

## ***Love Revealed – Excerpts***

*George Bowen*

(1885)

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Formatted and lightly modernized, Jan 25, 2023

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**John 15.7-8. ‘If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask what you will, and it will be done for you. In this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be my disciples.’**

Comparing this with the expression in verse 4, “Abide in me, and I in you,” we learn that Christ abides in us as his *words* abide in us. This is a most important thought — perhaps the most important of all truths for the believer. Our Lord had previously given a strong intimation of it. When Judas asked him, “How is it that you will manifest yourself to us?” he answered. “If a man loves me, he will keep my words.” We are to seek Christ, not in the third heavens, but in his words — that is, in the gospel; and we shall find him when that gospel is taken into our own hearts and kept there. The Spirit of God takes from Christ and shows to us, by taking from his words and bringing them before us, in their own appropriate beauty and authority.

Let the reader turn to the second chapter of First Corinthians, and glance along from the 9th verse to the 14th, noticing the following expressions: “The *things* which God has prepared for those who love him: God has revealed *these things* to us by his Spirit: The Spirit searches *the deep things* of God: no man knows *the things* of God, except the Spirit: *The things* that are freely given to us by God: Which *things* we speak: The *things* of the Spirit of God.” And compare with verse 2, “I determined not to know *anything* among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.” The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is that of which the ancient prophets wrote when they prophesied of things prepared such as eye had not seen, ear had not heard, heart had not conceived. “The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Cor 4.6) is no other than “the light of the glorious gospel of Christ” (ver. 4).

It follows that Christians are committing a most serious error when they neglect to seek in the Word of God for the answers to their prayers. If they believingly ask to see the glory of Christ, they may expect that the Spirit of God will cause them to see that glory in the ordinary words of the gospel. Ask any mature Christian concerning the blessings that have made his soul to overflow with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and he will tell you that they all came to him through the medium of the Word. “Say not, Who will bring Christ down from above? The word is near you, even in your heart and in your mouth.” Say, who will bring the Holy Ghost down from above, so that Christ in all his beauty and majesty may be discovered by my soul, looking out to me from his precious word.

Where in this wide world shall I find Elijah the prophet, to obtain for me by his effectual fervent prayer, the wonder-working fire from heaven? Ah! Do not call for Elijah. Be to yourself your own Elijah. The word is near you, in your heart and in your mouth. It has as mighty a claim upon your faith as upon that of Elijah. “Ask, and it shall be given you.” “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask what you will, and it shall be done for you.” You will ask

for the Holy Ghost, and he will show you the deep things of God in Christ, and Christ in the Word.

“If my words abide in you, ask whatever you will.” If his words abide in us, they will abide in our will, enveloping it and permeating it and making it Christ’s will; and then what wonder if we obtain what we ask, when we ask what we thus will! “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” “Sanctify them through your truth.” “Keep them from the evil of the world.” “Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come; your will be done, as in heaven so in earth.” “That their joy may be full.” “Peace I leave with you.” “Let not your heart be troubled.” “That they all may be one.” “That they may see my glory.” These, and such as these, are the words of Christ. Let them abide in us and become our own words, the expressions of our own will, our heartfelt desire, and we shall ask what we will without fear of a denial.

We see how it is that we are to bring forth fruit to Christ, how it is that other branches are to start from us, and thus the true vine extend itself to regions beyond, even to every nation, tribe, and tongue. We are told, if Christ abides in us, and we in him, we shall bring forth much fruit; and we are told that if we abide in Christ and his words abide in us, we will ask what we will, and it shall be done for us.

It is, then, at the mercy seat that we are to obtain all our fruit, that Christ through us is to be loaded with fruit. How easy it is to err here! How many, in fact, overlook this all-important truth! How constant is the impulse to take the words of Christ and rush forth with them as though they would *of themselves* work out fruit! The first disciples hid them in their hearts and went to the throne of grace, and continued with one accord in supplication until the day of Pentecost; nor did they afterward in the least intermit their prayerfulness. “You do not have because you do not ask.” “If you ask anything in my name, I will do it.” Christ is as truly the Author of all the fruit-producing processes *now*, as when he was bodily on the earth, and the believer loves to have it so. Not that Christ does anything without his people: *through the branches, the vine bears fruit.*

“In this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit.” The husbandman is glorified when the vines are loaded with excellent fruit. The hope that animated him in all his labors is then realized. No one is justified in believing that there is an unwillingness on the part of God to witness the extension, elevation, and glory of the Church. The end of all creation and all providence is that God may be glorified. Everything else must give way to this necessity. If we really and thoroughly desire that God may be glorified, there is no reason why we should not bring forth much fruit to his glory. If much fruit is wanting, the glory of God is wanting, and we are responsible; it must be that his words are not abiding in us.

It may be a protracted process by which God will fit us for fruitfulness; though we don’t see the *fruit*, we may see the *preparation* for it. The fruit we are now speaking of is fruit *in others*. But until the day when God will be glorified by such fruit, through our instrumentality, let there be a constant prophecy of that future day of glory in our increasing patience, humility, prayerfulness, faith, submission, self-denial, love, and gratitude.

Oh, let us lay hold of the gracious declaration that God is glorified in our exceeding fruitfulness, for in this there is the strongest possible affirmation of success accorded to our sincere prayers. What is said here does not affect merely the man of genius, the man of great

natural energy and power of adaptation; it relates to Christians generally. Upon every one is laid a solemn obligation to bring forth much fruit.

The command, “Glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits, which are his,” is no other than the command to bring forth fruit. To fulfil this command, it is needful *first*, for a man to know that the thing is possible; he must learn it from the promises. *Second*, to know that it is obligatory. *Third*, to cease from living for himself, realizing that he is bought with a price. *Fourth*, to be willing to be anything in the hand of God, to let God treat him as something quite contemptible and worthless. *Fifth*, to be content to bring forth fruits in God’s order—patience, meekness, submission — when these are particularly called for. *Sixth*, to beware how he dreams of glorifying himself with any fruit that God may give him, and to gladly leave his left hand ignorant of what his right hand does.

**John 15.8-9. ‘In this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you: continue in my love.’**

The idea of the second verse is reaffirmed here. Christ had said, *Every branch in me that does not bear fruit He takes away*. He says here, *if you bear much fruit you will be my disciples*. A man does not become a disciple of Christ by the power of bearing fruit, but he thus makes it manifest that he *is* a disciple. By his union to Christ he has life, and that life must reveal itself. There is nothing in the Scripture to sanction the hope of him who does not bring forth fruit to Christ; but on the contrary, there are countless declarations of the most positive kind that such a hope is vain. Faith without works is dead. *Genuine faith reveals itself in obedience*.

There are still a few in the world who insist that the question of their discipleship has no connection with the question of fruitfulness. They are sure that they believe in Christ, and they are consequently sure of everlasting life in him; for what can pluck them out of his hand? What can separate them from his love? Will sin or disobedience or spiritual slumber do it? What can take them away from the true Vine? Can fruitlessness do it? *They scorn the idea*, and look with contempt upon those twilight Christians who suppose that anything whatever a man does, or leaves undone, can affect the question of salvation. It is true that they are obliged to ignore a great deal of Scripture; but then they compensate for this by giving the utmost prominence to a passage here and there separated from its context.

They confound two things that are as far as heaven and earth asunder — God’s decrees, and man’s *knowledge* of God’s decrees. “Make your calling and election sure.” This is not an exhortation to you to live so that God may elect you to eternal life and call you into the kingdom of his dear Son, but to live so as to make it evident that you *are* one of the elect.

“Oh, but,” they say, “there can be no true peace if we are obliged to seek the grounds of it in ourselves.” Granted: the only true peace is that which springs out of your union to Christ; but the question is, *Does my peace spring out of my union to Christ, or is it the offspring of a mere imagination that I am united to Christ?* Christ says, “Whoever hears my words and *does* them is like a man who built his house on the rock; anyone who hears them and does not do them is like a man who built his house on the sand.”

The obligation to obey is like an enemy and like a tyrant to the heart of the *natural* man. He is a child of disobedience; his whole frame is cast in the mold of self-will; all his powers, his affections, his thoughts, his habits, are in a state of rebellion, and have continually been so; the King is driven out and forgotten, and there is a certain kind of peace in the mind in consequence of the non-realization of the presence of a lawgiver.

When by a superior power the mind is compelled to take knowledge of the long-forgotten law, then farewell to peace! The elements of a fierce conflict start into activity. The more the necessity of obedience is pressed home upon the mind, the more it *abhors* that necessity — as the resistance of a spring increases with the tension. A life spent in sin has utterly unfitted the mind to obey a holy God; and the obligation to obey is like setting up an inquisition in the mind, with its consummate enginery of torture. There is no peace until Christ, the *Redeemer*, is revealed to the conscience. The sinner believes, and obtains peace through the discovery of God reconciled to him *in Christ*. The sense of obligation was agonizing to his soul; the sense of free forgiveness enraptures him, and he is ready to conclude that obedience and faith are diametrically opposite — to look upon the former as the eternal enemy of His nature, and upon the latter as the ever-living benefactor of his soul.

But the glorious office of faith is to reconcile him not only to *God*, but also to *obedience*. God in pardoning him does not change; His character remains the same; His requirements are the same, for they were never arbitrary. Faith introduces the individual to the principle of obedience under altogether new circumstances — for obedience and grace are commingled, and the sense of obligation, so far from coming to desolate a heart sensible of its weakness and folly, is accompanied by a revelation of the *all-sufficient grace of Christ*.

The sinner, pardoned through the merits of Christ, rejoices that the grace of obedience is now given to him, and that he has the opportunity of testifying his love to the Savior. He would count it in the last degree dishonorable, if in the presence of the cross of Christ, and of such exceeding great and precious promises, he should retain his former animosity to the sense of obligation. The commandments of God are not grievous to him, for he knows where to find the strength which they demand; and there is a sentiment of gratitude within him which only waits for these indications of the way in which he shall honor Christ.

Disciples are those who learn from Christ. They learn from him what they are, what *He* is; they learn from Him what to love and what to hate, what to desire, what opinions to entertain, what words to speak, what places to frequent, in what to rejoice, for what to weep, what life to lead, what prayers to offer, what labors to engage in, what death to die. To show that they have learned from Him is to bring forth fruit to Him. A disciple is *necessarily* a fruit-bearer. The Lord Jesus will not continue to teach one upon whom his teachings are thrown away.

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.” These words should fill the soul of the believer with joy unspeakable. This declaration cannot, of course, tell us more than the cross of Christ tells us; but we are so unutterably sluggish in the apprehension of the deep things of God, that it is well we have this comment on the cross from the lips of the Savior himself. We understand without difficulty that the love of the Father for Christ was and is a boundless love. All the wealth of love residing in the Godhead pours itself upon the head of the Beloved. We are taught to retain intact the conception of this love, even in the garden of Gethsemane, and when Christ was numbered among the transgressors. We know that Christ is the image

of the invisible God; that he was without spot or blemish — he *alone* of men; that there was everything in his character, his work, his humiliation, his sufferings, to carry to its highest pitch the love of the Father. Do you recognize the love of the Father to the Son? Then let that be to you the measure of Christ's love to you. Is the former forever indubitable? Then let the latter be.

'All very true,' says someone, 'but the simple fact is, that I experience cruel pains in my body, accompanied with gloom of mind. That state of suffering interferes with the exercise of right feelings toward God; I can scarcely think of anything but my suffering; even prayer is seldom a relief to me. It is certain that Christ has power to banish at once these pains, this darkness. He has but to speak, and I will have something worthy of the name of life — faculties, and a heart to use them for his glory. Now, why doesn't Christ speak *that* word? He has all grace— why doesn't he reveal it by granting me deliverance? How can I be expected to appreciate his love, when in the day of my trouble, he allows me to remain days, weeks, months, without alleviation? A little kindness shown in my restoration would affect me more than a multitude of mere assurances, or even of acts that do not meet this, my urgent need.'

Well, if you wish for an *inferior* expression of Christ's love, you shall have it: Christ will hear your prayer and banish your ailment. But if you wish for Him to love you with the highest love, even as the Father loved him, then you will beware how you dictate as to the expressions of that love. He loves you with an *infinite* love; he is preparing you for *eternal* happiness, for inconceivable glory; and if you now thrust in your own paltry ideas of "blessing," you will fearfully endanger your prospects of that sublime inheritance. You are to believe in His love; you are to believe that whatever torments you, embosoms some great advantage; you are to say with Jesus, "The cup which my Father has given me, will I not drink it?" You are to let patience have her perfect work, and glorify God in the fires by submission, uncomplaining acquiescence in his appointments, and a persevering grasp of his promises. God is faithful, who *will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able*; and you are not to look for this ability in yourself, but in Him who is *made for you strength and wisdom and sanctification*.

### **John 15.17. "These things I command you, that you love one another."**

For the third time this evening, this command falls from the lips of the Lord Jesus. Evidently he is in earnest about this matter. He has it unspeakably at heart that his disciples should understand and be prepared to do his will thus expressed. He knows the material that he has to deal with, and that there are immense difficulties in the way of introducing into their minds the conception of Christian obligation existing in His. Hence this repetition. It is doubtless needed.

At the mention of a commandment, the thought that rises most spontaneously to the mind is that of some external and definite service to be rendered to the Master. "These *things* I command you," says the Lord, speaking in the plural number. It's as though he heard them say, 'Won't you give us ten commandments, as God gave to Moses, so that we may distinctly know what we, the apostles of the Messiah, have to do for you?' In reply we may suppose him saying, "The ten things I command you are these: first, you are to love one another. And second? Love one another. And third? Love one another. I will not let you turn away from this

expression of my will. There is nothing to alternate with this. You are not to do this, and then do something besides. Do this *ever*: all things are summed up in this. I am no longer in the world, but my disciples are, and I invest each believer with all my claims upon the love of each believer. Love your brother, then, as you love Me; love Me in loving him; consider that you are obeying all my commandments when you love him.”

Ah, it is one thing to love Christ, you say, and another thing to love his imperfect disciple. In *Him* I see perfection; in the believer, repulsive imperfections. Faith must come to the aid of your staggering love, and show you how intimately this same defective believer is united to Jesus — show also the new nature struggling to emancipate itself in your brother from the burdensome remains of the old, and destined to achieve a victory *through your love*.

As you love Christ, come to the help of that new and immature nature. It will be treason to Christ if you turn away because of the evil yet unsubdued in the heart of your brother. Christ has put into your heart love toward him, that you may come to his aid. Christ sends his love to him *through you*, and sends it even more because he so needs it — and *you*, instead of conveying the precious gift of your Master, turn away in disgust. How does it escape your notice that in acting this way, you merely reproduce in yourself the repulsive trait of your defrauded brother? You defraud both him and Christ — no, you defraud *yourself*, for Christ has nothing better for you than that love toward for brother so repeatedly commanded of you.

Let me, then, love the people of God. Love them how? As Christ did and does. Did Christ love them by shutting his eyes to their imperfections? No: he extenuated their faults in no degree. He practiced no deception upon himself with regard to their characters. He loved them not because of what *their* nature was, but because of *His own* nature. And their sins, infinitely more formidable and odious in His sight than in yours, indicated to him their need of his love, and afforded that love the opportunity of new triumphs.

It is time enough for us to turn in disgust from our imperfect fellow-Christians, when love in us has done for them all that love can do. Sometimes, indeed, love to the disciples will require us to withdraw all countenance and communion from one whose conduct is an occasion of scandal to them. Whoever strengthens the power of an evil example by his countenance, is loving with no hallowed love. We are never, in our love of one, to lose sight of the interests of others. But leaving out of view these extreme cases, isn't it manifest that Christ's reiterated command meets with very little from us that is worthy of the name of obedience? It is more manifest because we are, in these latter days, obtaining a juster view of the obligation to love one another.

Oh let us press forward in this direction! There will be unthought-of revelations of the glory of Christ to our souls when we make it our chief study to promote the welfare of our brethren in Christ. When we have so far remounted to the Pentecostal level, that none of us will deem anything that he has his own, *then* it will be made clear to us as it never was before, that all things are ours, and that we are Christ's.

*All things are ours*; there is a climax beyond this amazing height: *we are Christ's*. When we love the brethren with Christ's own love, *then* will it be beyond all controversy that we are Christ's. His name will be seen upon us, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem. *Jehovah Shammah* (God is there) will be written upon us.

After all, the great difficulty in the way of fulfilling this command of Christ, is our self-preference. Men are so much taken up with a vain ideal of their own goodness, so much absorbed in the sad work of covering the blotches made continually by sin in this ideal, so carried away by the idea that they can subdue and expel the leprosy of the soul (viewed by them as a mere superficial blemish), that there remains neither time nor capacity to entertain an *unselfish* love.

And it is with a view to the subjugation of this disease of selfishness, that the Savior so insists upon brotherly love. Oh, if we would only look upon each fellow-Christian as an embodied opportunity of inflicting another wound upon our great enemy, *Self* — as a medicine-bearer from Christ! For in giving *him* our affection, we save *our* affection from diseased action. Kept in our own hearts, it is like the air at the bottom of empty wells — noxious, fatal.

We are being educated for heaven by means of this law of brotherly love. Do we have aspirations for the joy, the peace, the glory, the power, of the heavenly life? Let us show these aspirations to be genuine by giving heed to this law. Christ prepares his people for the place which he has gone to prepare for them, *by teaching them to love*. Our prayers to be brought triumphantly through the battle of life into the place of victory before the throne of God, if answered at all, are answered by the creation and augmentation in us of a disposition to look *less* upon ourselves, and *more* upon our brethren — to live for them, rather than for ourselves.

There is nothing we need to be on our guard against so much as the disguises of selfishness. It too often manages to pass itself off for love. Whatever errors enter into our conception of Christ, will equally enter into our love of the brethren. If we know Christ as the Christ of a sect, then selfishness will reign only the more supreme in us, because it permits us to rejoice in those who are like-minded with ourselves. A true love of the true Christ will effectually bring the axe to bear upon the root of our selfishness.

How many are proclaiming this day, by the most unequivocal conduct, that they don't know Him who is the Head of the church, but only a phantom Christ, the deification of their own selfishness and prejudice! — not Him who holds in his right hand the *seven* stars, but one who holds in his hand a *single* star! What a glorious body of divinity is given in the epistles to the seven churches! what hallowed and potent instruction as to the largeness of the mind of Christ! Not merely does the church of Ephesus receive light concerning its own deficiencies and interests, but it is taught by the other epistles to look with love and interest upon the *sister* churches. One Christ is over *all*.

Philadelphia is not permitted to repudiate even Laodicea. What right has she to spew out of her mouth that which Christ has not yet spewed out of His mouth? Behold, he stands at the door even of Laodicea and knocks. Ah, if this glorious Being who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks should write seven letters to seven churches now existing! How would some of us not be rebuked! We would find the Master recognizing what some of us coldly ignore. *It is a mere bruised reed*, they say— *let it break*. No, says the Savior, I will not break it, nor let it be broken.

Our modern Thyatira would be covered with confusion by the mention of the woman Jezebel, so treacherously allowed to maintain a connection with the church; and also by the fact that some despised Philadelphia receives a more unqualified commendation. Such letters would

exalt that which is now humble, and abase that which is now exalted. Such missives will yet be read. “My word will judge them in the last day.” The Spirit of God, now coming forth in his glory, will not rest until He has emancipated the word of Christ from the bonds in which unbelief has held it up to now, and made it quick and sharper than any two-edged sword.

**John 15.18-19. “If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”**

Love suggests hate. God is love; love was incarnate in Christ; Christ was despised and rejected by men. “These things I command you,” he says to his disciples, “that you love one another.” And immediately he proceeds to speak of the *hatred* of the world, which they might assuredly expect to encounter if the love that was in *Him* should abide in *them*.

We have here the statement of a fact: “The world hates you.” The reason for that fact: “Because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world.” And a ground of consolation: “It hated me before it hated you.”

Light has come into the world; men love darkness rather than light; you are the light of the world. So long as men love darkness rather than light, and so long as Christians are the light of the world, so long may they expect to be despised and rejected, like their Master.

Christians are the sons of peace; they are commanded to follow peace with all men; their vocation is that of peacemakers. They are meek, long-suffering, forgiving; they give no place to wrath; they are kind, benevolent, self-sacrificing. How does it come to pass, then, that they are hated by men? Men do not ordinarily hate those who love them, bless them, pray for them; they hate those who injure them, who take from them, who oppose them.

Consider this: the mission of Christians is to take from men something that is unutterably dear to them, to reduce them to a condition that seems to them worse than slavery, to carry them away into perpetual exile, to foil them in every enterprise that they have at heart, in fact — we may as well say it — to *kill* them. Do you start back in horror? Hear me to the end.

There is nothing so dear to the man of this world as the idea of his own unblameableness.<sup>1</sup> Every day of his life he has been engaged in rearing, in his inner thought-world, a lofty edifice — a tower of Babel — to answer at once the purpose of a monument in his own praise, and to enable him, when the time comes, to step from its pinnacle into heaven. Every day he has been busy carving into some corresponding shape, the stones of his daily experience. He has diligently, all his life long, done battle with the insolent voices of a miscreant conscience, establishing by successive victories the difficult fact that he is, take him for all in all, one whom God must look down upon with benignity, if not with admiration.

You come to him in the name of Christ for the very purpose of *depriving* him of this idea of his own goodness. Your aim is to do what that tormenting conscience of his, with all its advantages of time and place, has failed to do. Do you think that he has fought with the Goliath

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur says *total depravity* is the most hated doctrine of Christianity, for mankind is convinced people are basically good. They claim they aren't to blame for their sins: they are victims, and thereby justified. — WHG



of his own conscience so many times, and so successfully, to now be discomfited by *you*? Will he allow you to be victorious over him, and take from him the idea of his own integrity in the sight of God, after he has gone through a thousand fights to obtain that pearl of price?

You tell him that he is a mere rebel against the most high God, that he has never been anything else, that all his righteousnesses are contemptible in the sight of Heaven, that he deserves the wrath of God; and you ask him to take this same view of himself. You ask him to judge himself worthy of everlasting punishment. How easy it would be for him, in comparison, to surrender all his worldly substance! Self-esteem permeates his whole nature, like the fibers of a cancer — to bid him to part with it, is like bidding him to surrender life.

Well, but does a Christian need to come to his fellow-sinner in just such a way as this? He may come in whatever way he will. He may come with a thousand tokens of love in act and word. But if he is indeed a Christian, a light in the world, then he must in some way testify to the condition of the impenitent in the sight of God. He must make known to them that there is a new birth, and that the wrath of God abides on all who have not experienced it. No man is saved by his own goodness: the blood of Christ alone cleanses from sin. His mission is to awaken men to these discoveries, and to bring home to their inmost convictions, these tremendous truths. The light that he communicates, is the light which they hate; consequently they hate *him*.

He invites them to come with him. But to their apprehensions, the region in which he dwells is a vast howling wilderness. They cannot conceive of the least approach to happiness in a life such as the one proposed to them. It would be like going into the direst captivity. Their joys are his sorrows, his joys are their sorrows; his gains are in their eyes loss, even as their gains are loss in his estimation. The sun, of whose glorious and soul-refreshing beams he boasts to them, is in their regard a sun perpetually eclipsed; and the sun of their life is darkness to him. How little way, then, will graciousness, kindness, even the most unlimited generosity, go in reconciling the world to the presence of a set of men whose business is to convince them of sin and danger, and lead them to forsake all, that they may follow One in whom they see nothing attractive! Kindness and generosity had their highest embodiment in Christ; yet he was hated by men to the end. And just as surely as his disciples are such, *they* will be hated.

“I have chosen you out of the world.” The world has discovered that its truest policy is to induce them to come to a compromise. It has brought all the resources of its wisdom to bear upon this problem of how to hinder the separation of Christians from the world, and at the same time allow them to regard themselves as Christians. It says to Christians, “We, after all, think very much as you do; there is a great deal that is excellent in what you say; you have probably misapprehended the Master’s meaning in some things. We must calmly and deliberately investigate these matters; let us avoid anything like a rupture. Some of your positions we do not yet see our way to adopt; some of our views are unpalatable to you; but so far as we have attained, let us walk together. We must bear with one another. You are surely too enlightened and too philosophic to break away rashly, and put a great gulf between yourself and us. You would never be able to do us any good after any such fanatical procedure. In the meantime, it must be encouraging to you that we adopt Christian phraseology to so great an extent. You take ‘hope’ for your motto, and we will take ‘peace’ for ours.” Such is the strategy of the world in these days, and it has been amazingly successful.

One of the great ends for which we need the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, is so that Christians may be chosen *out* of the world — that they may yield to the choice of Christ, and come fairly out of the world. If they are the elect, then they are elected out of the world. Remaining in the world, they cut themselves off from the number of the elect. Lot was elected to life by being elected to quit Sodom; and it would not have been more absurd for him to remain in Sodom — flattering himself that he was nevertheless elected to life — than for Christians to remain in the world, and yet buoy themselves with the hope of everlasting life.

If there is ground for believing that there are Christians, more or less, seeking earnestly at this time to come out from the world and be separate from everything that is defiling — if we can obtain anywhere a glimpse of a body of believers, few it may be, and yet described as 144,000 standing with the Lamb upon Mount Zion, redeemed from the earth — then we have an occasion for rejoicing beyond what the mere fact of the conversion of myriads or hundreds of thousands would furnish us with. But if we cannot discern such a body anywhere, wouldn't it be well to set about raising one up, and as a first step, to seek to reach that blessed summit ourselves?

If an individual grows up in a Christian community, with a law very deeply imprinted on his moral sense forbidding him to give any offence to society, then you may suppose that such an individual, even though a church member, will instinctively, as it were, shrink back from every path in which he will be likely to meet the frown of men. He knows nothing of the hatred of society. Why? Because he makes it his constant study not to transgress the tacit requirements of society.

The dread of giving a shock to the common sentiment of what is “fitting,” influences him even in his interpretation of Scripture. He is hindered by the mighty and perhaps unsuspected power which the world has over him, from even discovering that it is his duty to enter a path in which he will encounter the hatred of the world. The fact that there is now so little persecution compared with what there once was, is best explained by the circumstances that the world begins further back. Instead of waiting till the individual presents himself with the whole armor of God upon himself, the world imposes on him a law not to pay the least attention to requirements which would cause him to give offence to society.

This is a formidable impeachment to make of the church of these days. Ah! there is too much ground for it. *Society* is the Protestant Antichrist, calling itself the vicar of Christ, forbidding men to interpret the Scriptures except in consonance with the laws of society. When the time of sifting comes, it will be found that, even in what we call the *true* church of Christ, Christ is the master that receives least reverence; and Christians will acknowledge with unspeakable shame, that many lords have had dominion over them.

“The world cannot hate you,” said Jesus to some of his earthly relatives. Nothing more terribly suggestive of soul-ruin could be uttered than these words. And yet it is to be feared that the same utterance would fitly be addressed to the great body of professing Christians in our day. The world cannot hate them, because it cannot hate itself. These Christians have too often put a singular honor upon the world by receiving it into the church, and compelling the acknowledged servants of Christ to pay all respect to the laws, the usages, and the preferences of society.

**John 16.7. ‘Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send him to you.’**

‘STRANGE and scarcely credible though the announcement may appear to you, I nevertheless tell you but the simple truth, when I say that it will be for your advantage that I ascend to the Father and send to you the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, to be your perpetual guide. And when I say that it will be for your advantage, I don’t mean that the Holy Spirit is greater than I am, or that He will prove a truer friend to you. In fact, the special office of the Spirit will be to bring you and myself into a more intimate and a more blessed union than has yet been revealed to your consciousness. Though you have journeyed with me during these latter years of my earthly pilgrimage, yet there is no use in disguising the fact that a moral chasm yawns between us. You yourselves must often have felt the deepest pain in reflecting upon the very feeble amount of influence exerted on you by one who is manifestly God in the likeness of men. You have mourned that the words and acts of one who was proclaimed *the only-begotten of the Father*, who was transfigured before you, who was served by angels, who spoke to the winds and waves and they obeyed him — you have mourned that the discourse and the acts of such a one should have worked so feebly in your hearts. The desire for sanctification exists in you, but the new and elevated conception of holiness which has been introduced into your minds only makes you more sensible of your great moral deficiencies. If miracles could have given you the victory over your sins, you would now be the holiest of men. Since that hour when one of you fell at my feet, exclaiming, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man,” how many glorious displays of my power you have witnessed! Yet you are still sadly aware that pride, ambition, worldliness, have authority over you.

‘Surely you must have admitted to yourselves that if three and a half years of such stupendous exhibitions of power have left you the unsanctified men that you are, then ten years of such displays would not give you the victory over your evil natures. For three and a half years you have listened to one greater than Solomon — to one who spoke as never man spoke, to the Wisdom of God; and you have enjoyed such opportunities as never before were enjoyed by mortal man, to know the mind of God concerning the way in which he would be served. And what is the result? You yourselves are constrained to admit that the result is very unsatisfactory.

‘Ah, if all that man needed were to have a teacher, were to have lessons of Divine wisdom set before him in the most intelligible and the most impressive forms, then you would now be incomparably the holiest of men, proof against all temptation, superior to all earthly influences. But what is the fruit? Was it not necessary that this very evening I would begin the work of instruction over again, as it were, by washing your feet? Haven’t you this very evening been disputing among yourselves as to who will be greatest? Aren’t you this very night to make even the unprofessing world astonished by deserting me in my hour of trial?

‘Why do I now dwell upon these things? Simply that you may be assisted to recognize that my life on earth, however marvellous and glorious as part of the Divine system by which God is bringing you to himself, is yet of itself unable to effect your spiritual redemption. It is one thing that the image of God should have been placed before you; it is a very different thing that you should be changed into that image. Man foolishly asserts that he only needs to know

the true, the good, the beautiful, to be himself the embodiment of truth and goodness and beauty. Heaven has come down to earth; the very King of Heaven has tabernacled among men; He whom Isaiah saw in the temple, high and lifted up, adored by seraphim, has come down from his throne, dismissed the seraphim to heaven, and dwelt with the people of Isaiah year after year; and yet it is *not* seen that the men so amazingly distinguished, have been rendered seraphic in holiness and love. Something else, then, is necessary so that men may not only be made *acquainted* with the image of God, but changed into it.

‘Not only have the words which I have uttered in your hearing during these years been unfruitful in your minds; you haven’t even remembered them. Thousands of words of infinite account in the sublime work of bringing a lost world to God — words destined to convey life to men of innumerable tongues and tribes now enslaved to heathenism — have been uttered in your hearing, and have been forgotten by you. They have been given to you, that you might give them to mankind, and that by means of them, myriads of souls might be plucked as brands from the burning; and yet these words have passed from your memory. What *you* cannot recover from the depths of your dark minds, the Holy Spirit *can*. It is expedient for you, therefore, that I depart and that he come to you. Then you will hear again the words already heard, and they will be brought home to you with a power that you do not dream of. He will show you my acts with such richness of interpretation that you will stand awestruck in the presence of the works which made but a feeble impression on you when viewed merely through the medium of your senses and your native powers.

‘But not only must you be sensible that you have little remembered, little learned, little obeyed, of all that I have told you and shown you — you must be keenly cognizant of the fact that your influence as my servants and the expounders of my gospel, is all but nothing. In the presence of a perverse and rebellious race, your hearts sink within you, and you ask yourselves, “How will we ever be able to bring men over to our views of Christ?” You feel your need of some unknown power by which the minds of men may be rendered obedient to the truth. You find yourselves utterly at a loss to communicate your deepest convictions. You are ready to ask, “Isn’t there something beyond miracles, even? — something beyond the power of a holy life? Isn’t there in the resources of God, some means of reaching the hearts of men, and subduing that hostility by which they are hindered from receiving the testimony of a holy life and of a blessed gospel?” *There is*. I die that you may have life, and that you may have it more abundantly. I ascend on high that the Comforter may come to you. Then you will be strengthened with a strength of which you had no consciousness up to now. Rivers of living water — even of the water of life — will flow forth from you. Then the wilderness will be glad, the desert will rejoice and blossom as the rose.’

**John 16.12-13. ‘I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth.’**

A SEEMINGLY different statement, “All things that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15.15), is explained by its context, “I do not call you servants, for the servant does not know what his lord does.” He was not hindered by any reserve from communicating Divine truth to them. There was an entire readiness on His part to unfold to them the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that were in him. He treated them as friends,

and desired nothing more than for them to continue to stand on the most confidential footing with him.

From the passage now to be noticed, it appears that there was a hindrance to the larger and freer communication of his treasures of thought to them, and this hindrance was *in them*, not *in Him*. They could not bear it. They were not in a position to profit by it. The avenue of their minds was blocked up by many undisposed-of and unheeded treasures. They had not mastered the things already revealed. A great many important, no, *sublime* communications, made with utmost impressiveness and earnestness, were still uncomprehended by them. It was absolutely necessary for them to grapple with these things, and assimilate them into their moral constitution, and *put on* the strength they were commissioned to *bestow*, before they could profit by the remaining instructions of their Master.

How many there are to whom this language may be applied! A mass of precious truth is lying before their door unused, and they clamor with Christ to give them something better. They wonder that soul-refreshing views of Christ should be withheld from them, while they have just touched and forgotten many words laden with a mint of wealth. Many are asking for an increase of faith, and expecting it, if at all, in some surprising and supernatural way. Whereas the most faith-augmenting promises and indications of the power of which they have had some experience, are treated as exhausted, empty husks.

It may be that Christ has many precious things to say to us, and cannot say them because we cannot bear them. We are waiting for Him, as though the delay were on the part of the Master. But he is waiting for his passive and foolish scholars to return to the glorious things he has revealed to them, and see how slight a taste they have of the celestial truth showered upon their path from trees of paradise. How treacherous a part we are acting toward ourselves if we reject what Christ would gladly bestow, by neglecting to avail ourselves of the means of sanctification long since brought to our notice! Let us understand that in appropriating a blessing, we do something more than enrich our minds with that blessing: *we make way for another and higher to follow.*

The reason why some Christians cannot bear certain doctrines of Scripture is because they neglect *other* doctrines that naturally come *before* them, and open the door for them. They should go deeper into the things that Christ has already set before them, and let these have larger sway over them; and they will then be strengthened to bear what now seems so onerous.

Someone who is strictly guided by the Spirit, applies himself to just the lessons that the Spirit of God brings before him. We cannot dictate to the Spirit of God what things He will teach us and what not. He will perhaps bring before us something that we supposed we had long ago completely memorized and mastered; but we will find it good to sit down to it with all the freshness and zest of a first attack. Some unnoticed diamond, richer than all we had yet taken out of the casket, will be detected by us, and will flash light along a multitude of consecutive truths.

“However, when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth.” The Savior seeks to give his disciples a most exalted conception of the dispensation of the Spirit to be introduced by his ascension on high. Christ had many things to say to them; the hour had come when he was about to depart out of the world. Were these precious untold things to

depart with him and be lost to the church forever? Far from it. The Spirit of truth would come and guide the disciples into all truth. The Spirit of truth would rapidly demolish in their minds the lumbering and elaborate framework of old opinions and hereditary misconceptions which, in the place where they now stood, could not possibly be overthrown without bringing in a chaos of religious ideas. *Christ* was the truth; and none but the *Spirit* of truth could guide them into anything like a worthy apprehension of his character and work, his sufferings, his death, his will, his help. He teaches his disciples to look forward to the advent of the Spirit as to the moment of deliverance from a humiliating bondage; and he promises them the highest, noblest form of liberty — the liberty of moving unimpeded through the domain of truth.

Guidance is essential to this liberty. Whoever sits down to read the Word of God, unconcerned about the guidance of the Spirit, and exulting in the delusive sense of liberty, will be none the less guided by a spirit; namely, by his own erring, undisciplined, and biased spirit — a spirit much more at home in falsehood than in truth. Guided by this spirit, he can never know true freedom. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, and *there* alone. We put on freedom in just the measure that we bring to the study of the Word of God, the sense of our absolute dependence upon the Spirit of God to guide us into the truth. Without his guidance it will prove a mere labyrinth to us. He that gave the truth, gave the *Spirit* of truth. Christ referred his disciples to the influences of the Spirit as affording the only means of really availing themselves of the words he had spoken, the truth he had exhibited. To suppose that the truth is enough, and the guidance of the Spirit is unnecessary, is to say that Christ did not know the need of man. It is a virtual dismissal of the One whom you profess to call your Physician.

“All truth.” “We have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things.” There is nothing in this language that speaks of a limit to religious belief, a gate over which is written, *Thus far you may come, and no further*. Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the unction of the Holy One, we find ourselves in the presence of mere dead words, and we rush in every direction against the barriers of thought. Christ is the image of the invisible God when brought before us by the Spirit of truth; and we are changed into that image. The Spirit of God is omnipotent with respect to minds like ours and circumstances like ours. He is able to make God known to us. We cannot know all that God is — we cannot know all that any *creature* is; but we can, in fact, know God *better* than we can know any creature, for there are elements of uncertainty in creature-character that are not present with the ever-blessed Creator of all. We know in whom we have believed, and we show that we know Him by earnestly pressing forward after further and more particular knowledge; and thus we will do, if God permits, to all eternity. Those whom we know most, we delight most to know. We seek their society and note their ways and words with an avidity that nothing else awakens.

**John 16.13. “For he will not speak of himself; but whatever he hears, he will speak; and he will show you things to come.”**

We learn from the Gospel of John, that Jesus frequently sought to impress upon his disciples that he did not speak of himself: “He will know whether I speak of myself.” “I have not come of myself.” “I do nothing of myself.” “I have not spoken of myself.” “The words that I speak, I do not speak of myself.” He was found in the form of a man. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh. He had to work out for himself, by the exhibition of his holy and superior nature, a position far elevated above that of a mere man. At the same time he was to be recognized as

the legate (emissary) of God, commissioned and inspired not only with regard to all His works, but with regard to His every word, so that God would be manifest in him, and there would be nothing in him which did not manifest God.

And as it was of vital importance to the success of Christ's mission, that his works and words should be received as works and words revealing the mind of God, and that the Father should be seen in him, so it was necessary that the Holy Spirit should be understood as uttering the mind of the Father and of the Son, who is one in him. He will not speak of himself; he will not speak independently. He will simply be a more perfect medium of communication between you and Me. What I have left unsaid, because you cannot bear it now, I will unfold to you by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Language could not be more express as to the great and blessed truth that, under the dispensation of the Spirit, Jesus comes nearer to his people, and makes more intimate and enriching communications to them, than was possible in the days when he dwelt upon the earth.

"He will show you things to come." This he did by guiding the disciples into all that truth concerning future things which had been so copiously given through the ancient prophets, and concerning which they and all others had such defective, such *erroneous* views. Under this dispensation, the people of God are taught to grasp the true idea concerning the future of Messiah's kingdom. After the outpouring of the Pentecostal Spirit, the apostles were able to unfold the spiritual sense of the prophecies which had been so wrongly and mischievously interpreted by the Jews. A multitude of the promises and predictions of the Old Testament are brought forward in the New, with inspired interpretations, so that we may possess the true clue to future things.

Ah, if in all our studies of the prophecies we had ever kept in mind that it is the province of the Spirit of God to show us things to come, and that only he who is under the guidance of the Spirit of truth is under the guidance of the Spirit of prophecy and the Spirit of interpretation! He does not begin by showing us things to come, except so far as they bear specially upon our own *present* duty. He may show us the coming terrors of the Lord, or the future blessedness of the saints, to strengthen us for the fight of faith. His teaching will relate pre-eminently to our obligations, and to the claims of Christ upon us, and to the excellency of the gospel. And according to the earnestness with which we follow Him through these instructions, will be the freedom and clearness of his communications concerning the things of the future. The proper understanding of the present, *our* present, is the only standpoint from which we can look out rightly upon the future. In vain, however, we ask the Spirit of God to give us an insight into the scenes of days unborn, if we do not give heed to the indications of His will in our daily and hourly walk. Other things being equal, the man who has enjoyed the richest and fullest experience of the operations of the Spirit in his own heart, will be most competent to interpret the prophecies to his fellow-men. These prophecies were originally given by the medium of holy men of old, the holiest of their generation, who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And the key to them will be placed by the same Spirit, in the hands of the one who yields himself heartily, fearlessly, and unflinchingly to the guidance of the Spirit.

"He shall not speak of himself." Nor will anyone who is born of the Spirit speak of himself. As the Spirit of God honors Christ by seeking to exhibit the wishes, aims, and feelings of Christ, so the believer should know himself only as a medium for the manifestation of the mind of

Christ. Can it be said of us (yet it *ought* to be), that we do not speak of ourselves, not independently, not aside from Christ, and that for us to live is to reveal, *not ourselves*, but Him?

**John 16.14-15. ‘He will glorify me: for he will receive from mine, and will show it to you. All things that the Father has are mine: therefore I said that He will take from mine, and will show it to you.’**

The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ by revealing his glory to his disciples on the earth. Christ has never lacked glory in the realms of glory. The soul of every believer is a kingdom where the Redeemer is seen ascending the steps of the palace so long usurped and degraded, penetrating in more or less rapid succession to its chambers, and in due time mounting its throne, in undisputed authority. The soul is the chaos of a universe, and the work of Christ is to re-create this shattered and blasted immensity, and compel everything to circulate in harmony around the central sun. He will create in every believer’s heart a heaven, and will reign there to all eternity, a sovereign Redeemer. Round about the throne were many thrones, and all were for the glory of Christ. “I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.” Much more, those who receive an abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, will reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. The Father glorified Christ by raising him from the dead and from the earth, exalting him above principalities and powers, and placing him at his own right hand. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ by making him known to the believer as glorious.

If we profess to have our eye fixed upon the glory of Christ, as upon a luminary which is destined to make glad the face of universal nature, let us show that we are under the influence of faith and not of imagination, by ardently laboring so that the great aim of the Spirit of God in our hearts may be speedily accomplished. Let us fall in with this blessed project of the Spirit, and command all the faculties of our nature to yield to his control, so that Christ may be glorified in us.

It is as the Spirit of truth, that the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ. That which particularly exhibits the omnipotence of the Spirit and the sublime nature of his operations, is the fact that in the written Word with which we are familiar, He is able to reveal to us what eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived. Whether it was in the body or by the Spirit that Paul was caught up into heaven and heard unutterable things, I cannot tell; but it is evident that Paul attached no extraordinary value to this vision — while he constantly magnifies the work of the Spirit in making Christ known to him *by the Word*. It is with reference to this influence of the Spirit of truth that he says, “We have our citizenship in heaven,” where Christ is; “God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places *in Christ*,” “He has made us sit together in heavenly places *in Christ Jesus*.”

“The god of this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.” It is therefore *by the removal of unbelief*, that the Holy Spirit makes it possible for the glory of Christ to be poured in upon the mind.

The Holy Ghost is Christ’s advocate in the heart, pleading his cause, urging his claims, vindicating him from the unworthy representations made by that which is earthly in our



nature — rebuking the noisy advocate of the world, bringing to memory the sufferings of Christ and the resultant glory, and showing the vanity of those things whose paltry attractions still threaten to shake the soul from its steadfastness. In order that we may be taught to see Christ glorious, it is necessary that the Spirit of God should liberate us from all those false ideas of glory which so universally obtain among men. If we are intent upon our own glory, and pine inwardly for the admiration of men, if we desire to have our faults ignored and our virtues magnified by men, if we are cultivating a spirit of self-complacency, it is impossible for us to advance in the knowledge of the glory of Christ. We must decrease, that He may increase.

Just here is the great difficulty with many. It is to be feared that there are very few who are not cutting themselves off from important discoveries of Christ's glory, by the habit of secret self-laudation, and by a desire for the praise of men. There is nothing more utterly opposed to the mind of the Spirit. While these self-complacent thoughts prevail, the Spirit of God is vanquished. "The flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another." It is intended by God that no flesh should glory in His presence. If we still connect the idea of glory with anything that belongs to our miserable natures, it is clear that our ideas of glory are flagrantly erroneous. The mission of the Spirit is to *correct* this error, and cause us to discover all glory in Christ, and to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Him who gave himself for us.

"All things that the Father has are mine; therefore I said that He will take from mine and show it to you." The believer is taught to recognize the Father in Christ, and Christ in the Father. The glory of Christ is the glory of the Father; and the glory of the Father is that of Christ. But the Father is not glorified if the Son is not glorified; for where there is depreciation of Christ, the true knowledge of God is not there, and the Spirit of God is not there. The language used here by the Savior is that of one who is conscious that in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. When the believer has been brought a good way into the paradise of the gospel, everything in nature will speak to him of Christ, even of Him who was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. "All things were made by him and for him." And all things are ours because they are Christ's, and because *we* are Christ's.

The things shown to us are not things in which we are slightly interested, but things in which we are *intensely* interested. All that tremendous interval by which the consciousness of sin naturally separates us from the blessed Godhead is annihilated by the Spirit's exhibition of the love of God in Christ Jesus. The Spirit of God alone knows how to introduce us to the holiness and justice and truth of God. He solves this perilous problem by taking us to Gethsemane, and disclosing to us there the Son of God, the Man of sorrows, drinking the cup that we should have drunk through eternity, and purchasing for us a perpetual interest in the love of Him whose name is Love.

**John 16.16-19. 'A little while, and you will not see me: and again, a little while, and you will see me, because I go to the Father. Then some of his disciples said among themselves, What is this that he says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see me: and again, a little while, and you will see me;' and, 'Because I go to the Father?' They said therefore, What is this that he says, A little while? We cannot tell what he is saying. Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask him, and He said**

**to them. Do you inquire among yourselves about what I said, *A little while, and you will not see me: and again, a little while, and you will see me?***

Christ had previously said, “Yet a little while and the world sees me no more; but *you* see me.” Though he would disappear from the world’s view, he would be manifest to his disciples. Here another fact is stated: namely, that there was to be an interruption in their perception of his presence. There was to be a period the like of which had never been seen, and would never be seen again — a period when the believer was *without* his Christ, when Christ was buried, and with Him all the promises by which we have access to the Father. Darkness then brooded over the face of the church. The Son of God, in taking to himself the sin of the world, had also taken to himself all its most sacred interests: all these went down with him into the night of the grave. And we may conceive of the guardian angels of humanity standing on the edge of this gulf, *trembling*, wondering if from such a profound abyss, there would be a resurrection of those precious interests, a return of the self-sacrificing One. The disciples are assured that though that dark and critical hour would shortly come, yet it would not be of long duration: “Again a little while, and you *will* see me.” For the elect’s sake, that time was shortened. It might have been three full days and nights, but every hour told terribly upon the faith and hope of the apostles and of the multitude of others — disciples and inquirers — “who trusted that He was the one who would have redeemed Israel.” And therefore, the Lord diminished the interval to the narrowest possible limits consistent with the Jewish definition of the period of time mentioned, reducing it in fact to about thirty-six hours.

In chapter 14.16 we have the words of Christ, “I go away and come again to you; if you loved me, you would rejoice because I said, I go to the Father.” In this and in the verse under consideration, the idea does not seem to be that he would go to the Father, and then, leaving the Father, would come again to them. They were to console themselves in the dark interval of his absence with the reflection that, after a brief interval, he would appear to them again; but at the same time, the language used finds its solution only in the revelation of Christ made on the day of Pentecost and since. *By the power of the Holy Spirit*, believers are brought near to the risen and glorified Redeemer. “I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father.” The representation is nowhere made that he will *again* leave the Father. “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.” “He has sat down forever at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till his enemies are made his footstool.” The great, the *inexpressible* gain of the disciples, shadowed forth in the words we are considering, is this: Christ has ascended on high without being removed from them; they now have more intimate communion with him than ever; by the Holy Spirit they are made to sit together in heavenly places. It is true, their actual knowledge of Him and enjoyment of his love, are frightfully curtailed by their imperfect faith and consecration. But we are to contemplate what God has provided, rather than what man appropriates.

There are many who read the words of Christ without ever saying, “What is this that he says?” If they were called upon to give an explanation of this and that word of the Master, they would be utterly at a loss. It is truly amazing, the amount of ignorance that exists even among those who have been familiar with the Scriptures from their youth. The reason is that they do not *inquire*. The meaning of the passage does not strike them at once, and they are deterred by mental and spiritual sloth from searching into the Scriptures. Now, the blessings of Scripture

are particularly connected with that effort of mind which is implied in the words, “*Search the Scriptures.*” And one of the best evidences of the presence of the Spirit of truth, is the readiness of the mind to give itself reverently, patiently, perseveringly, to searching out the meaning of the word of God. Familiarity with the word of truth often hinders men from becoming aware of their lack of comprehension of it. It would be well, therefore, if we continually called ourselves to account concerning what we read, and ascertained whether we have an understanding of it or not.

They said among themselves, “What is this?” But none of them could enlighten the other. Their mutual interrogatories only made manifest their common ignorance. It was right in them to consult with each other concerning the meaning of Christ’s word. The disciples of Christ should *more often* employ their seasons of reunion in this way. “Then those who feared the Lord spoke often to one another.” If Christ has given a blessing to one, it is so that he may communicate it to his brethren. It is ever the Master who must teach us. He may do it through another. It does not become us to despise prophesyings, whether written or spoken. But the Lord is willing to teach us *directly*. In fact, we should receive everything as *from Him*, whether it comes to us directly or indirectly.

If we desire to ask Christ the meaning of his words, if such is the character of our desires, we need not fear to approach Him with them. Such desires are, in fact, the promptings of the Holy Spirit whom he has sent to draw us to himself. These are certainly not desires that we need to be ashamed to bring to Christ. The disciples were bold enough to come to their Lord with a desire that He would give them places of honor at his right hand and left, when he took to himself his royalty.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.” Only let them come with their hunger to the Bread of Life, who came down from heaven to give life to the world. “If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and does not reproach.” We need not fear that Christ will reproach us with our folly if we bring it to him. But we must be content to *receive* the answer that he gives us. Often, perhaps, it will seem to us *un-wisdom*, simply because we have not mastered the previous communications constituting the avenue to the present truth. Christ’s answer may be very different from our expectation; and then we are tested with reference to this, whether we will surrender our own conception and believe Christ’s statement to be the true one, or the contrary. Thus Nicodemus came to hear some glowing and surprising description of the heavenly world, and was sadly disappointed at having his attention drawn to the lowest rung of the ladder which reaches to heaven: “Unless a man is born again, he *cannot* see the kingdom of God.”

**John 16.25. ‘These things I have spoken to you in figurative language: but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will show you plainly about the Father.’**

When figures are made use of in speech, there is an *outside* meaning and an *interior* meaning. As the shell conceals and yet protects the kernel, so a truth conveyed tropically may be unperceived at first; afterward, when additional light is given, it becomes manifest, and the saying ceases to be a riddle. The gospel is full of parables that could very little be understood until Christ had suffered and entered into his glory. When the Spirit of God was poured out

upon his disciples, the veil which had been over the words of Jesus disappeared, and the interior truths flashed forth upon them in all their luster. Christ himself was such a proverb. Once, his divine glory had flashed forth upon their astonished gaze — but *that* was by way of anticipation; it very little dissipated the confusion of their minds. Nothing about Christ could produce its legitimate and full effect upon them until they had been brought out of the restricted and depressed valley of Judaism, and placed upon the elevated platform of the new dispensation.

Many these days occupy no worthier position than that first inferior one of the apostles. The apostles were not absolutely without the influence of the Spirit during the time that Jesus tabernacled among them; but those influences did little more than make the present darkness visible, and show them in the dim distance the light of the future. Without knowing it, there are thousands of Christians who have that feeble and uncertain measure of spiritual influence which belongs to a different dispensation than this, and shows them to be two thousand years behind their privileges. We've said it, and without shame we say it again.

Of course, they have knowledge that the ante-pentecostal church didn't have. It is the consciousness of this superior knowledge that tends to keep them *ignorant* of their spiritual destitution. Their condition is appalling, for they are familiar with the inspiring promises, and yet they have no faculty to catch a glimpse of the glorious things proffered in these promises. They actually suppose that these promises have no more exalted interpretation than that which their own emotionless and inglorious experience affords.

Blessed be God! we are not limited to one Pentecost under this dispensation. Let us only become aware of the abnormal state in which we are, and take knowledge of the lofty experiences to which God is inviting us. Pentecost was not so much a mountain summit as a mountain high *path*, or table-land, along which the church should have travelled to the New Jerusalem. Let us look steadfastly up above and see among the clouds this highway of holiness, and prove the power of the Savior to bring us to it.

“I will show you plainly about the Father.” Christ is God manifest. “No one knows the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son would reveal him.” The disciples were perhaps disposed to entertain a feeling of disappointment that they had not become more intimately acquainted with the Father through Christ. Untaught by the Spirit, we form extraordinary opinions of what it means to know the Father. A man may take the gospel and read it carefully through, and wonder that he should still be so little acquainted with God. Some came rushing to Jesus with great enthusiasm when he was on the earth, and went away sorrowing, knowing no more about the Father than before. “Show us the Father,” said Philip, after Jesus had been with them such a long time. But there comes a moment when the scales fall from our eyes, and looking at the least word of the gospel, we cry *Eureka!* in somewhat of ecstasy.

“What man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so, no one knows the things of God, except the Spirit of God.” It is the Spirit of God who reveals to us these things in Christ, who shows us the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The veil is taken away. Where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty.

“I will show you *plainly* about the Father.” This word “plainly” has great significance, and well deserves that we should ponder its testimony. Is there a good deal of obscurity in your views

of the Father? Is there a sense of vagueness and uncertainty underlying your address to him? Does it seem to you as though he were *remote* rather than *near*? This is not as it should be. Christ is willing to show you plainly about the Father. It is your privilege to know God and to *feel* that you know him. You may know him better than you can know your fellow-man. For the human heart is lacking in simplicity; it has great depths, even bottomless abysses; it is deceitful above all things, exceedingly changeable; yesterday's knowledge of it will not serve for today. But it is otherwise with God. Today's knowledge of him will serve to all eternity. It's not that you will know him better tomorrow. You have the tiny plant of the knowledge of God, perfect in its degree; but it is destined to expand from one degree of volume and of beauty to another, to all eternity. "No man will need to say to his brother, *Know the Lord*; for all will know him." "This is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

"God was, in Christ, reconciling the world to himself." Is it so to *you*? Is such *your* Christ? Is *your* gospel a marvellous glass in which you behold the steps of the Omnipotent amid the unconscious crowd of his rebellious creatures? Ah, isn't there room for one transfiguration after another, each higher in glory, taking the too-slighted gospel up to the throne of God? There are millions of gospels in the world; I speak of the gospel as it lies in the apprehensions of men. According to the faith of men, it is to them. Oh that we might have, you and I, that blessed and whole-souled faith which will cause the entire gospel to start into its proper glory and beauty and power and divinity!

A person desires to know God. He is told, on the authority of the gospel, that God is much more desirous to grant him that knowledge. Ah! if God is willing, how can there be any difficulty? Why should there be any delay? It is for *you* to answer that. God is in the gospel; the gospel tells you that He gives his Spirit to those who ask him. The Spirit of God is ready to show you in the gospel, plainly, the glory of the Father as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, the image of the invisible God. How idle, how reprehensible, for you to profess a desire to know God, and yet to make so little account of the gospel! Your ignorance of God is simply the measure of your unbelief.

**John 16.26, 27. "At that day you will ask in my name: and I will not say to you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."**

A SOVEREIGN, for the sake of the love that he bears for his son, bestows favors on persons for whom his son intercedes. It isn't that he takes any special interest in these persons— he doesn't even direct his attention toward them; he only knows that his son asked him to bestow the gifts. Should these favored ones have need of further bounties, they must obtain them in the same way: the son must make request in their behalf.

Now, imagine another sovereign who is led by the love that he bears for his son, to love those who love his son, to regard them as his own friends, to take the same pleasure in doing good to them, that he would in honoring his son.

The case between the believer and God resembles this last case, and not the former. The believer is not to feel that the great and awful distance between him and the Father is only temporarily neutralized by the representations of Christ, or that the royal largess granted once

at the Savior's instance is simply the expression of a momentary feeling of good-will. The believer is *united* to Christ and *identified* with Christ. And just as one would never think of the vine without including the branch in that thought, so the Father will never think of the Lamb of God without thinking of those who belong to him. This passage is intended to arm us against that inconstancy of faith which makes a Christian hesitate to ask anew for blessings, after great blessings have been received.

"I will not say to you that I will pray the Father for you." He doesn't say that he will; he doesn't say that he will not. What he means is that he will not need to pray for them as though they were strangers, as though they were unreconciled to God. "For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me."

Christ is love divine — love that has become incarnate for the purpose of revealing itself to us. Becoming acquainted with this love divine in the crucified One, we love him, we believe in him; and in doing this we, as it were, complete the circuit, so that the love of God may fully, freely, and forever flow into our bosom.

"The Father himself loves you, because you have loved me." How wonderful that the Savior, who had such an ineffable intelligence of the true nature of love, could have found it in him to speak of the crude and dubious sentiment so ominously flickering in the hearts of the disciples, as *love*! But the mother is taught by her very heart of intensest love to recognize with rapture the least dawns of love responsive in her child. It matters little how minute the love may be, if it only is *germinant*; unloving man may make light of it, but supreme love watches it with a profound interest. You and I, and tens of millions, owe our present happiness and our sublimer prospects, to the fact that Christ was pleased to regard as love that immature and trembling sentiment which bound the eleven to him.

Alas for those who do not love Christ! The Father does not love them. Christ, the Christ of the gospel — the one who sat by the well and talked with the Samaritan woman, who ate with publicans and sinners, who uttered such terrible denunciations against hypocrisy, who was led like a lamb to the slaughter — *do you love him?* Do his words and ways delight you? If not, then there is no love for you at the mercy-seat. Ten thousand mighty merits will go for nothing if you have no love of Christ to show. The very mention of such merits would prove that you do not have the love of Christ in you. To see the excellency of Christ, a man must renounce the thought of personal excellence and clothe himself in a garment of conscious unworthiness.

"You have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."

'We love God too much,' say some, 'to believe that Christ came out from God. With all desire to speak well of Christ, we must confess that we find it an impossibility to dwarf our ideas of the omnipotent One, by regarding Christ as the embodiment and revelation of Deity.'

Then you love a God whom you have invented for yourselves, and whom you glorify with the omnipotence of the true God. Christ has come that you may be made aware of your error, your perilous idolatry, and that you may give back to nonentity the ten thousand and one deities that you have formed for yourselves. *Christ is God manifest in the flesh*. It does not become you to speak of imperfection in this manifestation, until you have mastered the manifestation, and that you are not likely to do in ages of ages. The angels of heaven feel that this exhibition of Deity soars immeasurably away beyond their intelligence — above, beneath, around.

Doubtless the disciples found some difficulty in admitting that Christ had come out from God, but they found infinitely greater in rejecting it. They remembered a multitude of glorious acts, each one of which sufficiently attested that he was the Representative of Deity; his holy and unimpeachable life attested to it. They knew that he could not speak an untruth, and his words bore testimony to the fact of his oneness with God — yet there were a number of things that were different from what they would have expected in the Messiah. Do not marvel at that, disciples; the marvel would have been if there had been no such difficulties. Do not marvel, but wait; and now the Spirit of God will make those very difficulties the means of revealing to you unimagined depths of love and wisdom in the incarnate One.

“Loved and believed.” That is not love, which does not believe. The love extolled in 1Cor. 13 “believes all things. “Love to God believes all the things uttered by God. Whoever loves Christ believes that he is the expression of the Divine nature. Love *sees*; everything else is blind rather than being love. Without love it is impossible to see anything aright, much less Him who has the pre-eminence in all things. It is love that will enable us to discover wondrous things in the gospel. *Love alone can understand love.* Those who with lack-luster eyes and unloving hearts read the words of Christ, find nothing in them to gladden or sanctify. Love finds a feast in the least crumb that falls from the table of the Master. We love Christ when we open the door for him to come in and bless us. He is willing to receive this as an initiatory proof of our love, that we allow him to come in and begin to be a Savior to us.

Lord, I can give you this proof of love: I can let you love me. I can open the door for you to come in and sup with me. Opening it, I see a long train of angel servants reaching to the heavens, each having some blessed burden for me. How I wonder, then, that I should have kept you waiting!

**John 16.33. ‘These things I have spoken to you, that in me you might have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.’**

“These things.” That is, all the remarks that Christ had addressed to his disciples that evening; the words contained in these four chapters (13-16); those precious words that we have been permitted to make the subject of our meditations; they were all spoken that his disciples might have peace *in Him*.

When Christ said, “I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you;” — when he commanded his servants to love one another as he had loved them; when he spoke to them about the necessity of keeping his words, of bringing forth much fruit, of enduring persecution — his object was still that they might have peace in him. And those who seek this peace should understand that unless they receive *all* the testimony of Christ, they will come short of this peace. They will have a peace, perhaps; but it will not be peace *in Christ*. Peace in Christ supposes that we are reconciled to *all* his words; and that we can follow them all up with this Amen:

“Even so. Lord, for so it seems good in Your sight, and You are the *Prince* of peace. No soul can be so intent upon its own peace, as You are upon the peace of all Your disciples. This is to You an ever-present object of solicitude; and not a word falls from Your lips that isn’t commissioned to *bear* peace. Your words are all intended to bind the believer to Yourself; to

*engraft* him, as it were, upon Yourself, so that Your peace may flow like a river of life from You to him unceasingly.”

Some wonder, perhaps, that they have so little of that peace which Christ has promised to give to his people. And deep down in their hearts, there may be found some hard thoughts of Christ on this score. It is so distinctly promised; it is so easy for him to give; it would be such a blessed and beautiful expression of his love. Ah! you wicked unbelieving heart. I will confound you. Have you given admission to *all* the words of Christ? *His peace is in his words*; and these very words are complaining at the throne of God that you will not harbor them. Your pursuit of peace is thus conducted: you gather out a few of the words of Christ whose looks you like best, and separate them from the rest, insulting Christ in the great majority of his words, while professing to honor him in the reception of a few. It is in vain: these few refuse to bless you apart from the company to which they belong. One would think that Christ were generally of an austere and unsympathizing temper, and that only by chance could there fall from him a pacific word. One would think so from the way in which you daintily cull out a sentence here and there for the solace and restoration of your nature. It is false. *He* is our peace. He himself is the embodiment of our peace. Before we enter upon the realization of it, it looks upon us *in Him*; it comes to us *from Him*, just so far as we will let it — in all his looks, in all his words, in all his acts. We show that we know it, and that we know *Him*, when we act habitually upon the conviction that *all* his words are peace-breathing.

“In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” It is only faith that can understand these words. What has Christ’s overcoming of the world to do with our struggle? If in the world we are to have tribulation, how does it mend matters to tell us that Christ has overcome? The tribulation is inevitable; why then bid us to be of good cheer? It is all incomprehensible, except to *faith*. As a matter of fact, the people of Christ have experienced tribulation; as a matter of fact they have been of good cheer, and they have even rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory, to lay down their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus. It was for the salvation of his people that Christ battled with the world. The prince of this world was determined, with his two tremendous hosts, to hinder the accomplishment of his purpose; but he was effectually baffled. He indeed killed the Prince of life, put him in a sepulchre, sealed it, placed a guard over it, and amid the acclamations of his legions, sat down upon his throne. At that very instant Christ rose from the dead, leading captivity captive. He ascended up on high, giving to the hopes of his people at once the exaltation and the stability of the throne of God. They now know that the Christ to whom they are united, has all power in heaven and in earth; and this is the victory which overcomes the world: even their faith. Without tribulation there could be no trial of their faith and no perfecting of it. They are of good cheer because they are dead to the world and alive to Christ. Their conversation is in heaven; their hopes are there, their treasure is there. The frown of the world is the frown of one whom they do not respect and do not fear.

Christ overcomes the world in the heart of the believer. The world says, ‘My wrath is terrible; a God invisible is scarcely a God; I am the visible God; once my indignation is kindled, woe unto you; all hope of happiness will be at an end; your only hope is in my favor; my favor is life.’ But Christ says, “The world passes away and the fashion of it; what is man, whose breath is in his nostrils? Who is he that will harm you, if you are followers of that which is good? Fear



him who has power to cast both soul and body into hell, and who delights in mercy. I am he that lives and was dead. And behold, I am alive forevermore, and have the keys of hell and of death.” Thus Christ overcomes the world in the heart of the believer. Christ wins the victory, and the believer wins the victory. *He* wins it by his word and by his Spirit; *we* win it by our faith. And these three are one. The word accomplishes nothing without faith. The Spirit of God does nothing apart from the truth. The whole is the gift of God. Unbelief is the rejection of this divine threefold gift. *Whoever will, let him take.*

It is for me to show, in my measure, that Christ has overcome the world. If the world overcome me, then so far as I am concerned, there is no testimony given to men of the sublime fact that Christ has overcome the world, and opened up a way out of it for all who believe. Christ must abide in my heart, and victoriously say to the world, “Get behind me.”

The outpouring of the Spirit of God is the great evidence that Christ has come away conqueror over the world. On the day of Pentecost, Satan awoke to the consciousness of the terrible defeat he had sustained. The presence of Christ upon the earth did not so alarm him as this evidence of the presence of the omnipotent Spirit. At first, perhaps, he thought that all was lost, for what could resist the gospel, the Spirit, Faith, going forth in one, conquering and to conquer? But when he had fled a little way, Satan turned and took heart, for it was evident that the church of Christ could be shaken from its faith, and fail to reap those splendid results of the victory of Christ which might have been anticipated. For [two thousand] years the church has remained frightfully insensible to the significance of this announcement, “I have overcome the world.”

The flag of our general is seen waving on the battlements of the enemy’s citadel, yet the army of this victorious Commander fails to give heed to this signal; and instead of taking possession of the conquered city, it remains supine in the plain. Perhaps we are now awaking to the significance of this declaration. Christ having overcome, we ask why we should not overcome.