His great work gave them a Gospel of larger power and charm. When Calvary was past, and He had risen from the dead and taken His throne, then redemption was seen in its completeness and glory, and every part of His redeeming work illumines every other part, and commends it to the understanding

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and to the acceptance of men. With a complete Gospel assuring all who accept Him of life and pardon; with all the glory of the Saviour's victory over death; with such messages of comfort and hope as had never entered the souls of men; with Christ at the right hand of power, and with a faith that lets the life and power of Christ stream into their souls, they had before them no downcast, broken, disappointed career, but a grand course, in which they might go forth conquering and to conquer, and in which each day's life might achieve some work or victory that would infinitely reward their most arduous effort.

The death of Calvary will not be a bereavement robbing them of all they value, but pure Gain—gain of enlarged natures, enlarged help, enlarged opportunity and power of sublimest usefulness. Is this promise not one of the sublimest comforts that life could have? Ignoble as we are, there is none of us who would not endure much to confer essential benefit on our fellow-men and to go through life shedding blessing. For there is more than complacency in the sense of usefulness. In a curious way it reacts upon the soul, and

gives ever higher ideals of honour, and ever-growing force of goodness, and ever-deepening gratitude to our Master and our Friend. Souls that are useful grow, as no others do. They are daily self-excelled. They rise by the sweet pre-occupations of well-doing above all the smaller cares and fears of life, and are stamped with the stamp of magnanimity and triumph.

It is a wondrous consolation for all believers that though earth may yield them but little wealth and less of gladness, yet, however lowly, a sublime usefulness is within our reach. Let our hearts, as well as the hearts of the apostles, be cheered by cherishing higher thoughts of the possibilities of our lives. The Master plans for us lofty careers. Let us enter into the plans He forms for us, and pray and endeavour that His will in this matter be realised, and cherish the comfort of having brought within our reach the possibility of glorious and abiding usefulness. Mark next:—

II.—The fulfilment of this promise in the case of the Disciples.

As matter of fact and history, they did such works as Christ did, and greater. The

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works of Christ were marvellous beyond compare. Not merely the bodily miracles, full of tender omnipotence as they were; but the deeper works that restore the souls of men. For no miracle of raising the dead, or cleansing the leper, can be compared to the spiritual miracles that stirred publicans and sinners to repent, or moved coarse people like the woman of Samaria to desire and to get the Water of Life, or changed a woman that was a sinner into one who taught the angels to bring their vials full of sweet odours and pour them on His feet. These are the supreme works of Christ. For to minister to the mind diseased, to bind up the broken-hearted, is the acme of all achievement. And the Saviour's work in waking, winning, inspiring, refining, and saving the hearts of men was infinitely more wonderful than all the miracles by which the dead were raised or the living comforted.

But great as were the spiritual works of Christ, look at the works wrought by the disciples, and say were they not greater even than His? When the disciples gathered themselves together after the Saviour's rising, the number of the names was an hundred

and twenty. But at Pentecost alone, such was the flow of Divine Force into their souls, and such the spell of their story of redemption, and such the might of the Holy Ghost which Christ shed forth, that the number of the names added on that single day was three thousand. And everywhere the marvels were wrought — in Jerusalem and Cæsarea, Babylon and Antioch, Ephesus and Philippi, Corinth and Rome. How big the work done by each man that uttered the vital and life-giving message! “From Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum,” says Paul, “I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ.” Men never wrought so sublime a work as they were permitted to feel they had wrought. “Thanks be to God who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge in every place,” is their glad word. And “the Grace that worketh in me mightily” was their constant experience. And yet, living, they never knew how big was the work they did, nor even after centuries in Heaven have they measured all its vastness. For do you think that John or Matthew knew that eighteen centuries and more after they were in their

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graves, the Gospels they wrote would be enlightening the minds of men in every land with the light of life, and blessing them with the joys of the great salvation?

All good work is bigger than the most enthusiastic thinks. It is a seed, and grows and yields successive crops. Good is the most reproductive thing under heaven. No good mother knows the bigness of the work she works, the evil she prevents, and the good she starts. Droop not in doubting weakness, thinking you lack the forces and man lacks the susceptibility that would make the success of your efforts possible. Greater works than Christ did when on earth you may do, because the completion of His work makes it intelligible, and the imperial help He gives renders His Gospel victorious. It was not rhetoric, flattering their hearts to more tranquil forecasts of life, but the measured truth and the absolute verity that Christ put before them. All His promises are yea in the firmness of His asseveration, and all of them have found the 'Amen of the Church's witness to the completeness of their fulfilment.

Mark lastly:—

III.—The personal applications we should make of this great promise.

For the word and the experience it predicts are not old-world things, but are matters pertaining to us to-day and realisable in our experience to-day. The fulfilments of this word vary in externals from age to age. Sometimes there is more and sometimes less of Miracle, for instance. And God's grace, which in one age may be earthquake and fire and storm, may be in another a still small voice, or dew, or rain on the mown grass. But in every age, whoever has believed in Jesus Christ, has wrought works identical in spirit and in blessing with those of Christ, and has wrought sometimes even greater works than He. It is a commonplace of experience that unbelief works no deliverance in the earth. It saps energy, destroys hope, deems man not worth helping, and despairs of any aids of Heaven to effect its purpose.

So doubt comes, not to fulfil the hopes of men, but only to destroy. But faith comes not to destroy, but to fulfil. And in all directions, the omnipotence of lowly efforts animate with faith in Christ and love

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to man is largely writ on the history of Church and world alike. And even lowly, uneventful lives, when thus inspired, effect often a measure of well-doing to their families, their churches, their neighbourhoods, which it would be proper to describe in the words, "The works Christ did, they did also." So that this promise is for you and me, if we will lay hold upon it and take it into our very lives. What uses should we make of this word?

(1) Should it not humble us by bringing into consciousness the sins of our low ideals? Who has realised that it is the business of every Christian "to do the works Christ did, and greater"? to tread in the footprints of Him who went about doing good, who never evaded a sorrow or left a woe He met unlessened? Who first and last and always sought to bring men back to love and trust in God? We are capable of these things—are we not guilty when we do not aspire to them? Of all things that should humble us before God, this should humble us most—that we never even ponder the good that is possible to us, still less attempt it, and least of all achieve it. Ponder, therefore, our high calling in Christ Jesus,

and let us remember we are here to do the works Christ did.

(2) Let us, with hope and with a sense of the infinite worth of life, do the part in the world thus sketched out for us. On every hand there are the inexperienced in danger of being led astray, and the experienced in danger of sinking in despair. The widow and the orphan and the poor relation are with us still. There is need for all the loving hearts and the kindly labour the Church can find. Will someone not begin to try and pray that he may work the works of Christ and live a life that shall bring great blessings and be a greater? We are not straitened in Him, but only in ourselves. With Him is the force ever wishful to vitalise you and me. He is at the right hand of the Father, and from that high vantage ground can fill and use us in a degree we dare not dream.

Oh, believe in Him—in His greatness and nearness, in all His boundless love, in the worth of His work and in the triumph that awaits it. Trust Him with the trust that submits the life to His control and His disposal, and then even we may achieve more than we dare to dream. Yes, though poor and obscure, though weighted by faults

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of other days that still darken life; though we have but feeble consciousness of the nearness of God, and no rapture in religion; though the time left us may seem too brief to permit any effective work being done, and the decays of age disable us in all directions, yet even then, if, with tremulous love and trust, we link ourselves to Him who died to win, and lives to apply, our salvation, we shall succeed in living a life full of benediction, and rich in works like those of the Son of Man.

V.

THE CONSOLATION OF THE
PROMISED ANSWERS TO OUR
PRAYERS.

*Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name,
that will I do, that the Father may be
glorified in the Son.*

*If ye ask anything in My name, I
will do it.—JOHN xiv. 13, 14.*

WE have considered successively several great lines of consolation. We marked how Faith in God and in Jesus Christ is the secret of all peace, and carries the cure of all trouble. We saw next that all who follow the Saviour will have a heavenly Home, to which He will bring them. We saw next how by the Revelation of God in Christ the soul was assured of the solidity of its hope, and the fact that he who sees Christ sees the Father made the disciples' memory an Apocalypse of glory. And then we marked the promise

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of grandest usefulness, made possible to everyone that believeth: That the works Christ did we may do, and greater.

We turn to another of THE COMFORTS OF GOD. It is connected with that promise of usefulness. Faith in Christ will enable a man to do the works of Christ, largely, because Faith prays, and all true prayer is answered. The Saviour knew the depth of human needs, and how impossible it seems to meet them; and He knew the wisdom of God in ordaining all the laws by which Nature works, and the benediction He works through all natural processes. He knew also that though man's highest wisdom is at work when he prays; yet even then his prayers have streaks of unwisdom in them, making their literal answers only a modified good. And yet here He pledges an answer to all real prayer. He does not suggest, as some do, that its chief value lies in its soothing power. But impossible as the fulfilment of a promise that all true prayers would be granted would seem to be, He makes it explicitly and unconditionally; and doing so, brings before us a spacious realm of blessed possibilities, the sight of which ought to take away all fear and all

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despair. Whatever weakness disables us or difficulties deter us, there is a mercy-seat ever within reach, and there is an answer waiting every true prayer that we send to that throne of grace.

Consider some points in connection with this great consolation:—

I.—Christ found prayer rising from the heart of man to the heart of God.

Prayer to God did not commence with His advent. Always, everywhere, some have prayed. Many definitions have been given of man that have accentuated one or other of his prominent and distinguishing attributes. Perhaps nothing expresses the deepest peculiarity of man better than to say, Man is an animal that prays. For this is the strangest and noblest feature of human nature, that it has such a consciousness of God and confidence in Him that it raises itself up to look for God, finds Him, speaks to Him, and claims His notice and His help. The hill-tops everywhere have been places of altars, and all spots where holy men have lived and died have been consecrated as likely places to meet with God. Every land

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has its temples, and the temple is everywhere a house of prayer.

You will find, for instance, everywhere in China, on labels tied to trees, or painted on temple walls, the words "Ask and ye shall receive." Man's prayer to God is instinctive as the weakness and hunger of a babe turning to a Mother's breast. The difficulties of his prayer finding answer are as obvious to the dullest savage as they are to the most accomplished man of science, and yet men pray. These mysteries are insufficiently pondered. Possibly the question of prayer belongs to the great category of Attractions. None can explain the mutual attraction of the molecular particles of matter which makes them cohere; nor magnetic attraction, which draws certain bodies of kindred compositions together; nor that of gravitation that pervades the universe, and operates so regularly that men can say, all bodies attract each other in the proportion of their mass and inversely as the square of their distance.

Something of the same sort of attraction seems to draw spirits together, and perhaps the same law obtains between them, that they attract each other in proportion to

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their mass and inversely as the square of their distance. And the mass of power, helpfulness, and love in God draws souls to Him instinctively, and instinct being the surest of all natural prophecies, it does not draw them in vain. At all events, whether this or something else be the explanation, it is well to mark that prayer is in the very make of man; that Christ found it there; that in all ages the hollow sky has overheard innumerable cries that ascended seeking and finding the ear of God. What does the Saviour do with this instinctive moving of the soul to God?

Consider next:—

II.—The Saviour gives us encouragements to pray.

It is not all great teachers that have bidden men pray. Gaudama, the great Buddhist sage, forbade prayer, explicitly, as at once a futile and a selfish thing, and insisted that each man must save and help himself, as there is no help from any God; and Confucius, the Chinese moralist, gave a not dissimilar verdict when he bade men keep the gods at a distance. If there had been no answers to prayer, Christ would have

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told us, for the theory of the usefulness of pious frauds found no place in His thoughts, His precepts, or His example. It is significant, therefore, and full of encouragement for us that He sanctions our praying in many different ways.

(1) He prayed Himself. He always found a closet, in desert place or mountain top, and prayed; and whenever any especially solemn moment in His career came, then especially He prayed. All His miracles, as we learn from His words at the grave of Lazarus, were wrought in answer to His prayers. And when He prayed the fashion of His countenance was altered, as yours is, only in His case the radiance of delight that came on Him was a transfiguration glory. He would not have left us an example of praying, if prayer had been a futile thing with no influence save a reflex soothing influence upon our mood. Then—

(2) He teaches us to believe in a God, not merely a mechanical centre of all things, but a Father. "Ask, and ye shall receive," He says; and adds, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"

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He has no idea of a God doomed to uselessness, and either incapable of feeling, or else incapable of giving effect to His feeling.

Some think of God once working, but making His work so perfect that there is no room for Him nor liberty for Him to touch it ever since. As if the universe were a clock, wound up and left to go by itself; and as if, by reason of the very goodness of His handiwork, God is shut out from all influence upon it ever since. A sort of new Calvinism is being taught by Science, and what is virtually a fatalism is preached, and we are told that God neither can nor will ever modify the natural issues of things. This view assumes also that God could not move or influence the flow of events without breaking something. Now God does not break even a bruised reed, much less a law of Nature. But everything else is free, and everything can effect some modification in the course of things. And God is free, and can modify life's courses and issues so as to permit His fulfilling the desires of our heart. God does not need to break the laws of Nature or anything else. He has infinite resources. He has forces other than those He generally employs. All things subsist

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by His upholding, and as "He brings down the heat with the shadow of a cloud," so, easily, and without breach of anything, He can effect His purpose or answer our prayers.

But our text refers to another encouragement to pray—to that, namely, that comes from every worthy and true thought of what Jesus was. As it is phrased here:—

(3) "The Name of Christ" is the impulse and the power of trustful, holy, and effectual prayer. In the language of the prophets, "The Name of God" is a phrase that stands for the worthy statement of what God is and the worthy conception in the mind of all His goodness. And men are called to trust "in the Name of the Lord," and are told that "The Name of the Lord is a strong tower, into which the righteous run and are safe."

Throughout this discourse the Saviour speaks much of the power of "the Name of God." "I have manifested to them Thy Name," He says, as if all His life He had been spelling it out before men that they might know what God is and have a worthy conception of Him. This Name of God that He has given men has immense power.

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“This is eternal life—to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” The “Name,” the true thought of God engrafted on the soul, has a great preservative power; so that He can say, “I have kept them in,” *i.e.*, “by Thy Name,” and He prays, “Keep them in Thy Name.” And as if He would sum up in one word all His own work and all the effect that work has on them, He closes His great prayer with the words, “I have declared unto them Thy Name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

All these words guide us to the meaning of the phrase here used, “Asking in Christ’s Name.” It does not mean relying on His merits and His atoning death, though these are the basis of all redemption. It names, not the plea prayer uses, but the root from which prayer springs, the power and the impulse, and the guide and the confidence that enable us to pray. It finds its simplest exposition in the great word of the next chapter (v. 7), where Christ gives the whole philosophy of prayer: “If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”

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For prayer is not a casual and arbitrary thing, which anybody can offer when he feels inclined. It is a Power and a Liberty that souls that dwell in Christ, and in whom His words dwell, come to possess, by virtue of which they can rise to God, and name and lodge and leave their desires in His heart.

Now here we are taught that while many wishes that men express, even on their knees, are foolish and cannot be answered; when the "Name" of Christ fills the soul with its light and warmth and hope, then the child-like desires begin to rise, and true prayer is possible, and the link is made by which the desire enters the heart of God and God's power travels back into the life of man. So that to pray in the Name of Christ means to pray inspired by the worthy thought of Him, by the memory of His promises, by His love, by His desire to save, by the joy of His presence in the soul. When we thus hallow His Name with worthy thought and with faith, then we can offer all the great petitions that express our need. In these ways Christ encourages us to pray—by His example, by His revelation of the Father-love of God, and lastly, by His self-revelation; everything about Him, when

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worthily understood and realised, moving us to pray. Till His Name illumines us, our longings are small, impure, feeble, and cannot rise to God; but in the inspiration of His Name, we are moved and able to pray. But there is something more and richer than this. Consider lastly:—

III.—He promises to answer all such prayer.

Again, the majesty of Christ's consciousness amazes us. He here makes a promise that only fits the lips of God. He invites all prayers of all mankind, to the end of time, even after these prayers have been enlarged by the ennobling hopes His love awakens. And He promises to all, whatever their burden, guilt, weakness, or fear, that He, out of the great resources at His command, will answer them all. It is not the voice of mere man. And yet the vastest promise from His lips hardly surprises us! And this promise is almost what we would expect from Him; for He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. It is the faulty that change; He changes not. And on earth, whatever men asked, moved by faith in His love and power, He gave them,

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sending none away empty-handed. And Heaven has not chilled His heart, nor lessened His powers, nor pre-occupied Him with other things. The same delight in wiping away the tear that moved Him here moves Him there. And in the Throne He is more able still, "all Power in Heaven and in earth being given to Him."

So, conscious of His power, and knowing that no change would lessen His interest in those who seek Him, He makes this ample, tender promise, sufficient to change all grief to peace: "If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." He does not limit it in any way. He is not afraid of folly or selfishness abusing the privilege. He knows that folly cannot pray, and that selfishness cannot pray. Cries in the form of petitions may express desires foolish and selfish, but he who utters them knows they do not go up to God. When a man full of the worthy thought of Christ prays, his confidence keeps his prayer from being selfish, and the feeling that he is going to be answered keeps his prayers from being foolish. When the worthy thought of Christ—His full Name—inspires us, our longings are sweet odours rising from a heart that has become a

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golden censer. So He puts no limit. "If ye ask anything, I will do it." And, blessed be His Name, the promise has been kept. Eyes have not failed with looking up; but, as of old, so still, the witness is heard, "I cried unto the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me out of my distresses"; "I confessed my sin unto the Lord, and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

Men have not got what they have sought always in the form and at the time they desired. But the form has always been a better form, and the time a better time. The world says, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity"; but no such dismal testimony rises from the Church. "There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the House of Israel; all came to pass." Still the heart's desires are given us, often most richly given when they had seemed to be denied; and so real and so rich is the fulfilment of our desires that satisfaction and hope are always the marks of the believing Church; and Christians are the people, of all others, who seem to realise their purpose in life and get their hearts' desires. So He was not misleading us when He uttered this word. Heaven and earth

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will pass away, but one jot or tittle of true prayer will not pass away till all are fulfilled.

For when God sows His prayers upon human hearts they find stony and trodden and thorny ground that gives no response; but when we sow our prayers on the heart of God they find no stony and no thorny ground there, but the soil of richest love which welcomes them, and they yield an hundredfold. If this be so there are surely momentous conclusions. Why carry our burdens on our wearied backs? Why despair? There are regrets; why not seek their healing? There are varied weaknesses; why not lay hold on God's strength? There is a crushing burden of guilt; why not let Christ give His abundant pardon? Love bleeds with solicitude for others—advice or censure seems in vain; why not pray? Remember the lesson. The Name of Christ is the great inspiration of prayer. Our seeming prayers fall short of being prayers by reason of want of thought. It is the soul that absorbs the true idea of Jesus Christ that alone can pray. Brood over all the words of Christ that spell out His Name. Remember He is Love, is

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Saviour, is Friend of Sinners, is Answerer of Prayer—brood on all He was and is and has promised to be, and then there will grow in the soul a power to venture near Him, to look Him in the face, and to tell Him your fears and shame and desires; and gradually, or at once, there will come to you reliefs and rejoicings and the gaining of the heart's deepest desires and richest peace; and you will look back when life is done and know that not one of all your real prayers passed away without its complete fulfilment.

VI.

THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT.

I will pray the Father and He will give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth.—JOHN xiv. 16, 17.

WE have not yet exhausted the Consolations of Christ. What He has said about Heaven; about the Revelation of God in His own character and life; His promises to the Disciples of their increased usefulness; His assurance of an answer to all the prayers inspired by His "Name," might be imagined enough to exhaust even the resources of God. But a consolation richer than any yet given, and one by which those already given are made larger and surer is now given us—the promise of the Holy Spirit to dwell with us for ever and be our Comforter.

A sentence or two seems necessary on the word translated "Comforter." It occurs

in the New Testament here, in the last discourse of Christ, four times, where it is translated "Comforter"; and in the first Epistle of St. John, once, when it is translated "Advocate," in the text, "If any man sin we have 'an Advocate' with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous" (1 John ii. 1).

In connection with this diversity of translation, note that the rendering "Advocate" in the Epistle cannot be challenged. The chief function of a "Paraclete," *i.e.*, the man called in by a Greek citizen to help him in difficulties, was to plead his cause with his judges, professional lawyers being then unknown. Perhaps the word "Helper" might be the best equivalent. The word "Comforter" when our translation was made had the significance of "Strengtheners," and the Greek word "Paraclesis," which describes the action of a Paraclete, has predominantly in the New Testament the force of "Comfort." So that we shall best get the idea of this word if we take it in the general sense of "One that helps us," and does so especially by "advocating" our cause and by "comforting" our hearts. This was a function Christ had filled, and filled so wondrously that they grieved to

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lose Him. So the Saviour says, "The Father will give you another Comforter."

Twice in this chapter He says, "The Father will send" Him. Twice in the next chapter He says, "I will send Him." These statements led the ancient Church into subtle discussions on the question of the "procession" of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son, which concern us but slightly. The fact of supreme moment for us is this: that a promise is made us here of the strength and comfort of an Indwelling God.

The human soul has this quality—that it is easily entered and influenced by other kindred souls; which seem to transfuse themselves into it; which move, constrain, and gladden; which blend with it and make of twain one life. Here there is a promise that God the Holy Ghost will enter the soul and dwell in it for ever: a source of strength, light, hope to all who welcome Him. The soul that is so entered may not be conscious of His presence; for like the light which makes things visible, but is itself invisible, the Holy Spirit is a God that hideth Himself and rather inspires our faculties than speaks as a foreigner within us. But though we may not be conscious of the Divinity that is

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moving us, the Presence here promised is potent to quicken, to gladden, to strengthen, and to save. Consider this great Consolation. Mark first:—

I.—Christ promises the Holy Spirit to protect and perfect our personal bliss.

We need God within us if we are to live the Christian life. So utter is our weakness, so many our difficulties and temptations; so grave are our perversities, and so ready are we to misconstrue God's dealings and to err in judgment, that it would look like a waste of time to form a better resolution or cherish an ideal if we had not help stronger than our own.

But here we have a promise of an Inhabitant for our heart that brings strength and light and all well-being—One who does not overpower us, but emits His influence as it is needed on our hearts. It is not possible for us to gather up all that the Holy Spirit, thus given, may do for us. For He is the source of all manner of good within us. To Him is due our new birth and our progressive renewal. He is the mover of the cry of adoption, "Abba, Father." He bears witness within our spirits that we are

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“ children ” and “ heirs ” of God. He makes intercession within us, with groanings that express deeper needs than words can name. He is within us the warmth of love, the brightness of hope, and the force of victory. So that in all sorts of ways He is the Helper and Comforter to our souls. But in this discourse of Christ there are three special ways noted by Him in which the gift of the Holy Spirit works our consolation:—

(1) He will be a source of pervading life within the soul—a Divine sap that animates stem and branches of the vine alike; a suffusive quickening, operating through the whole nature. For our physical life it is necessary that the blood circulating through every part should carry moment by moment new supplies of life-giving matter to every cell of nerve and tissue. And we want a similar, constant, effectual supply of quickening influence to will and heart and conscience. Here the Stem of the Vine says to the branches, “ I will give you the Holy Ghost ”—that power which was given Him without measure and by which His mighty works were done; and by which we can do works otherwise impossible. For we cannot develop ourselves and we need some-

one to breathe the breath of life upon us. And it is strange how this promise is fulfilled. The sap Divine flows through the soul, maintaining higher purpose and finer feelings often from youth to oldest age; so that Convictions keep fresh, and Delight in the Saviour keeps fresh, and Purpose maintains its energy and Hope its brightness to life's end. The secret of this lifelong, growing freshness is here. "I live," said Paul, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Christ was the heart of his heart and the life of his life. And the same Divine charge of life is available for you and me. Christ came "that we might have life and might have it more abundantly." All of us get as much of the Holy Ghost as we can hold. If we get less it is because we have not made room for more. In God we are not straitened; in ourselves we often are. Therefore Christ says, "If ye keep My commandments My Father will send the Holy Ghost." Obedience is room; Love is room; Wistfulness is room, for the Holy Ghost. Let us open the heart to His impulse and to His restraint—co-operate with all His efforts to make us trust our Redeemer God, and He will enter us and enrich us, and there will be

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a freshening sap in all our life that will make us bring forth fruits of Righteousness.

(2) He promises the Holy Ghost as the Giver of all needed Light.

“He will teach you all things”; “will take the things of Christ and show them unto you”; “He will lead you into all truth.” We need inward light to use the outward. All Nature is an open secret, and yet for want of the luminous eye many see but little of either its working, or its beauty, or its mystery. And Grace is a similar secret, open to those who have sight, but hidden from those who are indifferent.

All that have ears do not hear, and all that have eyes do not see. The eye must be illumined with a power of vision. As Paul puts it, “The eyes of the heart must be enlightened,” before we can see the greatness of God’s power.

And the Holy Ghost comes as the Spirit of Truth, revealing all we need to know, and especially revealing the glory of the Saviour. Some fear that the light which will lead into the truth of God and of man will bring despair, and distrust ordinary comforts as false witnesses. Some fear light on Jesus Christ, as they think they might

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discover He is such a hard Master that they will never rest again. But God is Love, and therefore all the facts and realities of life are friendly; and to be comforted completely only needs the Light of Truth and the power to believe what it reveals. Especially, to Know Christ is the end of all dread and all weakness. It is therefore by imparting this knowledge of Christ that He is the great Comforter. He takes of the things of Christ and reveals them unto us. The heart is too narrow to admit the great facts of God's redeeming love and the wonders of His tenderness until the Spirit infuses receptive energy into the soul, and strengthens it to believe. Light that others shed on Christ is too feeble to reveal Him. As a candle can show the contents of a room, but cannot show you Mont Blanc, and you have to wait till sunrise illumines all its majesty, so none can see Christ till the Spirit discloses all the vastness of His being and His mercy. So no man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost. But when He enters the heart He reveals all the trustworthiness of Christ; all His Divine omnipotence; His Divine lowliness in taking human form that He might be our Saviour; His power to

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strengthen us into a capacity for usefulness. All His patience He brings into our view and enables us to trust it, and all His power to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him. It is a great thing to live in a world with the face of Christ for our sky. And when the Spirit reveals Him ruling over all, there is a conviction wrought in the soul that all things will prove to be working for the best. Seek this illuminating Spirit—for we need it. Flesh and blood cannot by any statement make us understand Christ, nor can by any logic make us believe in Him. But when the Comforter is come He shows all the things of Christ—and these are all the things of God as well—to our hearts, and there is the sort of light which makes Heaven, for it is written, “The Lamb is the Light thereof.”

There is another point here accentuated by the Saviour, in connection with our personal well-being:—

(3) “He will show you things to come.” This seems somewhat strange for Christ to add. But it is not quite so strange as it appears. It does not mean that He will gratify the unbelieving curiosity that peers into the future, for to satisfy mere curiosity

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would be only to augment distress. It would seldom be an advantage to know beforehand what is about to happen, as, even if you did, you could not reach the scene or the parties to it or the forces that are operating to produce it. So that to know details of the future would be no benefit to any.

But there is a knowledge of the Future that it is well for us to have. It is well for us to know that God is there at work. It is well to see waiting in the future Results of holy labour, sure and satisfying. To do so will be to be inspired to labour on in all good ways. It is well to see the Answers to our prayers that are on their way, coming to meet us. It is well to see the expanding Life beyond the grave that will give fairer scope for all graces and powers developed here. It is well to see in front of us the vindication of our character, if it has been misunderstood. There are many situations in which the sight of to-morrow is the saving of a man. It is such a knowledge of things to come, that is here promised:—The salutary vision of our Redeemer that liveth; of the Success of holy work that is threatened with failure; of the Vindication of all our better motives and aims; of the Reward of all our

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love and faithfulness. The sight of these things saves men from despair, and keeps them moving on and upward. It is the fulfilment of this promise that makes it a feature of all believers that they are men with a future, and that their to-morrow is usually a land of brightness and of blessing. We are saved by hope; and all that is needed to let hope have her perfect work is promised here. Realise the fulness of this promise of the Indwelling God. Open and prepare your heart, and fit its throne to receive its king. And He will come in to each of us, a Force of being, a Light on Christ, a Daystar in the heart, showing the good things that are to come. Do not try either proudly or despondingly to live the new life in your own strength;—but remember and claim and get the greatest of all gifts God can give or man receive—the gift of the Holy Ghost. Mark next:—

II.—The promise of the Holy Spirit's help in all our work.

Their work was to be sublime. It was to be difficult as well. In this address the Saviour bids them expect to be hated as He had been, and persecuted as He had

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been (ch. xv. 18—21). And He has charged them to be His apostles to an unbelieving world — Sheep sent as missionaries to Wolves.

The world was so impervious to truth that, instead of welcoming its Redeemer, it slew Him. How could they hope to succeed in convincing men of the Saviour's worth and of their duty? To-day, though nineteen centuries of Progress lie behind us, our spirits droop when the progress of the work seems slow; when unbelief seems to spread, and when earthly Pleasure takes possession of the hearts of the people. How much more might the apostles cherish misgiving about their power to lead an unbelieving world to the life of faith!

But if the promise of the Holy Spirit is rich for all believers, in their own personal struggles and fears, it is specially precious to all workers. It is given explicitly, in the next chapter, in the concluding verses. Unfortunately, by translating the same Greek word by different English words, the sweetness of the promise is somewhat obscured. But it is very clear and very potent. "The Comforter," says Christ, "shall testify of Me, and ye also shall

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testify"; so that in all work and witness for Him, a Divine Power would co-operate with theirs; and whenever a human voice declares His glory, another Heavenly voice adds its witness and declares it also. Always in their work, the unseen Helper would be near and co-operant. They and He would speak; they and He would work.

And later, in the sixteenth chapter, He amplifies this promise further. "The Spirit will convince the world of Sin, and of Righteousness, and of Judgment"—*i.e.*, of Wrong done, of Right that ought to have been done, of Judgment for both. He would convince the world of its wrong by showing the malignant elements in its rejection of Him who came to save it. He would show the world its responsibility for fulfilling that righteousness which He required here, and now requires from His heavenly throne—a righteousness which His presence in the throne of glory makes more possible, and therefore more binding. And He would convince the world of Judgment, of the failure and the defeat awaiting all evil, of which His Calvary victory is the prelude; a judgment ever operating in current Providence; a judgment in reserve for the future,

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which will bring all things into light. So that, that very power they thought they lacked, the power of convincing the souls of men of the supreme elements of responsibility and truth, would be more than supplied by Him. They would have an ally in every conscience. They would not need to create conviction of sin; they would find God was working it.

They would not need to demonstrate by eye-witnesses the rising of the Saviour; there would be something moving in the hearts of men compelling them to feel that the great life had not ended, but had only been enthroned; that He was Master, and they were responsible to Him. They would not need to prove that there is a judgment to come. Men would have intimations of it within themselves—a Divine demonstration of awaiting judgment that would move them to repent, and make them eagerly rejoice to welcome and believe the Gospel that sets them free from the heart's great fear.

How richly was this promise fulfilled! Not only at Pentecost, and on occasions that have resembled it, but unceasingly, ever since, in the experience of even the humblest workers all the world over. And, thank

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God, we have not exhausted either the truth or the richness of the promise yet. But to-day, throughout the world, no voice ever witnesses for Christ without another voice, inaudible to the speaker, but authoritative in the heart of the hearer, testifying as well.

Fear not to work for Christ; as teachers, preachers, missionaries, friends, neighbours. Another helps you, and by the power of the Holy Ghost the foolishness of preaching will still save them that believe, and a faithful Church will always find that truth carries a force that error can never wield, and that the Gospel is still the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

VII.

THE GIFT OF PEACE.

Peace I leave with you : My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.—JOHN xiv. 27.

WE reach to-day the last great Consolation needed by man, and pledged by Jesus in this chapter. All men appreciate Peace. The Syrian people amongst whom Jesus lived summed up all prosperity in this one word—Peace. Their greeting was given in this word, and it expressed their farewell of good wishes. To them it seemed either the essence or the condition of all comfort and satisfaction. Without it no joy was secure; with it no ill was insupportable. The one thing the disciples despaired of when they looked forward was—Peace. All things looked adverse to them. They hardly needed Christ

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to tell them that in the world they should have tribulation; but they did need Him to add, "But in Me ye shall have peace." And here He meets their need. He did not use great words for small things. What He calls Peace is something more perfect than thought of man can conceive, or hope of man expect. Yet here He pledges it, in all its victorious calm and in all its healing virtue, to the lowly followers that cowered beneath the threats of an angry and unbelieving world. Consider this word that rounds off the consolation given us by the Saviour. And mark first:—

I.—Peace is the desire of every heart of man; but seems impossible.

All are seeking Peace, by some path or other. The desire for it is the root of many different aspirations and activities. Some want wealth, simply in order to be able to say, "Soul, take thine ease." Some want knowledge for the same reason. Some are eager in pursuit of health and strength, in order that they may be at peace from the solitudes and the weariness which beset them. Seekers of fame, of admiration, of pleasure,

of excitement, even, are all in various ways seeking that which they think will give them rest. Some seek Love, and some seek Leisure—only that they may have Peace. All want Peace. For all feel that if the mind can be at rest they are at leisure to taste every joy. They feel, moreover, that the calm mind has all its powers at command, and so is more able to meet and deal with everything that threatens their welfare. If they are at Peace, they can make use of all the treasures of the past and present to gladden them, undisturbed by fear of the future. Somehow Peace is a condition precedent of all sorts of comforts. Even the strongest affections are disturbed in their flow and their delight by anything that disturbs the inward Peace. Agitated, no wealth or repute or even love can satisfy you.

Yet it seems impossible to reach it. The place of Peace, like that of Wisdom, it seems impossible to find. Wealth and Health and Fame, and even Love, all seem to say, "It is not in me." For who has the Nerve to face the possibilities before him, serenely? Much less the impending experiences of overwhelming disaster that often look us in

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the face! Who is without some dismay and apprehension when he looks forward to his own future? Who is there that warmly loves who is not anxious as to what may happen to others? The care of them is on us, and in their sickness, their sorrows, their faults, and their misfortunes, there is reason enough for care and for unrest. So that it seems as if no one can secure Peace. No one has strength, foresight, alliances, or resources sufficient to be perfectly at rest. And yet without Peace the lean kine of To-morrow's possible troubles always eat up the fat kine of To-day's comforts. Without Peace we are the prey to all sorts of fears and many needless distresses; we can hardly pray, and we are so pre-occupied with care that even Love is weakened. Without Peace we have neither the time nor the courage to think and to realise what it is desirable that we should do.

And yet here, to the disciples and to our poor, nervous, feeble, insufficient souls, Christ promises the Calm, which He calls Peace. Nay, more than that; He promises that the very Peace that filled His heart should enter ours. He was a centre of calm in the midst of a tumultuous world. The

wrath of the priesthood, the weakness of Pilate, the policy of Herod, did not dismay Him. When He knew death waited Him in Jerusalem, He steadfastly set His face to go up thither, so that His disciples were amazed. While He was speaking, death was awaiting Him in its most awful form a few hours ahead; but He is full of the strong Peace that can detach itself from all thought of self and all regard for His personal troubles, in order to console those about Him. He had the profound Peace that came from being vitally linked to the God of Peace, between whom and Himself there was no shadow of divergence in plan or in desire. His Peace was not the inert and pitiable Peace of those who do nothing and need nothing, but the vital Peace of one full of all benign activities, with the needs varied and vast of a sublime nature—needs which kept always soaring to the mercy-seat of God. And this vital Peace, this Peace full of labours, not ignorant of the assaults of temptation and pain, but serenely victorious over all of them—this Peace He promises to all who follow Him, whatever their nervous sensibilities, whatever their environment, whatever their

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previous sins or present sorrows, whatever the imperfection of their vision or their understanding. To the disciples, assailed with all forms of anxiety and fear, He promises that Peace which has been the radiant summit of serenity, on which the world has looked with wonder and adoration. Believe this is possible. Amid all your pursuit of things that will benefit you, seek Christ's Peace; for nothing will give you either strength or usefulness, the mastery over your wayward impulses or the victory over your fiercest temptations, like the Peace of God. And this Peace, whatever may seem to render it impossible, is here promised to us by our Saviour. Mark next:—

II.—The Peace promised is the gift of Jesus.

He does not merely predict—He promises it. The resources needed to impart it are His. And, by what He is and says and does, for us and in us, He works that Peace. Only His voice can still the storms of the soul. He uses two words to describe His part in it. "Peace I leave with you," and

“My Peace I give unto you.” It is not desirable to press unduly the different suggestions of these words. But the two words do suggest different views of this gift. The suggestion of the word “Leave” is that Peace is a thing the elements of which have been provided by Christ and are ours for the taking. The suggestion of the word “Give” is that Peace is something which the Saviour works in our hearts by direct operation. He and none else bequeaths Peace. For He has won for us all the elements that can make it. He has won Pardon for us, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the aids of Providence, and the Rest of Heaven, and the possibility of Reconciliation with God. He has opened up by His Cross a new and living way to the Father. He has revealed God’s Fatherhood; He has left exceeding great and precious promises which cover all sorts of extremities. So that the elements of Peace are always within our reach—are a legacy left to us, and it is ours to claim our share and appropriate our portion.

But over and above providing such resources as make Peace possible to our souls, He gives us Peace in ways more direct,

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and by influences that enter and pervade the soul.

All who have Peace shed it off in some degree. The serene confidence of the Commander conveys itself to his troops. The serene confidence of the Physician imparts itself to his patient and those who tend him. Peace is always contagious; suggesting there are grounds of confidence besides those we see. And the Great Christ has shed off upon the world His Peace in a degree not easy to be measured. He has permeated the world with some of His own confidence. Millions have a confidence that "All's right with the world"; that One all-wise and all-loving is ruling and ordering all. They have caught this confidence from that of Christ. The sweet contagion of His Peace has infected the world. It operates, of course, more powerfully on those who live closest to Him and dwell beneath His Shadow. And lowly Christians hope because Christ hoped, and are content with what God sends because Christ trusted and because Christ was content with what God sent to Him. What a soul with strenuous serenity and victorious calm does for a little circle round him, Christ has done for Man-

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kind, and, by the vital contagion of His Peace, He has given to mankind on a vast scale Confidence and Calm and Hope.

But more than this, He works directly on and in the heart producing Peace. He gives strength to lay hold on the promises, force to pray, the power to hope; He whispers by His Spirit our acceptance with God, assures us of His forgiveness, of His care, of His purpose to perfect that which concerneth us. So that it is not only what He reveals without us, or provides within our reach, that secures Peace for us; but the fine working of His Spirit within our soul, that strengthens us for all we have to dare and to hope. So that in the largest sense the words can carry He gives us Peace.

And this may be seen on a large scale. The Peace of God's children has been the marvel of men. It has been the Seal on the brow of those who walk with Him. This Peace has been the mystery that puzzled and baffled the tyrants that sought to crush them; it has been the envy of philosophers who wished they had the victory over external circumstances which the lowliest Christians seemed to achieve. Peace in Life and Peace in Death has been the glory given

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to the disciples by which men have known them to be true followers of Christ. "Being justified by faith, we have Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," is the song sung through all the Christian ages. If this promise has not been as largely fulfilled in us as we would have wished, it is not because there are features in our case that make the fulfilment impossible, but because we have not given the Saviour the chance of working in us mightily. Let us go to Him and get this Peace. For He still invites the weary and the heavy laden to come unto Him, and still is omnipotent to give them Rest.

But mark next in connection with this point:—

III.—Christ gives His Peace in strange ways.

"Not as the world giveth, give I unto you," is a word that has a somewhat deeper significance than is sometimes given to it. It does not mean that with the world, "Peace be unto you," is merely a greeting, casually uttered and soon forgotten, while His benediction is an effective prayer, and an abiding power. This is, of course,

obviously contained in the word, but it is by no means the whole or the chief part of its meaning. This word points, I think, to something else altogether. It signifies to us that Christ gives Peace, but takes what seem to us strange ways of giving it. Here, for instance, is one of them. His going away is an event that seems to them destructive of their Peace; but He departs, that by departing He may promote it. His going, as we have seen, provoked consternation, involving as it did the loss of the presence of the best human friend that man had ever known. But that same going away gave them a Divine Friend in the Throne of all things, still more potent to bless than He had been below. So also He seemed to destroy the possibility of Peace by the duties He gave them to discharge. Will they ever rest again when He calls them to be in the world as He was in it? But the Duties are a Yoke that gives Rest. These duties refine the soul, they enlarge its love; attempting them they find a Divine Companionship that helps them. So that more Peace grows out of Labours of Love than the soul can reach in any other way.

He sends the Hate of man, persecutions

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and troubles, and these seem to destroy the last possibility of Peace. But so far from doing this they drive men to God in prayer, to find answers to prayer so rich that Peace is perfected as without such antagonisms it could not have been. None have Peace that are indolent; none that are selfish; none that are cowardly; and so He gives Peace by sending strains on the soul that bring out all its mettle.

We are never at peace till we get hold of God and find our portion in the heavenly and enduring things. And Christ, to give us this Peace, sends affliction to wean us from worldliness and to bind our heart to His own and move us to share His lot. So He takes a different course to give Peace, from that which the world would take. He knows it is not an easy problem to give the soul of man Peace. The first idea the world would have would be to excuse a man from all service, sacrifice, and suffering. Such a treatment would not give Peace, but would doom him to littleness that could not hold Peace—to a listlessness that could not enjoy it, and to a self-consciousness that would destroy it. It would have the same sort of effect on the man that you find in a boy,

when a foolish parent thinks to make his life happy by always giving him his own way. The result of such treatment of the boy is, as we all know, that his life is usually the most miserable that can be found.

Christ loves us too well to spoil us, and so gives Peace in another and a nobler way, by developing strength and interest in others, and venturesome faith and trustful love, and by imposing all the duties and strains needed to produce these qualities—and He succeeds. Look at Paul, and how Christ gave him Peace: through the compulsions of Love, the activities of ceaseless toil, the hardships which seemed alike measureless and endless. But the more Paul does and dares and suffers, the higher rises the spirit of victory and hope within him, and—to quote his words—the more the “Peace of God that passeth all understanding, keeps his heart and mind in Christ Jesus.” As with Paul, so with all believers. John Bunyan cast into prison might have seemed the most pitiable of all men, with his heart bleeding over his children, especially over the girl whose blindness made her his darling. But read his “Prison Meditations”—that little poem of 70 verses that describes the effect

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of his imprisonment on his soul. Probably many of you could have written better poetry; but the charm of the poem lies in the fact that in shutting him up in prison they had somehow driven him into the warm bosom of God, where he was kept in perfect Peace.

This prison very sweet to me
Hath been since I came here ;
And so would also hanging be
If God did there appear.

So, though not in the way the world gives—in the best and most successful of all ways, Christ gives Peace. He produces Peace by developing heroisms, purposes, and hopes that are sublime. Be not surprised if Christ seems by His requirements, His discipline, and His guidance to make Peace difficult or impossible. He gave the apostles Peace, by a different way from that by which the world would give it; but He does give it, and redeems His promise fully, to obedient souls.

Such is the crowning promise of this chapter, so rich in its consolations and promises.

Christ's words bring within our view a Heavenly Home; the heart of God revealed

in the face of Christ; the mercy-seat where we may find the answer to all our prayers; the hope of richest usefulness; the bliss of an indwelling Spirit of God; and the gift of Peace—Peace with God; Peace within; Peace vital and not torpid; a Peace not of indolence but of action; a Peace growing from force and victory; Peace that is wrought in the soul by Strength.

They are no small blessings that the Redeemer gives.

Multitudes that none can number have received them in richest fulness. He calls on the disciples to avail themselves of the mercies that He puts within their reach. He closes the discourse as He opened it, with the words, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." This word affirms that care and fear are needless, and so comforts us. But it does more. It calls us to co-operate with Him. He will give Peace. We must do our part and take it. We have to stir up our hearts and resist the tendency to misgiving and to despair. For help of Christ comes to them that help themselves—to the brave and the trusting, and not to the shrinking and those that give way to fear. How much of needless trouble

enters and weakens and distresses our hearts!

Brethren, rise and claim your share in these mercies. All these things are for all who will take Christ for their Saviour. If any have not taken Him as their Saviour, repent of the distance and the indifference that are costing you the loss of all these precious blessings, and come and claim your share in His great Salvation. And if we have accepted Him as our Master and our Saviour and our All, let us take boldly His great promises and live a life that ventures all upon them, and in our happy experience they will all be fulfilled, and our life in Time and Eternity will be Peace.







