

## THE TWO PRAYERS IN THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

Two prayers recorded in the Epistle to the Ephesians, are no mere human compositions, but the Divine breathings and groanings of the Holy Spirit; they are inexhaustible in their fulness and depth.

We, who know not how to pray, because we know neither the height of the Father's power and love, nor the depth of our own need, are here prayed for, in words with which the Spirit Himself "helpeth our infirmities".

The two prayers are recorded in chap. i. 15-23, and chap. iii. 14-21. While these two prayers are in every way distinct; and are full of contrast, yet there is one subject that is common to both: and that is the subject of the Epistles as a whole, viz. Christ.

In the former it is Christ, and what God has made Him to be unto His People, and in the latter it is Christ, and what God has made us to be in Him. In the former it is—we in Christ: in the latter it is—Christ in us. In the former it is God's power which He wrought *in Christ*: in the latter it is the Father's power that worketh *in us*.

This indeed is the one subject of the Epistle, as a whole. It is the revelation of the Mystery or Secret, which had been hid in God from ages and from generations: yea, "before the foundation of the world". This secret is not concerning the blessing of Gentiles (as such) with Israel; for this was never a secret, but was part of the original revelation to Abraham in Gen. xii. 3. It concerns "Christ and His Church" as forming one Spiritual Body; of which He is the great and glorious Head in heaven, and His people are the members upon earth.

All blessings are treasured up in the Head, and are ministered to the members according to their need, and according to His will.

Hence the Epistle commences, immediately after the first Epistolary sentence:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in

Christ: According as he hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world" (Eph. i. 3, 4).

Identification with Christ is the Secret concerning the Church of God.

Association with Israel in blessing is the revelation concerning the Gentiles.

The former is heavenly, and in the heavenlies: the latter is earthly, and in the earth.

"Chosen IN Christ before the foundation of the world", in the *purpose* of God, His people died WITH Christ; were quickened together WITH Christ; and are now seated together WITH Him in the same eternal purpose of God; and only waiting to be manifested in glory WITH Him at His coming (Col. iii. 1-4).

This being the great Secret so fully revealed in Ephesians, we can understand why that Epistle should open with so grand a declaration.

The two great relationships in which Christ stands to the believer are the same two relationships in which God stands to Christ; and to us, therefore, in Him: "GOD and FATHER". This is the key to the whole Epistle, and it is the key to these two prayers.

The first prayer is addressed to *God* (ch. i. 17); and the second is addressed to the *Father* (ch. iii. 14).

In the first, all is *power*; in the second, all is *love*.

The first prayer is, that we may know the power of God: the second prayer is that we may know the love of God in Christ.

The starting point of these prayers is that we possess in Christ, everything except glory.

Ephesian truth is built on the foundation laid in Romans. Romans truth is the basis of Ephesian doctrine.

This is the foundation:

"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom we have access also into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. v. 1, 2).

We rejoice in this standing which God has given us. "Stand therefore" is the Ephesian command (ch. vi. 14). "Rejoice" is Roman's exhortation. "Give thanks" is Colossian precept (ch. i. 12).

And we do all this "In hope of the glory of God". Yes.

Glory is all we wait for. This is the end of the great Mystery (1 Tim. iii. 16). We wait to be "Received up in glory".

This is the consummation we hope for: and, until it is realized in resurrection and ascension, we are to "stand", and "give thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet".

The two titles, "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ", and "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ", correspond with the two lines of truth. It is God who by His mighty power raised up Christ and gave Him to His church; gave Him, thus raised and exalted and glorified, to His redeemed as their Head; gave Him, who is Head over all things, to them—the church: which church is His Body, for He is its Head; and from Him comes all its life and all its blessing: which church is the fulness of Him that filleth all [the members of His Body] with all [spiritual gifts and graces]. The church, being the members, fills up and completes that Body: and He, being the Head, fills up the members with life, and power, and blessing. And why all this? "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus". This is *not* some goal to which we are to attain. This is not some high standard which we are to reach. But this is where we *start* from as believers. This is the letter "A" of our alphabet. Here we may well "stand": for on this standing we can rest quietly, and wait patiently, and evermore give thanks. If we do not see and know this blessed truth, as to the perfect standing of Christ's redeemed in Him, we start far below our privileges; and with all our efforts we shall never attain to anything like this height of blessing.

Alas! alas! we are so full of ourselves: and we are occupied with only one of our blessings. Hence, we are anxiously asked: "Have you got the blessing"? Our answer is, Yes: indeed; we have got "ALL spiritual blessings in Christ". Thousands of them. They can be neither counted nor weighed, but they are all "in Christ". God will not trust them with us, or we should lose them at once. True! He has given us *one* great blessing, *the* great blessing: and that is THE blessing of knowing that we are "complete" in Christ, and are already "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light"; and are only waiting to enter it.

The question is, Do we believe this? Do we believe God? Surely we want nothing more than His Word! Nothing that

we can feel, or do, or be, or experience can make us more “meet”; or make His Word more true. To occupy ourselves with our *state* is to shut out from our view the *standing* which is ours in Christ: and then, instead of a life of “rejoicing” and “giving thanks” for what *God* has done, it becomes a life of disappointment and regrets for what *we* have not done.

Oh! to rest in God’s word! Oh! to believe Him. To give thanks to Him, because He has quickened us, raised us, and seated us with Christ. If we would only do this and take our “stand” here, we should then be at liberty to “rejoice in hope of the glory of God”, and go on our way with our mouths filled with praise, and our lips with thanksgiving; just simply “waiting for God’s Son from Heaven”; waiting for the opening of the endless ages of eternal glory.

The Two Prayers of this Epistle to the Ephesians are in perfect harmony with its teaching. All is based on, and proceeds from, the two great relationships in which God stands to us in Christ: “God”, and “Father”. (See ch. i. 3, compared with ch. i. 17 and iii. 14.) The prayers intensify the teaching, and show forth its reality and depth.

We are dealing with the “words which the Holy Ghost teacheth”. The pen was the Apostle’s pen, but the words are the Spirit’s words. We know not what to pray for as we ought, but He—the blessed Spirit Himself—helpeth our infirmities. He knows our need, if we do not. He knows what to ask for, if we do not. And for what does He ask?

Are these prayers of His for us like ours? Indeed they are not. Our prayers are full of ourselves and of our needs. His, for us, are full of God’s wisdom and gifts, and power and love. Our prayers are full of what we want to do for Him: His are full of what He has done for us. Our prayers are all *far below* the level of that wondrous position in which Grace has set us. Not only are they below it but they drag it down to our own low level; instead of lifting us up above it. We are full of our sins and their forgiveness; instead of praise for our Divine meetness in Christ. We are praying for the Spirit; when our very desires are proof that we already have His precious gifts, manifested in our desire to pray. Our Hymns are indeed too often the cold “dead hand” of saints who have died; and we are tied and bound by their poor experiences, instead of rejoicing in the glorious liberty in which God has set His children.

How could we pray for this blessing or that blessing, or "the" blessing, if we once realized the truth of verse 3; and began by praising God, because He "hath blessed us with ALL spiritual blessings in Christ" (v. 3)? How could we pray that we might know that God loves us, if we were rejoicing in the blessed fact that "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (v. 6), and that this Well-beloved assures us that the Father loveth us as He hath loved the Son Himself (John xvii. 23)? How could we pray for the forgiveness of our sins, if we were giving Him thanks, because "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace" (v. 7): and not according to the sincerity of our repentance, the merit of our faith, or the earnestness of our prayers? How could we be yearning to know, or feel, that we are the children of God, if we believed that He had "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (v. 5)?

All these blessings were sealed to us by the Holy Spirit, when we believed (v. 13). Not "after" we believed, as in the A.V. There is no "after" in the Greek. The Greek reads literally; "in whom, ye also, on believing, were sealed". The R.V. reads "having heard" . . . and "having also believed". They are both aorist participles and mean literally, either *on hearing* . . . and *on believing*; or *when ye heard* . . . and *when ye believed*.

The first thing, then, that the Holy Spirit does, when He has sealed these blessings to us, is to give us the prayer that God will give us spiritual wisdom, so as to understand these wondrous blessings which Grace has given to us. But, some may ask: Are not we then, as Christians, ever to confess our sins? Most certainly we are; but we can do this without lowering the position in which Grace has set us. We can do this without using language which practically denies the blessed assurances contained in the teaching on which this prayer is based; and of which it is the expression.

We are full of failure and infirmity. True, we are His children; but we are sinful children. "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with THE FATHER" (1 John ii. 1). Thus, in the very Scripture which speaks of our sin, we are reminded, in the same breath, that God is still our "Father"; and that our relationship to Him has not been broken. There is no reference

to "the blood" here, in connection with the children's sin: but there is, a few verses before (in 1 John i. 7), in connection with the Saints' walking "in the light": because *there we have* to be reminded of the precious blood of His Son, without which none can have access into His presence, or walk in His light. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves (though we do not deceive other people!) and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John i. 8-10).

Sin is not what many take it to be. We have heard it said that we may have the thought or the desire for sin, but, if we do not actually commit that sin, it is not sin. But the Divine definition is that "the THOUGHT of foolishness is sin" (Prov. xxiv. 9); that sin is within. It comes "out of the heart". It is "Not that which goeth into the mouth", that "defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, THIS defileth a man" (Matt. xv. 11-20), (Mark vii. 14-23). This is the "teaching of Jesus". But it is not the teaching of man. Man daily teaches the very opposite.

The truth of Ephesians lifts us far above all these questions that concern *self*. Our temptation is to be occupied with ourselves. But here, it is not that a Christian, in himself, is any better than others: but that he occupies a different position *from* others. It is not a question of what he has done, but of what God has done. It all turns on this. It is not a question of his ups and downs of walk: but it is a question of the immovable foundation on which God has set him; and of the standing which God has given him in Christ. If it be a question of what the Christian is in himself, then the Word of God soon settles that. It assures us that there is "no good thing" in him, i.e. in his old nature. And, if he sins, he is pointed, not to the brazen altar, but to the brazen laver; not to the "blood", but to the "Advocate" with the Father.

To show us that sin is no light matter, God has told us, through John, that He has provided two advocates, or, comforters. So great is our need, and so unable are we to keep ourselves, that it is necessary for us to have TWO ADVOCATES. One is in us, that we may not sin: and the other is with the Father, if we do sin.

CHRIST is our “Advocate” with the Father, looking to all our interests up there: and the Holy Spirit is with us, seeing to all our interests down here. Instead of looking away from ourselves, and praising and blessing God for this wondrous provision; we are looking after our own interests in heaven and on earth, and are, naturally, overwhelmed with the magnitude of our task.

It is all self, self, self. Oh! to be taken out of ourselves, if only for a little time. How sick of ourselves we become, as we are occupied with the failures and infirmities of our walk. Oh! let us be occupied more with our standing in Christ, the calling wherewith we are called; so alone shall we walk more worthy of it (Eph. iv. 1).

As for sin, what do we know of it? How often do we sin without even being conscious of it? but our “Advocate with the Father” *has seen it, and the merits of His precious blood* are its propitiation.

The WORK of Christ has set us in the light of God’s presence (1 John i. 7); and the ADVOCACY of Christ keeps us there, justified and cleansed. The *work* is finished, and done. It is perfect. Nothing can be put to it, or taken from it. But, the *Advocacy* of Christ is perpetual; and never finished until we shall be “at home with the Lord” in risen bodies, made like Christ’s own glorious body (Phil. iii. 21).

The shedding of that blood is past: but its cleansing power is ever present.

Great Advocate, Almighty Friend,  
On Thee alone our hopes depend;  
Our cause can never, never fail,  
For Thou dost plead, and must prevail.  
In every dark distressing hour,  
When sin and Satan join their power:  
Let this blest truth repel each dart,  
That Thou dost bear us on Thy heart.

## THE FIRST PRAYER

EPH. i. 15-23

“THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM”

THIS is the first of all the things prayed for believers by the Holy Spirit, through Paul.

The Epistle opened with the Benediction: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ".

In this first prayer, prayer is made to "the *God* of our Lord Jesus Christ". In the second, it is made to "the *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ".

Thus we are taken at once to the source of all blessing: and are taught that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ" is our glorious Father (ch. i.): and that "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" is our God (ch. iii.) Hence, *glory* is the subject of the first prayer. *Love* is the subject of the other.

In the very first petition of the first prayer our thoughts are taken entirely out of ourselves. Would that it were ever thus in all our prayers. Oh, how great is the contrast! We are eaten up with self. God would have us to be taken up with Himself. Here, all is of God. It is "the *knowledge* of HIM", of "His calling", of "His inheritance", and of "His power". He fills our vision. No room is left for anything lower than Himself, and His Christ.

The promise of John xvi. 13 was, of the Holy Spirit, "He shall guide you into all the truth". Here, in these Epistles we have "all the truth".

The first Epistle (Romans) commences with the proclamation of "God's gospel concerning His Son Jesus Christ". Thus, at the outset, we have the blessed fact that the *source* of this wondrous good news is "*God*"; and that the *subject* of it is "His Son Jesus Christ". That is Romans teaching. *That* was the *flower*: Ephesians teaching is the *fruit*. In Romans it is *grace*. In Ephesians it is *glory*. "The Lord will give grace and glory" (Psalm lxxxiv. 11). The one is the earnest or pledge of the other. In Romans we learn what grace does for the sinner; in Ephesians we learn what glory will do for the saint.

When we think of what we are, in the light of all this, surely we are humbled in the very dust; and ready to praise and bless His holy name, and to be occupied wholly with Him. But, when we lose sight of Him, we are filled with ourselves, and occupied with ourselves; to our own infinite loss.

What can be more blessed than to be brought thus into contact with the *source* of all our good? and to remember that He is the fountain-head of all blessing? Yes, and to know, that He was this, for us, "before the foundation of the world".



Eph. i. 3, 4 tells us that this was God's "eternal purpose" for us.

This is "the knowledge of Him" which is given unto us. We can know Him only "in Christ": in what He has purposed for us in Christ. He has "chosen" us in Christ (v. 4). He has "pre-destinated" us to be children in Christ (v. 5). We have "redemption" in Christ (v. 7); and in Him we have obtained an "inheritance" (v. 11). He has given us all our blessings "in Christ".

When the prayer is that He may give unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Himself, it is that we may know Him in what He has purposed for us, and given us, and made us to be, "in Christ". With man it is the very opposite. The wisdom of the natural man is summed up in two words, "know thyself". And the teaching of the saved man, too often has this for its subject. Hence it is that most Christians get self-centred: they are occupied with getting a knowledge of themselves instead "of Him". Hence it is that they are starved in spiritual things, lean in themselves, and stunted in their spiritual growth. Instead of breathing this life-giving air of heaven, their windows are closed, and their doors are shut, and they are asphyxiated with their own exhalations. They are breathing over again and again their own breath, from which all vitality has gone. No wonder that we hear so little of the spirit, and substance, and subject, of these two prayers.

Christians are taken up with *their* blessing, the knowledge of *themselves*, the hope of *their* calling, and *their* inheritance, and *their* power or enduement. All is self. Self is their centre: and self is the circumference which bounds their view.

It is the very opposite of what we have here. Here, we come to the fountain; and sit by the well of living waters. When Moses "sat down by a well", he was in the place where he could water others (Ex. ii. 15-19). And if we would water and thus help others, we must sit down by this fountain. Only as we drink, ourselves, from this, shall we be able to refresh others. As we get to know Him and all that He is to us, and all that He has for us, we shall start from *His purpose*, and not from *our object*: we shall begin with His *fulness*, and not with our *need*. As we get to know Him, we shall see that nothing lower than this fulness of blessing, and riches of grace and glory, could have been worthy of Him. As we get to know Him, we shall

see that it could not be otherwise, if we are to be with Him for ever. We must be "made meet" for this wondrous inheritance. And as we realize His greatness and glory, we shall see the utter folly of ever supposing we could make ourselves meet by anything we can do.

If He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world (not "that we should be", but) "TO BE holy and without blame before Him", then we may depend upon it, that is how we ARE "before Him" now. He has not left this to chance, or to our ability, or effort, or will. It is "according to his purpose", His "eternal purpose". Not an after-thought, or a contingency. It does not say that He chose us to be holy and blameless before Him if we will to be so. No! We ARE now already "before Him": not as what we choose to be ourselves, but "according as He chose us to be".

The purpose, the choice, the love, are all His own. The believer has no voice in this matter at all. If he looks at himself, his one thought will be to make himself meet to be "before Him". But if He looks at God's purpose, he will see that all this was arranged "before the foundation of the world": he will see that he has been "made meet" already: but he will also learn that this meetness is "in Christ", and not in himself. If we would but reflect on this for a moment, we should see that God could not have us there, in His presence, "before Him" in various degrees of meetness, according to our own ability to produce it or procure it. He has prescribed the "court dress"; and He must provide it; for it is heavenly, holy, and Divine. It is nothing less than Christ's own righteousness, holiness, and blamelessness. We are "accepted in the Beloved", not in ourselves.

When we are actually thus "before him" it will be in resurrection. Then, there will be no "old nature". Then, the flesh will have died: we shall have been delivered from this mortal body (Rom. vii. 24). We "thank God" for this promise now, and we thank Him for the gift of the "new nature", which gives us the capacity to enjoy these blessings now, and which will alone enable us to enjoy them hereafter. Now, the flesh is in us; though, "before Him", we "are not in the flesh". This phenomenon it is which causes all the confusion in our minds now; a confusion which can be dissipated only by our "knowledge of HIM". We are now "accepted in the Beloved".

And, if we are to be in glory before God, then we shall have to be made "like Him" altogether. And this is our hope. "*We shall be like Him.*" This is the promise (1 John iii. 2). But, when? "*When He shall appear*". How? "*For we shall see Him as He is*". Not now, therefore, can we be thus "like Him". Not in death. Not "after death". Not till "He shall appear", for not till then shall we "see Him".

*Seeing Him* necessitates resurrection, transformation, and translation. To say, therefore, that "after death" is *seeing Him*, is to do away with resurrection altogether. It is practically to "err concerning the truth", and to say with Hymenæus and Philetus that "the resurrection is passed already". It is the "word" of such to-day that "eats as doth a canker", to the "overthrowing of the faith" of many (2 Tim. ii. 17, 18). No! When we shall see Him, it will be, in one sense, "after death", but a very long way "after" indeed; for it will be after resurrection, and "when He shall appear".

That will be "glory". Now we rejoice, and give thanks to God; who, in His grace, hath already "made us meet" for it, as to our standing; and has set this "fulness of joy" before us as our "blessed hope".

### "THE HOPE OF HIS CALLING"

When "the eyes of our understanding are enlightened", we are in a position to get to know "what is the hope of His calling" (Eph. i. 18).

The Critical Greek Texts and R.V. read "the eyes of your heart". But it comes to the same thing: for it is a Figure of Speech. It is not the muscular fleshy organ within our bodies that is meant; but that in us which can alone get to know Him, our spiritual "understanding" (1 John v. 20), which is affected by the knowledge we gain of Him.

The first thing we get to know of Him is "the calling" wherewith He hath called us. (Compare ch. iv. 1.) And, What is the hope of His calling? This is the question of questions. Only as we are enlightened with the knowledge of HIM can we learn and understand what He has called us for. Only as we learn what is the calling wherewith He has called us can it be our "hope". It does not say that *our* calling is something for us to hope for: but that, "His calling" becomes for us the blessed ground of our blessed hope.

There is no uncertainty about "His calling". There are no contingencies in it. There is nothing doubtful. "His calling" is an accomplished fact. It is the necessary sequence and consequence of the statement in verses 4 and 5 as to His eternal purpose and choice. In Rom. viii. 30 we have the Divine order: "Whom he did predestinate, them he called also". Hence "His calling" is part of that Salvation which Christ has wrought for His People. "By grace ye ARE saved". This is, therefore, a present and accomplished fact. The work of Salvation was wrought on Calvary; and the Father's "calling" is one of the blessed fruits and results of it. The root of it all is "the riches of His grace" so fully set forth in the earlier part of the chapter.

God Himself is seen as the *source* of every blessing, from grace to glory. Nothing called that Grace forth. It is all spontaneous, "without a cause", free, and like Himself, everlasting.

But Christ is the *channel* through which it comes to us. Through Him it flows to us. In Him it is treasured up for us. He came to do "the Father's will". This "will" was the source of Christ's work for us. "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world . . . having predestinated us unto SONSHIP through Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will".

What He has predestinated us to is "Sonship". The word, in the Greek, means neither "the adoption of children", as in the A.V., nor "adoption of sons", as in the R.V. There is only one word in the Greek. It is υιοθεσια (*hyothesia*), and it means *sonship*, i.e. *the position of sons*. This is the meaning of the word, and it should be substituted for "adoption" in Rom. viii. 15, 23; ix. 4. Gal. iv. 5; and here (Eph. i. 5).

This is "His calling". He, the great and holy God, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ", has designed to call us His sons! What a wondrous truth!

When we received the new nature, or Divine *pneuma* (Rom. viii. 14), we did not receive "a bondage-spirit" to serve as servants, with fear and trembling; but we received a sonship-spirit, whereby we cry "my Father" (Greek ἀββᾶ, *abba*, Rom. viii. 15). Thus, the Holy Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit (or new nature, v. 14) that we are children of God (Rom. viii. 16).

"God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under

the law, that we might receive sonship: and, because ye ARE sons, God hath sent forth his Son's spirit into your hearts, crying, Abba, i.e. my Father" (Gal. iv. 4-6). This is "the sonship-spirit" mentioned in Rom. viii. 15. Nothing less than this is "His calling". We are called to be sons.

Now, unless we know what "His calling" means to us, how are we as sons to walk worthy of it? In ch. iv. 1 we are besought to "walk worthy of the calling wherewith we are called". But how can we do this unless we know what it is?

In Col. i. 9, the prayer is that we "might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual understanding". Why? The answer given in the next verse (10) is "That (i.e. in order that) ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing". That is, we are to walk as sons, and no more as servants.

The question for us is: Do we thus walk, as sons? If not, we are not walking "worthy of the Lord", or of "His calling". We are occupied with our *service*, or with our "*character*" as servants. But God would have us occupied with our *relationship*, "as sons". It is just this that makes all the difference. Instead of thinking of our *relation* to God as sons, we are thinking of our *behaviour* as servants. We do not, as Christians, live up to our privileges. That is the secret of the low standard of Christian walk, which is so universally deplored at the present day. We do not "know" God as we ought to do from His revelation of Himself in His Word: and hence, we know so little of "His calling", and of our privileges.

No wonder that, when we are taken up with getting to know ourselves and others, and are occupied with *our* calling: and, when we read of the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 14), it seems so high, that we feel it is too good to be true; and then we are filled with doubts and fears. So it must ever be, if we do not receive, and believe, and feed and live upon, "the whole counsel of God".

We are, He declares, "blessed with ALL spiritual blessings in Christ". In that case, not one can be lacking: and these blessings belong to, and are the privileged possession of, "sons"; yea, of *all* the sons of God; the youngest as well as the oldest in grace; the poorest as well as the richest in the things of this world: the weakest as well as the strongest in spiritual strength.

And why? Because the measure of these blessings is not

according to our deserving of them, or to our appreciation of them; but "according as He has chosen us in Christ". Nothing, therefore, can touch them, or affect them.

Nothing can ever alter the first great blessing of *relationship*. This is what God has called us to; this is our hope: because, blessed as it is in itself, it is only the foundation of all other blessings. All are the outcome of this. For, if we are His sons, then we are "heirs"; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. We suffer with Him here; but we shall be glorified together hereafter. That is why "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 17, 18).

How few rise to the heights of this "high calling". They do not get beyond servants and their "*characters*"; and, hence, rejoice not in the *relationship* of sons.

The large majority of Christians seldom get beyond singing "I want to be an angel". This well accords with the low condition of those who have this low and vain hope; for angels are only servants (Ps. ciii. 20, 21. Heb. i. 14; ii. 5. 1 Cor. vi. 3). And "we are no more servants, but sons".

True, all sons, in one sense, are servants: but all servants are not sons. Sons may serve; but no amount of service can ever change a servant into a son. Hence, it is with "a sonship-spirit", and not with a servant or "bondage-spirit", that sons serve their Heavenly Father.

Those who are partakers of "His calling", are called by His grace; called for blessing; called to glory. "So that thou art no longer a bond-servant, but a son: and if a son, then an heir through God" (Gal. iv. 6, R.V.) The son inherits the possessions of the father.

Here, then, is rest. We are not striving to "win" an inheritance, as so many hymns assert; but, we have it even now, in "hope". It is this hope which "His calling" assures to us. Nothing can be added to these blessings; except the blessing of "faith", that we may believe what God says, and be daily going over our treasures, counting up our unnumbered mercies, dwelling on the goodness of God, rejoicing in His grace, and looking forward to His glory.

All our blessings are from Him. Even this sonship blessing is for "HIMSELF". For His own pleasure; simply because He willed it. No other reason is given, or can be given. The

measure of this sonship blessing is "according to the good pleasure of His will" (v. 5).

What can be more blessed than this? What can be greater? What can be truer? What can be more worthy of our sole and individual attention? "According to the good pleasure of His will." We are "accepted" as sons in His "beloved Son". This expression takes us one step higher. Christ is that "Well-beloved". All blessings are His by right; and they are ours in Him. Ours, by grace, as to ourselves. But, ours by right, too, in Him. Loved as He is loved.

Beyond this we cannot go. We can only bow our heads, and worship, and adore, and "give thanks" to the Father, who hath thus "made us meet" through His grace, for His own most blessed presence in glory. "Before Him" there, and now, in His purpose; and soon to be there really, by His resurrection power. Even now "before Him" we are comely as Christ is comely; holy as Christ is holy; loved as Christ is loved.

#### "HIS INHERITANCE IN THE SAINTS"

This is the third subject in the prayer in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians: the former of the two prayers of that Epistle.

The first subject is that we may have "the gift of wisdom and revelation IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM".

The second is that we may know "what is THE HOPE OF HIS CALLING".

And the third is that we may know what are "the riches of the glory of HIS INHERITANCE IN THE SAINTS".

There is yet a fourth which is "the exceeding greatness of HIS POWER TO USWARD who believe".

Thus all is concerning Himself. And it is in this that this Divine prayer differs from all *human* prayers. *We* are full of ourselves. *Our* calling, *our* inheritance, and *our* power or "endowment" occupy our vision. But, when we, who "know not how to pray", are prayed for, and have a prayer indited for us by the Holy Spirit who "helpeth our infirmities", then our vision is filled with God himself.

It was even so when the Lord Jesus taught His disciples to pray. It was first—

Hallowed be THY name.  
THY kingdom come.  
THY will be done.

Then, and not till then, was it:

Give Us.  
Forgive Us.  
Lead Us not.  
Deliver Us.

But even then the prayer goes back to Himself; and in a three-fold Doxology ascribes the kingdom, the power, and the glory to Him.

So here, we are first occupied with Himself, with His grace and His glory; then with the hope set before us in the fact of His condescension in calling us to be sons: and now it is with "His inheritance in the saints".

This was God's "counsel" with His People Israel. "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance" He provided for His own inheritance; and He says (Deut. xxxii. 8, 9):

"Jehovah's portion is his People:  
Jacob is the lot of his inheritance".

Israel is spoken of as the People which God has purchased (Exod. xv. 16). And as His "peculiar (or purchased) treasure" (Exod. xix. 5).

All this was true of Israel. But we have something more in this prayer. We need not rob Israel of one iota of their blessing: but we can, in this case, as in so many others, say, *à fortiori*, or *how much more* then, must it be true of that People of whom God speaks when He teaches them to pray that they may know what are "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints".

In Israel's case, it was the riches of His grace. In our case, it is the riches of His glory. God's inheritance in Israel was all of grace; but Israel's enjoyment of it depended on a covenant of works; which covenant they brake. God's inheritance in His saints now, depends on His covenant with Christ. Both are secure. Both are real. But Israel's enjoyment of his inheritance in the Land is in abeyance; while ours is to be enjoyed now in Christ. For it is in Christ that "we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who



worketh all things after the counsel of his own will". His inheritance in Israel was "after the *counsel* of His own will". His inheritance in His Church is after His *purpose*. It is "the mystery (or secret) of his will", which is now made known to us. This "purpose" had been kept secret, until it was revealed through Paul and the inspired apostles and prophets of his days. It is the secret purpose which He hath willed.

The "all things" of verse 11 are the same as the "all things" in verse 10, which God is going to "gather together in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth". Israel's will be on earth; the Church's will be in heaven. It is "God's inheritance in the saints", but it is our inheritance in Christ. It is the "knowledge of Him", but it *gives* to us. It is "His calling", but it is our blessed hope.

"In the fulness of times he will gather all things together in Christ". Israel will be gathered according to His "counsel". The Church will be gathered according to His "purpose".

This latter is "the great secret" of ch. v. 32. "I speak concerning Christ and the Church". Christ by Himself is not the secret. The Church by itself is not the secret. But it is Christ and His People together; He, the great and glorious Head in heaven now, and His People, the members of His body, now on earth. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ" (1 Cor. xii. 12). This is "the great secret". This was God's "purpose"; for what is only in *purpose* is secret. What is *counsel* is declared. God has declared His *counsel* from the beginning that Gentiles (as such) are to be blessed with Israel (Gen. xii. 3): "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed". But now God has made known his hitherto *secret purpose*: he has revealed His "secret", that a People taken out from Jews and Gentiles shall be blessed in Christ and made "one body" in Him (ch. iii. 6; iv. 3).

As "the Son of Man", Christ is to have universal dominion in the earth (see Gen. i. 26-28, Ps. viii. 6-8): but, as the Head of the Body, He is given to be Head over all things, to the Church, which is His body. But all this is to be "in the dispensation of the fulness of times". This word "dispensation" means *administration*, and it refers to the time when all things will be under the administration of Christ. "But now, we see not yet all things put under Him" (Heb. ii. 8). Now, Satan is "the God

of this world" (Matt. xii. 29; 2 Cor. iv. 4; Eph. ii. 2, vi. 12), and "the prince of this world" (John xii. 31; xiv. 30); but he has been "judged" (John xvi. 11). Sentence has been passed. A work has been wrought by which the inheritance has been "redeemed"; and presently a "judgment-summons" will be issued; "execution" will be "put in"; and the usurper will be cast out.

Now, even at this time, the affairs of the one Body are under the administration of Christ. He gave gifts, and gave some, Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, Evangelists; and some, Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the Body of Christ: till we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect MAN (not a perfect woman or bride), unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. iv. 11-13). All this has been done. We have come into "the unity of the faith", "the unity of the Spirit" (v. 3). This Spiritual unity is made; all we have to do now is to endeavour to keep it. God has made it in Christ. We have come into this "knowledge of the Son of God". That is why those "gifts" are no longer necessary. They have done their work; they have fulfilled their mission; they have accomplished their object. But, instead of realizing that this has all been done, and that spiritual unity has been Divinely made, we are labouring to make another kind of unity; we are trying to set up a number of corporate fleshly unities. Hence, all the confusion around us; hence, the need of the statement as to what this Divine work should do for us. Now, in ch. iv. 14, the reason for this statement is given: "that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (v. 15).

This is our blessed privilege now: to realize what this "knowledge" (ch. iv. 13) is: that we may not be occupied with our wisdom, our calling, our power; but may know that God has made us to be His inheritance in Christ in this spiritual unity in Him. Then we should not be "tossed to and fro" and "carried about" with anything lower than Himself. We should not rob Israel of their inheritance, or spend our time in labour-

ing to prove that we stand on their lower ground either as Anglo-Israelites, or as "the Bride"; for we should know that we are come "in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a PERFECT MAN". We should not be bothered about "pastors" and "teachers", or with the scaffolding of the building, but we should be "growing up unto HIM in all things, which is the Head, even Christ".

#### "THE EXCEEDING GREATNESS OF HIS POWER"

We now come to the last of the four great matters that we are to get to know. The Spirit Himself, who knows our infirmities, and who, though we know not what to pray for, thus helps us, prays that we may get to know (1) "HIM", (2) "His calling", (3) "His inheritance", and now (4) "His power".

Oh how different from our poor, mean, low thoughts as to our needs! We are full of ourselves. We are occupied with *our* calling and *our* inheritance. We think of *our* power; and are full of plans and efforts to obtain power for ourselves, to manifest it for Him.

The Holy Spirit would have us filled with thoughts of God's power, as manifested "to us-ward". He would have us dwell on its greatness, yea, on its "exceeding greatness". It is in this thought of "His power" that we have the difference between these two prayers.

In the first prayer (chap. i.), it is the exceeding greatness of God's power. In the second prayer (chap. iii.), it is the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

In chap. i., the prayer is made to "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ". In chap. iii., it is made to "the FATHER of our Lord Jesus Christ".

In the first prayer the members of the Body are seen in Christ, the Head. In the second prayer the Head of the Body, Christ, is seen in us, the members.

The fourth point which we are to consider in this first prayer is the mighty power which puts the members into the one Body of which Christ is the Head.

This one Spiritual Body is the great subject of this Epistle: this Body, of which Christ is the glorious Head in Heaven, and of which we are the members on earth. These two great facts are dealt with separately in the two Epistles which follow: in

which we are shown the sad consequences of not holding the two parts of this one great doctrine.

Both Philippians and Colossians exhibit failure.

In Phil. it is practical failure, through *not holding the precious truth about the members*. In Col. it is doctrinal failure, through "*not holding the Head*" (ii. 19), and not realizing all that this great fact involves.

Here, in Ephesians, we have both these truths presented doctrinally, apart from "reproofs" for failure, or "correction" of error. Hence the prayer is "that ye may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph. i. 18-20). To get to know this power is one of the objects of the Christian during the whole of his pilgrimage on earth. It is so stated in Phil. iii.

In Phil. iii., we first have our *standing* described as "*found in Him*" (v. 9), i.e. in Christ, clothed in His perfect righteousness. All His merit imputed to us, and nothing of our goodness or badness seen. *That is our standing*. Then we have, at the end of the chapter, our "blessed hope" described, as being made *like Him* in resurrection glory, when these bodies of our humiliation will be made "like unto His own glorious body". *That is our hope*.

But now, between these two, between our being "found" in Christ and our being made "like" Him in glory, What is our *object* to be? What are we to aim at? What is to be the occupation of our hearts? What is to engage our attention? One object, and one only. It is still Christ. For Christianity is being described (in Phil. iii.) in contrast with Religion (v. 4-6). And Christianity is Christ. It is all "Him". Hence our one object is defined in the words "that I may get to know Him" (v. 10). *That is our object*: to get to know Him, and the power of His resurrection. This is the thought here in Eph. i. 17: "the exceeding greatness of his power . . . which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead". This is something far beyond the mere *fact* of his resurrection. It is the "*power*" of it. In Eph. i. it is the "mighty power", put forth in the resurrection of Christ; while in Phil. iii. 10 it is what the power of it means for us.

*Christ crucified* (1 Cor. ii. 2) is foundation truth; but there

is far more to learn and preach than this. There is something built on this foundation. *Christ risen* is the outcome of this foundation truth: and it is essential that we should get to know all that it means for us: “the power” of it. Hence, it goes on to explain that, to know what Christ’s resurrection means for us, we must first know what it is to have had “fellowship” in His sufferings; to have suffered when He suffered: yea, more: to have been “conformed to Him in His death”. To know this is to know that we not only died in Him, but that we have risen “in newness of life”, i.e. into another kind of life altogether—life on a different plane; life which we live as sons of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

Now, to realize this, we must get to know something of “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power”. That is to say, we must know that the power which raised up Christ from the dead is the same mighty power which has already wrought in us, and quickened us, and made us alive again, in this new resurrection life in which we stand, in Christ, before God. This power was put forth not merely, or only, toward Christ, but “to us-ward who believe”. This is stated still more plainly in chap. ii. 5, 6. “Even when we were dead in sins (He) made us alive together with the Christ . . . and raised us up together, and seated us together, in the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus”. This is our high privilege. This is the declaration of what God has done. We are not asked to reason about it, or to understand it; but only *to believe it*; to “believe God”, as Abraham believed what God had said to him. Now, faith cometh by hearing this word of the Lord: this wondrous revelation. And, believing this, we get to know what the “power” of it is to us-ward.

Christ was raised, because all who died in Him were justified. This is why it is necessary for us first to get to know what it means for us to have suffered with Him, and to have been made conformable to Him in His death. When we get to know this, we know the Gospel of Christ’s *burial* (1 Cor. xv. 4). When “they laid him in a sepulchre” (Acts xiii. 29) we see the end of our old man. We were buried with Him in that [His] baptism unto death. When He was laid in that sepulchre there was not a single claim of justice which He had not met on our behalf; not a single debt which He had not fully paid; not a single liability which He had not discharged; not a single enemy whom

He had not silenced. For there can be no claim made against a dead man. "He that has once died—(with Christ, that is)—standeth justified from sin". This is the definite statement of Rom. vi. 7. There was an end of everything human, and an end of our standing in the first Adam.

Now comes in "the exceeding greatness of his power". "The God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus" (Heb. xiii. 20). Why "the God of peace"? Because there is now no understanding debt or claim. All is peace: "the peace of God": "peace with God". Here we enter into "the power of his resurrection". We were "buried with him", and are "risen with him"; and while we were ourselves "dead in sins", God hath made us alive again in Christ, "HAVING FORGIVEN YOU ALL TRESPASSES" (Col. ii. 12, 13). Not some. Not many. Not most. But "all".

Those who speak about *some* of our sins being forgiven, or sins being forgiven before conversion, or up to a certain time, are those who do not yet know "the power of his resurrection". They do not know "the God of peace", and cannot therefore enjoy "the peace of God".

The extent of the believer's forgiveness must be, and is, the extent of the Saviour's atonement. If His work is "finished", then our sins are finished too. If His work is perfect, then our conscience is perfect too. But we shall realize it as a fact only as we "believe God". If we prefer to believe, and go by, our own feelings, our conscience will then be in accordance with our faith; and we shall be occupied in confessing the very sins which He declares He has forgiven. And the sad process will go on, and on; and will so engross our thoughts, and occupy our time, that we shall have no opportunity for giving Him thanks. We shall be as much occupied with *our* "Confessional" as the Papist is with his. The only difference there will be is that ours will be to God, and not to man. But it will fill up our time, all the same, and occupy our thoughts with *what we have done*, instead of filling our hearts with thanksgiving for what God has done. Some who hold this doctrine may ask (as was foreseen in Rom. vi. 1), "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" But those *whom the doctrine holds* will answer (in the words of v. 2), "God forbid. How shall we, that have died to sin, live any longer therein?" And they will know also in the context which follows that such are reckoned, and are

to reckon themselves, as having so died (v. 11); and that (according to chap. vii. 17) they may say, "It is no more I that do it, but sin (my old nature) that dwelleth in me".

The redemption which we have in Christ includes "the forgiveness of sins according to"—what?—according to our sense of them? or our confession of them? No, but, "according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. i. 7). And now, "if any man sin"—what then?—"we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John ii. 1). Let us leave ourselves in His hands. Let us not take our cause into our own charge. Let us not conduct our own case, when we have such an "Advocate". He is our surety. He has taken the responsibility. "He is risen": and therefore we are "justified from all things". And now, "He is the Head over all things to (or, for) the Church". Not Head *over the Church*; for the Church is His Body, and He is its Head.

All things are put under His feet: and all things therefore will be under our feet, when we shall have ascended, as He has, and been caught up to meet Him in the air. "He is Head over all things to the Church". His Church is one with Him who is "Head over all".

Do we believe God? or do we believe our own experiences? Oh, that we could take the high ground of privilege which God has given us in Christ; and thus get to know something of "the power of Christ's resurrection", and "the exceeding greatness of God's power to us-ward who believe".

## THE SECOND PRAYER

EPH. iii. 14-19

### "THE ETERNAL PURPOSE"

THE Second of the Two Prayers is contained in Eph. iii. 14-21, concluding with a Doxology in verses 20 and 21.

The most cursory examination shows us how different is its line of truth from the first Prayer. There, it was the standing which God has given His children *in Christ*: here, it is Christ *in us*. There, it was God's power put forth *for us*: here, it is that same power put forth *in us*.

The one great subject of the whole is the Mystery, or Secret,

as to the One Spiritual Body of Christ; the members of which are on earth, and the great and glorious Head is in heaven.

At the end of chapter ii., in verses 20, 21, this great truth is stated, without its specific name. The Body is being formed: it is being “fitly framed together”: it “groweth into an holy temple”. This is further expanded in chap. iv. 16, where this whole Body is seen, being “fitly joined together”. It is the same word used in chap. iv. 16, as in chap. ii. 21, showing that the subject of chap. ii. 21 refers to the Body as “a building of God”: in other words the Mystery.

Then, chapter iii. begins the prayer. “For this cause”—but, instead of going on at once to the prayer, there is a digression treating of and expanding the subject of it, which is distinctly stated to be the Mystery. So that verse 14 takes up the point of verse 1, and reads on from chap. ii. 22.

Chapter iii. 1. “For this cause”: [i.e. because ye are members of this wondrous Body, an “habitation of God through the Spirit”: on this account] I bow my knees in prayer for you.

The prayer itself commences in verse 16: “[praying] that He may give you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might, by His Spirit in the inner man (i.e. the new nature, the spiritual man): that (as the result of this strengthening) Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts, ye having been rooted, and founded in love: [praying] that ye may be fully able to apprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length, and height, and depth [of it], (i.e. of this Mystery: we in Christ and Christ in us; rooted in Him; built up in Him); [fullyable] to get to know also the knowledge-passing love of Christ; [praying] that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God”.

There are thus *three* distinct subjects in this prayer. It is not one long jumble of confused thoughts: but, the repeated word *ὅνα* (*hina*), *that*, or *in order that*, in verses 16, 18 and 19, shows clearly and distinctly the three subjects.

The *first* is that we may be strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man.

The *second* is that we may be fully able to apprehend the Mystery in all its wondrous breadth and length and depth and height; and to get to know Christ’s love to us.

The *third* is, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God. This fulness is explained in the first Prayer (ch. i. 23) as being



the truth concerning the Body of "the Christ". This fulness of God is in "the Christ" (Col. i. 19; ii. 9), and if we are "complete in Him" as the next verse declares (v. 10) then we partake of this fulness.

This prayer must not be wrenched apart from its context; and made to apply to Christians apart from Christ. That is what is commonly done, so that the whole of this sublime prayer is frittered down to ourselves and our needs. The prayer has the Mystery for its one great subject; and, so broad and long and high and deep is it, that we need Divine strengthening in our inner man in order that we may apprehend it. It surpasses all human knowledge. It can be fully known only by the special gift of Divine strength, and heavenly wisdom.

We cannot get to know this truth of the Mystery (*we in Christ* and *Christ in us*), by human wisdom. No mere fleshly knowledge, or intellectual capacity, will stand us in any stead in approaching this great subject. No! He must "grant", He must "strengthen", He must "fill". Hence, these are the three leading verbs, that indicate the three subjects of this prayer. This wisdom must come to us from the Spirit of God, from without; and cannot arise from any activities of the flesh, within. Moreover, it is the common possession and privilege of "all the saints" (v. 18). The youngest as well as the oldest; the weakest as well as the strongest. Grace levels all such distinctions, and it is bestowed on "all the saints", not according to the amount of their merit, but "according to the riches of His glory" (v. 16).

We must not interpret "the breadth and length and depth and height" of Christ's love. It is true of this, of course, but it is not that to which these four words refer here. Christ's love is mentioned immediately after, as an additional thought. All can see that the sentence is unfinished: there is an ellipsis of the pronoun, which is a very common Figure of speech. Many are the suggestions for supplying this ellipsis. But we need not leave the context: The *second* part of this prayer is that we may be fully able to do two things: (1) to *apprehend* the wondrous Mystery or Secret; and (v. 18) (2) to *get to know* the knowledge-passing love of Christ (v. 19). Verse 18 refers to one thing (viz. the Mystery in all its breadth and length and height and depth): verse 19 refers to another (viz. "the love of Christ"). Not our love to Christ, but His love for us: not the *attribute* of

His love, but the *activities* of it, going forth as it does to such poor unworthy objects, and doing such great things for them. It is blessedly true that this love does surpass all knowledge, and is alike immeasurable and unknowable; but, after all, this is only *one* of the blessings here prayed for on our behalf. It is only a part of the wondrous blessing wrapped up in the great Secret which is "Christ and the Church" (chap. v. 32). It includes all that God has made Christ to be unto us, and all that God has made us to be in Christ.

These are the "things of Christ" which were to be revealed by the Holy Spirit. The Saviour's declaration was, of the Spirit (John xvi. 14, 15):

"He shall glorify me:  
For He shall receive of mine,  
And shall show it unto you . . .  
He shall take of mine,  
And shall show it unto you."

These things could not be revealed and made known to His disciples at that time. "Ye cannot bear them now" (John xvi. 12). These "things of Christ", these things relating to, and connected with Christ had been "hid in God" (Eph. iii. 9); "kept secret since the world began" (Rom. xvi. 25); "hid from ages and from generations" (Col. i. 26); "in other ages not made known to the sons of men" (Eph. iii. 5).

It was the special mission of the Holy Spirit to make these "things of Christ" known.

Eleven times in those four verses (John xvi. 12-15) the Lord Jesus pledged Himself to this promise. Eleven times He says "shall" and "will" to impress us with the solemnity of the promise, and the certainty of its being performed.

It is here, in these church Epistles, and especially in the Epistle to the Ephesians, and in this third chapter, that this promise is fulfilled. Here is the "all truth" into which He was to guide; and here He prays that we may be strengthened with all might by His Spirit in the inner man, that we may apprehend, and comprehend this "all truth".

Only this one thing is the subject of verse 18. The article is used only once: it is "THE breadth, and length, and depth and height" of that which is the subject of the immediately preceding context, viz. the Mystery, "according to the eternal purpose (or purpose of the ages, R.V. marg.) which He purposed in

Christ Jesus our Lord". What we have here are the dimensions of this "eternal purpose".

Its *breadth* is so wide that it includes within it God's purpose with regard to every family that is named

"in heaven,  
and earth (ch. iii. 15):  
in this world,  
and that which is to come" (ch. i. 21).

Two of these heavenly families are "named" in iii. 10: "principalities and powers". Two more are "named" in ch. i. 21: "might and dominion".

There are more than these four; for, they include "every name that is named".

More strictly these four are *governments, authorities, might, and lordship*: and these in heaven and in earth; in this world and the world to come.

The "breadth" of this "purpose" includes all angelic beings among these *families*: for God is "the Father of spirits" (Heb. xii. 9), and "the Father of lights" (Jas. 1. 17). It includes Israel, and the Nations on Earth; and the Church of God, the Body of Christ in heaven: for we are in Christ, who is thus exalted and glorified to be the Head over all things to the Church.

The *length* of this purpose reaches back into the ages that are past; formed "before the world" was; and it reaches forward to and includes the ages to come; while it embraces the "now" of verse 10.

The *height* of it is so vast that no mere human wisdom can attain unto it.

The *depth* of this purpose is so profound, that no mere human wisdom can fathom it.

It needs Divine strengthening from above, and the mighty power of the Spirit, within, to enable us to apprehend it.

Most expositors are so anxious to bolster up the teaching of Tradition as represented in the non-scriptural expressions of the "Church militant" and the "Church triumphant", that they resent the R.V. rendering "every family" in verse 15 as teaching gross heresy. They insist on the A.V. rendering "whole". But like all expositors in such a case they manifest gross inconsistency, for they adopt the very same rendering

“every name” in chap. i. 21 (not, whole name), which speaks of the very same subject. There can be no doubt as to the correctness of the R.V. in this rendering, for it is consistent in both cases (chaps. i. 21 and iii. 15).

True, the Church is “militant” now; and it will be “triumphant” when the at present sleeping saints shall be raised and “caught up TOGETHER” with those who are “alive and remain”. There will be no triumph till then. Our hope and joy and crown of rejoicing will be “in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ AT HIS COMING” (1 Thess. ii. 19). Our hearts will be established in holiness before God, even the Father, “AT THE COMING of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints” (1 Thess. iii. 13).

#### “THE LOVE OF CHRIST”

These Two Prayers end with this important petition: “that we may get to know the love of Christ, which passeth mere knowledge” (Eph. iii. 19).

The first petition of the first prayer was that we might get to know HIM, i.e. the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The last petition of the second prayer is that we may get to know Christ Himself.

We can never get to know the love of Christ perfectly. It ever remains the one great business of the Christian’s life, as we have already pointed out in referring to Phil. iii. 10. This it is that must fill up his thoughts, his heart, and his time, from the moment he is “found in Him”, i.e. Christ, and is clothed with His righteousness which is the very righteousness of God (v. 9), until he shall be clothed upon with a body like His own glorious body (vv. 20, 21).

His love—the love of Christ to His church—is the fountain of all blessing (ch. v. 25). It cannot be separated from “the love of God”, which is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Hence this second prayer opens with the petition that we might “be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man” (v. 16).

Yes, it needs spiritual strength to apprehend such spiritual truths as the love of the Father (1 John iii. 1), and the love of the Son. That love is *spontaneous*. Nothing in us called it forth; no merit in us attracted it; no want of merit hindered its outflow. The love of Christ has respect only to what He is in Himself; only to His own good pleasure. It was ever thus.

Even David could only confess “He brought me forth also into a large place: He delivered me *because he delighted* in me” (Ps. xviii. 19, and see 2 Sam. xxii. 20.) It is *eternal*. That love stretches back to eternity past, and looks forward to ages everlasting. It is *infinite*. It can know no bounds, no constraints, no limits. Great faith cannot demand it; and great fears cannot forfeit it. It is infinite in itself, in its manifestation, and in its communication. It is *inexhaustible*: and able to meet all the needs, and supply all the wants, of every family in heaven and earth. It is *invincible*: sweeping away all obstacles; overcoming all opposition; humbling the proud; purging the unclean; subduing the wilful; melting the hardened; comforting the sorrowful; strengthening the weak, and triumphing over all enemies.

Even with this brief, distant, view of its character, we can see that it surpasses all mere human, earthly, fleshly knowledge. The natural man cannot get to know it (1 Cor. ii. 14). It is “knowledge-surpassing”. Only as the Son of God Himself shall give us an understanding (1 John v. 20), can we apprehend it. It requires a spiritual capacity; but the gift of this capacity is to “all the saints”. It is given not according to our deservings, but “according to the riches of His glory” (Eph. iii. 16).

Our blessing rests, not on what we are, but on what the Lord is: not on what we have done, but on what He has said; not on our need, but on His *delight* in us. Of course, the moment we look at ourselves it is fatal to our enjoyment of peace. One of the most subtle of all Satan’s snares is to have us occupied with the good which we get from Christ’s work, instead of with the delight which God has in giving it. This snare is so dangerous, just because it is so plausible. It surely must be right, we reason, to be thus occupied. It is with Christ, and with His work. Yes, truly, it is so: but all the joy and the strength is lost by looking at it from the point of view of our good and our need, instead of from the Divine point of view of God’s delight in giving Christ; and Christ’s love in giving Himself.

We miss the point of the Scripture as it is written in Num. xiv. 8: “If Jehovah hath taken *delight* in us, then He will bring us into this land”. We look at the goodness of the land; and are occupied with the wilderness through which we reach it, and at the labour of entering it, and its suitability for the supply

of our needs; instead of with the Lord's "delight" in bringing us into it.

True it is that the love of Christ passes human wisdom and knowledge. It is high. We cannot attain unto it. But even this is exceeded by the final petition "that ye may be filled up to all the fulness of God". What is God's fulness? Does not ch. i. 22, 23, answer our question by telling us that it is "the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all [the members of that body] with all [spiritual gifts and blessings]"? It is God's fulness, because it is His purpose, His "eternal purpose". We fill up this mystical body, as being its members; and He fills up us, the members, with all needful gifts and graces.

We have the same construction with *εἰς (eis) unto or up to*, in ch. ii. 21; iv. 15, etc.: where we have the same body, the church, the members of which being "fitly framed together ("fitly joined together" as in ch. iv. 16 the same word) groweth (or increaseth) *unto or up to* an holy temple in the Lord".

This, then, is the prayer: that we might be complete in Him according to God's own standard of completeness. Is it not manifest, that nothing but the Spirit Himself, strengthening us with His own might, can enable us to apprehend this wondrous Mystery, the breadth of it, the length of it, the height of it, the depth of it?

No amount of study, or learning, can make us understand this Mystery; or enable the body to grow up to Him, to its completion in Him, who is the Head, even Christ.

No wonder the prayer closes with a doxology, which condenses it, and sums it up.

"Now to Him that is able to do infinitely beyond all things which we ask or think, according to the energy of His power that worketh within us—to Him be the glory in the church, even in Christ Jesus, to all generations for ever and ever, Amen."

Here, in this concluding doxology, we have the thought of the first prayer again introduced. It is "power". In the first prayer it is God's power put forth *for us* in the raising of Christ from the dead: here, in the second prayer, it is the same power put forth and working *in us*. It is by this mighty power He gives, and gives infinitely beyond all we ask or think.

In our poor prayers, in which we are eaten up with self, and centred in our own needs, we constantly limit Him. Whereas,

we are here distinctly told that, with all our *thinking*, we can never think of *all* that God's mighty power can do for us.

We are in trouble or difficulty: we can see a way out of it, and we ask God to deliver us out of it in that particular way; while all the time He has a dozen ways, all infinitely better than our poor ignorant thoughts and feeble faith can imagine.

We little know what we lose by our mistaken so-called "definiteness", when we substitute it for God's infinite power, and infinite love, and infinite wisdom. Oh! to rise to greater thoughts of God: to think less of ourselves: to dwell more on His power than on our weakness; more on His wisdom than on our ignorance; more on His grace than on our merit; more on His fulness than on our need.

Do we really believe the revelation made in these two prayers? That is the question. It is all so wonderful, that it seems too good to be true. Hence, if we do not actually doubt it, we fail to grasp it with a God-honouring faith. To some, it savours of humility not to speak or feel too certainly about such wonderful things. But, surely, when God Himself is the one who speaks, it is not presumption to believe Him; but rather, it is presumption to doubt Him. If we were reading the words of Paul, or of any mortal man, we might well hesitate to cast ourselves upon them: but, when we remember that these are the "words which the Holy Ghost teacheth" we can only join in this grand doxology, and ascribe all the glory to God, who has purposed such infinite blessedness for "all His saints".

Shall we not pray: that the Lord may give us to know more and more of that power by which He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think; that we may be more occupied with Him, and less with ourselves; more filled with His thoughts, and less with our own? Then shall we be filled with all that His grace has given to us and is preparing for us; and cease to be oppressed and depressed by circumstances. For all that He has purposed is for eternity. Oh! what power is in this hope of eternal glory. How petty it makes our greatest possessions. How it separates us from the world. How it lifts us far above all its pleasures and all its cares. How it strengthens us for His service. How it enables us to worship Him truly with our spirits, as we confess, and say: "To Him be the glory in the Church, even in Christ Jesus, to all generations for ever and ever. Amen".

## THE CLOSING BENEDICTION

Having considered at some length the two prayers in chapters i. and iii., it may be profitable for us to look at the brief prayer with which the Epistle closes.

The Apostle commences the Epistle with his prayer for the Ephesian Saints, and, at the end, he asks for their prayer for him: but the theme is the same. It is the *Mystery*, or Secret, which is the great subject of the Epistle as a whole. He beseeches them to pray (ch. vi. 19) for him, "that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the Mystery".

We note that, though most of the printed texts add "of the Gospel", Lachmann puts these latter words in brackets. That means that they are not supported by some of the more ancient manuscripts. It may well be that, owing to the very early loss of the truth concerning the Mystery, there was considerable difficulty in the minds of Transcribers when they met with this word. Not knowing the *doctrine*, it was clearly difficult for them to understand the *word*. Hence, we believe, it is that, in 1 Cor. ii. 1, Col. ii. 2, and 1 Tim. iii. 16, we have three such important various readings, in the manuscripts; and all of them connected with the word "Mystery".

The Apostle might well ask the prayers of the Ephesian Saints; that, in view of the fact revealed in 2 Tim. i. 15 of their departure from the Apostle's teaching concerning the Mystery. That departure must, even then have shown itself in its weakening their hold on this truth. Pray, he says, "that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the Mystery". Even with the words "of the Gospel" added, it comes much to the same thing; if we take it as the Genitive of Relation: "*the Mystery which is the subject of the Gospel*".

Not satisfied with this, or with writing this Epistle, he goes on to tell them how he was sending Tychicus to them. Tychicus was sent also to the Church at Colossæ, but on a different mission. He was sent to Colossæ, Paul says, "*that he might know your estate*" (Col. iv. 8). But he was sent to Ephesus for the opposite reason: "*that ye might know our affairs*" (Eph. vi. 22). In each case the object was the same, "that he might comfort your hearts".



This is followed by his concluding prayer for them: “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility”.

Now the word rendered “sincerity” is further evidence that this prayer is connected with prayer with the “Mystery”. It has nothing whatever to do with our English word “sincerity” as meaning *honest, without hypocrisy*. If that were the meaning intended there are other words that would have been used, e.g. εἰλικρίνεια (*eilikrineia*) *clearness, pureness*, as judged of in the sunlight 1 Cor. v. 8; 2 Cor. i. 12, ii. 17; or εἰλικρινῆς (*eilikrinēs*) Phil. i. 10, 2 Pet. iii. 1; or γνήσιος (*gnēsios*) 2 Cor. viii. 8 (sincerity); Phil. iv. 3 (“true”); 1 Tim. i. 2 (“own”); Titus i. 4 (“own”); or γνησίως (*gnēsīōs*) Phil. ii. 20 (“naturally”, i.e. sincerely or truly).

Now the word in Eph. vi. 24 is neither of these; which shows that the word does not imply, merely, that the love was to be *genuine*. It is quite another word altogether. It is ἀφθαρσία (*aphtharsia*), and means *incorruptibility* or *uncorruptness* (R.V.). It always has reference to *immortality* as the result of resurrection. It occurs seven times and is rendered twice *immortality* (Rom. ii. 7; 2 Tim. i. 10); and four times *incorruption* (1 Cor. xv. 42, 50, 53, 54). The word is always associated with *immortality*, and of that which cannot decay or become corrupt. The noun ἀφθαρτος (*aphthartos*), *incorruptible, immortal*, is used of God Himself (Rom. i. 23; 1 Tim. i. 17). The dead are to be raised *aphthartos* (1 Cor. xv. 52). The crown of the child of God is *aphthartos* (1 Cor. ix. 25). Our inheritance is *aphthartos* (1 Pet. i. 4). The new nature is *aphthartos* (1 Pet. iii. 4). The seed from which it is produced (the Word of God) is *aphthartos* (1 Pet. i. 23). There can be no doubt, therefore, as to its meaning. Nor can there be any doubt as to its application or reference in Eph. vi. 24. It refers not to our love, but to our Lord Jesus Christ as risen from the dead, and as living again in incorruption and immortality.

We are not lovers of a dead Jesus, but of a risen Christ. We know Him “no more after the flesh” (2 Cor. v. 14–17).

It is natural for us to think of ourselves, and of our love; but this prayer takes us out of ourselves and turns our thoughts to Christ, and the sphere in which our love is to be manifested. It teaches that the character of our love to Him is to be in the sphere in which we regard Him, as risen from the dead.

The Epistle thus ends as it begins, with HIM, and with Him as risen from the dead, and made "the head over all things to the Church which is His body" (chap. i. 19-23). To love Him in incorruptibility, is to love Him as He is, as our risen Head; not as He WAS "in the days of His flesh". To love Him in "incorruptibility" is to acknowledge Him as the risen Head of the body, and ourselves as members of that body. It is not the mere saying "I am OF Christ" as did many of the Corinthian believers, but the acknowledging of the blessed fact that we are "IN CHRIST". "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new". We henceforth know Christ no more after the flesh, but as "raised in incorruption", not merely as a "living soul" but as "a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor. xv. 45); not merely as "put to death as to his flesh" but as "quickenened (or made alive)" in the spiritual resurrection body (1 Pet. iii. 18).

Those who are prayed for in this prayer are those who love Jesus Christ as their risen Lord and Head. Their blessings are "in the heavenlies, in Christ". They live and walk on resurrection ground, and serve "in newness of life". They are "born of the Spirit" and all that He produces in them is spiritual. They "worship God in spirit (or spiritually)" (Phil. iii. 3). As they no longer know Christ after the flesh, so they no longer look to their own flesh as being able to produce anything for God, who is spirit (John iv. 24). They know that "the flesh profiteth nothing" (John vi. 63). Hence, they have "no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. iii. 3), and have no temptation to adopt new fashions or modern methods in their service for their Lord. They know that whatsoever comes not from His Spirit and from His Word is nothing worth. Having "no confidence in the flesh", they do not depend on working on the feelings by "personal magnetism", music, or numbers. They know too well that music has wonderful powers to excite, as well as to calm; to inflame the passions, as well as to soothe the heart; to create fleshly feelings, as well as to induce religious solemnity. They put, therefore, no confidence in that; but, rather, eschew it as an "edged-tool".

Neither do they rely on the assembling of people in multitudes; for there is a mysterious influence in numbers, which can be felt, though it cannot be explained. Scientific reasoning is useless; "Psychical research" is in vain; yet the fact is so real

that many are tempted to rely upon it, and upon its effects, for the realization of its assured results. Ravishing music, powerful appeals, heart-breaking anecdotes, combined with the mysterious influence of numbers, may produce the deepest emotions, exalted conditions of feeling, and excited action; and yet those who are the subjects of it may know nothing of "the love of Christ".

There may be much *hearing* and much *doing*, but without this "love of Christ" all is nothing worth. Herod "*heard* John gladly". He "*did* many things". But there was *one* thing he did not do; he did not "love Christ". No! for this love is only "shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit". It is to-day as it always was: it is not the "earthquake", not the "fire", not the music, not the excitement, but it is "the still small voice". "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit" is the one and only means of creating a child of God. No other means will accomplish this. We are born by nature *only* by the flesh. We are born anew or from above *only* by the Spirit. And the one essential proof and test of this new birth is that we "love Jesus Christ as our LORD in [His] incorruption, as the Risen Head of the one body". This is the evidence of the possession of the gift of "a sonship spirit". This love is manifested now by the possession of "that blessed hope" of seeing Him and being with Him for ever. This is the hope of all the members of the One Body; the hope of being "caught up to meet the Lord in the air, so to ever be with the Lord". Until that blessed moment arrives, we manifest this "sonship spirit" by a desire to meet with Him here, and now. God's Word is the appointed way of finding and seeing Him. Prayer is the appointed way of intercourse with Him. We may study that Word from other reasons, and with other subjects. We may pray with many other motives. Self-will may come in: and both these means, the Word and Prayer, may be perverted by being directed to our own pleasure and the supply of our own desires.

These are the open windows by which alone we can see Him now; and, if we love Him in sincerity, we shall love to be gazing through them. As Dr. Watts puts it:

"I love the windows of Thy grace,  
Through which my Lord is seen;  
But long to meet my Saviour's face  
Without a glass between."

If we love Him, we desire to please him; and this for His own sake. Not because we have made any vows or resolutions; not because of any "Rules for daily living", or "Directories for a devout life"; but for this sole reason—because we love Him.

Many look to Him as a helper, and not as their Saviour.

Many look to Him as a Saviour, but not as their Lord.

The test of tests is this: and it is one which comes down, in its power, and meets the poorest, weakest, youngest of the Children of God—that our desires are for himself; to be with Him for ever; to be with Him now through His Word dwelling richly within us; and never feeling so happy as when we are occupied with Him through that Word.

Even in reading these words now, our one ever-present temptation is Self. Our temptation is to be occupied with *our love*, instead of with Him, our glorious Head, in heaven, who is the object of our love. We can never get to love Him by mourning over our felt lack of love. We can never love Him by mourning over our shortcomings and failures and infirmities; and our want of wisdom or strength. Our bond of union is a living union with a risen Christ by the Spirit of God. It is not union by Ordinances, or by Church membership, or by Confessions of Faith; but it is union in this—that we "love Jesus Christ as our Lord, in incorruptibility".

This is the abiding thought which closes this Epistle, as it closes the first Epistle to the Corinthians (ch. xvi. 22), "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema". Why? The answer is, "Maran-atha"—*the Lord cometh*. As much as to say: in the light of that coming, this is the one test. It is not what are spoken of as "Ethical results": it is not merely, or only, correctness of ritual, clearness of views, soundness of faith, orthodoxy of doctrine, morality of life, or any thing to do with the flesh: it is "love to our Lord Jesus Christ as Risen Head".

There may be no fault to find with our creed, our worship, or our life: there may be all these in perfection; but, if love for Him as our Lord—be lacking, all these will be vain. And, on the other hand, if there be this love for Christ, then none of the others will be lacking: all will be present in measure, and in degree.

If there be this love, then it is all traced up to "Grace":

which shuts out all other things as *works*. We are saved by grace. Grace in redemption, grace in election, grace in justification. Our very “faith” is bestowed by grace; our “hope” springs from grace; our “love” comes from grace; and all this, from first to last.

All the precepts in the Epistle to the Corinthians, all the doctrines in the Epistle to the Ephesians—all are of effect for us, only, and so far as, this closing prayer is answered in our experience: “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility”.