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At the Lord's table:

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THOUGHTS ON
COMMUNION AND
FELLOWSHIP



HOWARD CROSBY

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COMMUNION AND FELLOWSHIP

BY
HOWARD CROSBY.

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NOTE.

It was customary for Dr. Crosby at the Communion Table to speak briefly on some theme suitable for meditation during the service.

A few of these utterances taken down at the time are now published, with the hope that they may prove as helpful to others as they were to his own people.

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AT THE LORD'S TABLE.



I.

THE REAL PRESENCE.

VERY early in the Church's history, misunderstandings arose — naturally arose as do all misunderstandings — with reference to its two ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism became synonymous with regeneration, and regeneration became, not the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit in the will and affections, but the external application of water with a sort of magical formula. The Lord's Supper suffered a like change. The Lord Jesus was declared to be actually present in the bread and the wine placed upon his table, not present symbolically, not pres-

ent spiritually, but present physically, the bread and the wine becoming his flesh and his blood. These teachings have been the source of unmeasured harm. They deal only with the external rites, and the attention is soon altogether fixed upon externals. Spirituality then departs, and a flood-gate is opened for formalism to enter.

And yet prolific as they have been of error, there is in these teachings a great deal of truth. Add the element of faith, the faith of the recipient, and they become nearly all truth. Baptism, then, is not the cause but the sign of a true regeneration. There is no power in the water, or in the officiating minister, or in the church. The whole power (on the human side) is in the faith of the recipient, or in the faith of the parent through the family covenant, which faith is acknowledged by God. And so with the Lord's Supper. Christ Jesus sits to-day at this table, not perceptibly to the senses and yet actually, not by a poetic

fancy or by an act of the imagination, but truly. There is a real presence; Christ is here with power to instruct the mind and to strengthen the heart. Faith perceives the presence and feels the power.

Now I take it that we shall derive comfort and peace from this holy ordinance just as we recognize this presence of our Lord. If we see him and hear his words—and faith will enable us to do this—we shall go away invigorated and refreshed; if we do not see and hear him, the Supper is without meaning to us, is merely a form.

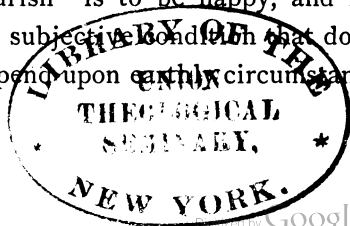
II.

COMMUNION SEASONS.

THERE can be no doubt that in the time immediately following the institution of the Supper, its observance was a feature of every holy convocation of the church. The brethren came together daily, and never separated without partaking of the emblems of their Lord's death in their behalf. But even in the apostolic days we find an increase in the length of the period between the celebrations of the Supper, and that these occurred not daily as at first, but on the first day of every week. I think it is a misfortune that different parts of the Church ever departed from this apostolic custom and lengthened the intervals between the communion seasons, making them in some cases a year apart, or six months, or three months, or two months.

One of the evils growing out of this custom is a sort of suggestion of intermittent piety, an unacknowledged notion that Christians may be quite worldly for most of the time, and then gather themselves up into a pious frame of mind at the approach of the communion season, only to fall into worldliness again as soon as the season has passed. A more frequent observance of the Supper would, I think, correct this, and by bringing our Lord's death constantly before us, be a quickener of our faith and a powerful agent to keep us closer to his side and thus farther away from the world and farther away from temptation.

God's wish for us His children is that we should be full of joy and peace, and He has made ample provision for this. A verse in Psalm XCII. tells us how: "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." "To flourish" is to be happy, and happiness is a subjective condition that does not at all depend upon earthly circumstances of



any kind. But those who thus flourish are such as are planted in the house of the Lord, that is, make it their abiding-place. Just here is the difference between Christians. Many Christians (to keep the figure) seem to be planted in boxes which are now and then rolled into the Lord's house and then rolled out again. Such Christians cannot flourish, cannot be happy. Happiness is found in the house of the Lord, and belongs to those who are planted there.

Is not this a good time to think over our own case, to see whether we make our religious life, our true life, our life hid with Christ in God, our main thought, subordinating all else to it? Only in this way can we be planted in the house of the Lord, and it is the only place where we can become holy and happy, filled with joy and comfort and peace.

III.

THE NATURE OF THE SUPPER.

THROUGH the ages of the Church's life the Lord's Supper has received various names, and some of them have been sad misnomers. The "sacrament" is one of these. "Sacrament" in its Latin form had two meanings. The first was that of a vow or an oath taken by a soldier to his commander; and this notion has fastened itself upon a large part of the Church, causing great terror and distress where neither terror nor distress should exist. We do not come here to-day to take vows of obedience upon ourselves; we do not come to bind ourselves by oaths of service. We are too weak for either vows or oaths; we should break them all if we made them. God vows, not we,—God vows to give us eternal salvation and glory, and binds Him-

self by an oath that He will bring this to pass. We do nothing but receive his promise.

The other and later meaning of "sacrament" is "mystery," and this grew out of its use in the Church. It is just as false as the other. There is nothing specially mysterious in the holy Supper; there is no more mystery in it than there is in prayer, or in faith, or in our daily life. We are only children, and to children everything has somewhat of mystery. The Supper is simple enough for a child to understand; it is coming to the Lord's table to remember him, that is, "to see Jesus bearing my punishment, broken for me, dying for me." All there is of mystery is in the great principles which lie behind the facts here memorialized.

In the Bible this holy ordinance is called a "supper," and we sit at a supper with our friends when the day's work is over. It is a time for rest and refreshment, for loving intercourse and mutual confidence.

And it is called, or we call it, using one of the words found in the account of the institution of the Supper, the "Eucharist." "Eucharist" means "thanksgiving;" and this is a most appropriate name, — for where should our thanksgiving be more fervent, where should our gratitude be more ardent, than here where we see before us the emblems of the sufferings of our Lord for us?

Then, while this holy ordinance is a supper to which the Lord invites us, to which we come in obedience to him, that we may have our gratitude enkindled and our love strengthened by our remembrance of his work for us, there is also in it the element of a divine union, a union with God established by Jesus. No heart sits at the table in child-like faith without receiving the peace and joy and strength that must come from such a union. And so the supper becomes to us a seal and pledge as well as a memorial rite. I sit at the table and partake of the bread and the wine, and my

faith perceives in these the body and blood of my Lord, while God imparts to me through my faith a pledge of my salvation. Why? Because God has made the Supper the sign and the seal of a covenant between my soul and Himself, — a covenant in which all my part was done for me by Jesus Christ.

IV.

THE SUPPER A FESTIVAL, NOT A FAST.

AMONG all the false notions concerning the Lord's Supper that have pervaded the Church, none has been more pernicious than that which has associated with it thoughts of gloom and severity. It is true that there is a vein of sadness in the past or historic view of the Supper. It was instituted at the beginning of the terrible sufferings undergone by Him who came to redeem the world, and the shadows of the coming agony—an agony so great that it pressed out that awful cry upon the cross—were already thrown upon him. And there was much in the surroundings of the first supper to increase this gloom. One of those who sat at the table was to betray his Lord; another was to deny him; all were to forsake him. The very

emblems chosen by the Saviour were emblems of suffering,—of a broken body and of poured-out blood.

But as soon as we leave the past the whole aspect of the Supper alters. The gloom and the suffering and the approaching death are gone, and only their results remain. This suffering wrought our release; this death secured our life; this sorrow brought forth our joy. The very emblems now change their significance, and we see bread, the staff of life, and wine, that makes glad the heart of man. No severity is here, for these emblems tell of pardon; no sorrow is here, for they tell of the removal of sin, the source of sorrow; no gloom is here, for we are in the clear bright sunshine of God's love. We look not upon a dead Christ, but a risen Christ. We see not a suffering Saviour, but an exalted Saviour. Christ is not in the tomb; he is here, and we are with him. It is this that makes the Supper a feast, the one great festival of the Christian Church.

It is true that as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we remember the Lord's death, but we are remembering it until he comes. He is coming again to perfect in glory what he began in suffering. We remember his death and the awful price he paid for our redemption, and we keep our eyes on the coming glory. Our deliverance is accomplished; our salvation is attained; and just before us is the crown of righteousness which the righteous Judge shall give to all who love His appearing. That crown of righteousness shall be given to us, as we pass through the heavenly gates in the name of the King of Glory, and hear our dear Lord's voice bidding us sit down at His board amid all the glories of our heavenly home. This is what the Supper means to us, — salvation here, glory there; and both the salvation and the glory are the work of him who tells us to assemble together and remember him.

Surely all the associations of the Supper should be those of joy and gratitude. It is

a feast, not a fast; and an anthem of praise, not a *miserere*, should rise from our hearts as we gather around the table of our Lord.

There is another thought, a thought too seldom considered. This holy feast is an occasion of joy not only to us, but also to our God. Is the thought too great? Is it impossible to think of the Infinite One rejoicing with us? Listen to the words addressed by the Spirit to every believing heart: "He will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest [take his ease and comfort] in his love; he will joy over thee with singing;" again, "As a bridegroom rejoiceth over a bride, even so will thy God rejoice over thee;" still again, "I will rejoice over them to do them good with my whole heart." Do not let us refuse to take to ourselves the comfort and the encouragement derived from knowing that God, our God, is to-day rejoicing with us over the blessed results of His wonderful love and grace.

V.

THE SUPPER A LOVE-FEAST.

THE Lord's Supper is a love-feast. In it we emphasize the great love of Jesus for us, we emphasize our love and gratitude to him, and we emphasize our love to one another as all being in Christ. We see him as our suffering substitute, and we recognize the brotherhood which exists between us and our fellow-believers — exists why? because we all belong to the race of Adam? No; that is what the world's philosophers say, who would have us love all men alike.

There has been no natural bond of brotherhood between men, ever since sin entered into the world and separated one from the other, placing each in a state of isolation. The only brotherhood now to be found is among Christians, and this because

they are in Christ, who has brought them out of isolation, and as the Head of a new race, established among his seed a bond of union that shall exist forever.

Our 'Lord's teaching makes a broad distinction between these and the world, and tells us that our feeling regarding our brethren in Christ is not what we are to have regarding the world. Listen to his words; he is speaking to his Father. "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them that Thou hast given me out of the world." That is emphatic, and draws a deep line between those who believe in Christ and those who do not believe. Again, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these," — not the "least of mankind," but "the least of these my brethren." Christ is identified with those who receive him, but he is not identified with those who reject him. Undoubtedly we are to love the world. God loves the world, and we are followers of God; but this God-likeness of the soul, this broad

affection for all the members of our race, is something very different from the love felt toward our fellow Christians, the family tie that binds us together because we are in Christ.

There are commandments in the Church of Christ. The Antinomian notion that the children of God have no law is arrant folly. We have no law to obtain salvation; but we have a law, the holy, just, and good law of our holy, just, and good God, and we love it and love to obey it. Our Lord tells us that obedience is the mark of love to him. "If ye love me, keep my commandments;" and then he adds a little further on, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another." If the Church would but obey its Lord all its troubles would be over in a single day. All the sad fruits of our natural isolation, all anger and malice, all jealousy and backbiting, all bitter words and unkind thoughts, would disappear in a moment, and in their stead would be the fraternal recognition, the

brotherly kindness, which caused men to say of the early Church, "See how these Christians love one another!"

As we think to-day of the past, remembering all Christ has done for us, let us also think of the future, and plan what we can do for him. It is just as we obey him that we have a joyful experience and happy hearts and brighter views of our dear Lord.

VI.

THE SUPPER A PLEDGE OF GLORY.

WE naturally think of the Lord's Supper as a memorial feast, as telling what Jesus wrought for us, of his humiliation and death in our behalf. And we naturally think of it as showing our communion with him and with one another, our participation in the sufferings of Jesus, and our Christian fellowship. But we do not so often think of it as a pledge of our eternal glory, a foretaste of that heavenly banquet at which every believer shall sit down when we all gather together at the marriage-supper of the Lamb. This glory is ours to-day.

In his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul writes, "In whom [that is, in Christ] we have an inheritance," — not "will have"

but "have," have at this very time. That we have not entered upon the possession of the inheritance does not affect the fact of our ownership. A man may become the heir to a large and rich estate in America and the man himself be in China. He has not entered into the full enjoyment of his inheritance; he cannot see it with his eyes; he does not know its details of hill and valley; he cannot tell all its resources of mine and field and river; but it is his, nevertheless. He is the rightful and acknowledged owner. So it is with our possessions in Christ. They are ours, though our ideas concerning them are undefined. We know about them in a general way. The apostle Peter tells us that they are incorruptible, undefiled, unfading, and reserved for us in that heaven toward which we are hastening; and Paul says that man's mind is not now able to conceive the good which God has in store for us. It is this thought that robs death of all gloom to the Christian heart, that makes

a Christian look forward to the time of his departure from this world with gladness and eagerness. Why should he not rejoice? He then enters upon the full glory of his inheritance in Christ.

But, while the glory is in heaven, and while we must wait for it until we pass into the other world, God, who gives us the glory, also gives us earnest and pledges of its ownership, bidding us look upon these and handle them, and thus have our faith made strong. In this same epistle to the Ephesians, Paul tells us that the sealing of the Spirit is an earnest of the promised possession, and the Spirit uses the holy Supper, as he uses prayer, to perfect his work in the soul. It is not the mere observance of the rite, not the eating the bread and drinking the wine, that is to do us good. We may eat and drink, and be thoughtless and careless and formal, and then the exercise will be profitless to us. It is the spiritual grace contained in the outward rite that will make us grow in

the Christian life. The Holy Spirit is given to every believer, and furnishes discerning power to every believer; but the fruits of the Spirit will be enjoyed only when the heart welcomes Him and the will submits to His control.

As we partake of the supper of our Lord to-day, let us keep this joyful thought before our minds,—not only does it memorialize our Lord's death, but it also conveys to us a pledge from God—from God, who cannot lie—of the glory awaiting us. Let us eat and drink, using the God-given tokens whose full significance we shall never know until we enter our country above.

VII.

“COMMUNION.”

WE speak, and rightly speak, of Communion seasons, but it is not always clear in our minds what the term means. It is not, as is often supposed, communion with the saints; that is a precious privilege, but it is not that which is enjoyed around the table of our Lord. The Holy Spirit explains the word “communion of the body and blood of Christ,” that is, communion with Christ himself through the symbols of bread and wine. The same Greek word translated “communion” in the first epistle to the Corinthians is in the first epistle of John translated “fellowship,” — “We have fellowship one with another,” where the fellowship is not with other Christians but with God. One can enjoy the communion of saints only when

in the company with other believers; but were a man cast away upon a desert island, or were he the only saint upon earth, he could with perfect propriety break the bread and drink the wine, and through the symbols enjoy communion with his God and Saviour.

VIII.

“FELLOWSHIP.”

ALL the unspeakable glories, present and future, promised us by our God, can be gathered into one word, — “fellowship,” “fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Do you ask what this means? I cannot tell you. Is it a partnership in business? Yes, and more. Is it the sweet intercourse of friends met to converse upon subjects dear to the hearts of all? Yes, and more. Is it the sacred harmony of the family circle? Yes, it is this and more than this. Is it the mutual confidence and affection between husband and wife? Yes, and more than this. All these are types and tokens, given, it is true, in God’s word; but types and tokens, though divinely appointed,

fail to depict the intimate communion established between your soul, my fellow Christian, and the God of eternal life, manifested in Christ Jesus our Lord.

IX.

MISUSING THE SUPPER.

IT is possible to misuse this holy ordinance of the Supper. There is no mystery about it, no more than there is about prayer or any other means by which we hold communion with God. There is always a certain amount of mystery whenever the human and finite approaches the spiritual and infinite; but there is nothing specially mysterious about the Supper. Any misuse of the ordinance is not, therefore, caused by a failure to grasp its hidden meaning.

Nor is it because of any special grace given us through the Supper, — I mean more grace than can be given through other channels. When we pray, God gives us grace through our petitions to Him; when we engage in Christian service, God gives

us grace through our obedience to Him; when we read His word, God gives us grace through the printed page. God has never said that He would give more grace through one channel than through another channel. It is not, therefore, because of its peculiar sanctity that we may misuse the Lord's Supper.

Our misuse of it is when we fail to use it spiritually, when we come to it as a habit, when we treat it as a customary part of the religious service, as a mere external rite of the church. We misuse it when we fail to "discern the Lord's body." Paul uses this phrase in writing to the Christians of Corinth, who had fallen into the habit of coming to the Lord's table as they would to a social festivity or to an ordinary meal at the house of a friend, forgetting Him in whose commemoration it was instituted. They did not come together to remember the Lord's death; they came together to eat and to drink. The apostle tells them this was all wrong, and bids

them examine themselves and see how far they had departed from the true observance of the ordinance.

“As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord’s death.” It is this human relation of Christ Jesus, and this human relation to us, that we are to discern; our union with Christ and with his death, and therefore with his eternal life. “Discerning the Lord’s body” is recognizing the fact that Christ died for me, and making my own all the benefits that flow from his broken body and shed blood. When we come to the table with a simplicity of faith appropriate to the simplicity of the ordinance, we perceive our oneness with Christ, and we gain from the feast much strength and great joy. We misuse it when neither the strength nor the joy is obtained.

X.

CHRIST'S DIVINITY IN THE SUPPER.

AS we approach the table of our Lord, we love to think of the human side of the feast, of the human side of our Lord, of his human love and sympathy, of his full and complete humanity, in which he was tried in all points as we are. But there is also another line of thought which we must not forget, and this is the divine side of the Supper, the divine side of our Jesus. Were the invitation he extends to every one of us, to-day, merely an invitation of love and sympathy, it would make the feast a very tender one but never a satisfying one. No one who has felt the heavy weight of sin, the painful accusations of a wounded conscience, the oppressive anticipations of coming retribution, does not

know that something more than love and sympathy, precious as these are, is needed before the soul can be at peace. And just here we turn to the divine side of the Supper and see that it symbolizes atonement, and that the atonement was God's atonement. Jesus never relinquished his Godhood. He relinquished its active use for a time to resume it again when his humiliation was over, but he never relinquished his Godhood; and because he was God as well as man, his atonement for sin has an infinite depth of value which eternity itself cannot exhaust.

When we read in the Scriptures that God sent His Son into the world to obtain eternal life for men, we know that there was a movement of God, an activity of God toward this end. It was this movement and activity that made the work a divine one, and so made the taking away of man's sin possible. If Jesus had been only man, and not the Eternal Word become flesh, no sin would ever have been taken

away. It is as we see our degraded condition, as we see that God must interfere for our rescue, see that God did interfere, that the Son of God became the Son of Man, that God stood in man's place, that a God-man satisfied God's justice; it is as we allow this divine side of our Saviour to be recognized by us, as we see that this table is Christ's table and God's table, that the work of salvation is Christ's work and God's work, — it is as we see this, that our souls are satisfied and our consciences are at rest. We do not for a moment hide from ourselves our sinfulness and guilt; but we look upon our sins without fear, knowing that God has cast them into the depths of the sea. Let us come to the table of our Master to derive strength from the contemplation of the divine character of our Redeemer.

You remember that the prophet Elijah once sat down under a juniper-tree, faint and discouraged; and then the Lord sent an angel and showed him bread baked on

the coals and a cruse of water. Elijah ate and drank and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights. So will it be with us. We can obtain strength to-day that will not fail us to-morrow, or next week, or next year. There was nothing in the bread and water that made them suffice for Elijah. There is nothing in this ordinance, there is nothing in the fundamental doctrine upon which the ordinance rests, there is nothing in the natural mind as we receive the doctrine and think over it; but there is a power of God behind all these which will give a divine efficacy to them all, and make the holy Supper a means of strengthening us for the remainder of our lives on earth.

XI.

CHRIST'S HUMANITY IN THE SUPPER.

THE holy Supper with its emblems brings before our minds, and so before our hearts, the fact that our divine Redeemer is also man. He is the Infinite God brought into limitations like our own. Instead of presenting himself to us as the great, strong, absolute, and eternal God, he comes to us as flesh of our flesh, as moved by the same sympathies, as rejoicing and sorrowing, and yet as divine. He loves as we love; he pities as we pity; he comforts as we comfort, with the love and the pity and the comfort raised to a divine height. We are not to explain away these facts of our Lord's life by any metaphysical subtlety. He is one with us. We see him and hear him, not afar off, but close at hand.

Let us apply this line of thought to the holy ordinance we this day celebrate. We find that God has put into it nothing that would tend to keep us at a distance from Him and everything that would tend to bring us into close proximity, into familiar intimacy, with Him. We have here a table spread with the simplest of tokens, with something to eat and something to drink, the ordinary food of daily life. We are here at a supper; and a supper at once suggests the dear home-circle with the father's care and the fraternal greetings. We have come not to listen to threatenings but to hear love-whispers, not to be punished but to be made glad. We have no long list of duties to perform, no magical incantations to pursue. We are here to remember what our Lord has done for us. Everything about us tells of the free family life, the sweet tie of kinship with its readiness to share and to sympathize.

This closeness of intercourse is just what God would see in each of us. From

it will spring joy and gratitude, strength and happiness; from it will come the symmetrical development of the Christ-life in us, in its active influence upon others and in its subjective enjoyment within our own souls.

XII.

THE DOMESTIC ELEMENT IN THE SUPPER.

IN Psalm LXXXIV. we read these words, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy courts; they will still [that is, always] be praising thee," — in other words, a permanent dwelling in God's house is the position of permanent joy.

What is dwelling in God's house? It cannot mean dwelling in the literal temple any more than the similar phrase in Psalm XXIII., "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever," means dwelling in the literal temple. The literal temple could not be entered by David or any of his tribe. The expression must have a spiritual import, and it had this from the beginning. It was never intended to be taken literally. Dwelling in God's house is

44 *The Domestic Element in the Supper.*

consciously dwelling in the presence of God and His work of redemption; it is dwelling so near Christ that the facts of his grace and love are always impressing themselves on the heart and on the mind. The Lord's house is not a locality but a condition. It is the condition or frame of mind and heart constructed by the Holy Spirit in which the believer may dwell. Alas! we all do not dwell there. We sometimes leave the company of our Lord and run off to dwell with the world; but each one of us has the power and the privilege of dwelling in the house of the Lord all the time.

In the supper of the Lord we find the same teaching. There is a domestic thought in it. Suppers are eaten at home, and it is the table in the Lord's house (or home) at which we now gather. We do not come here merely as invited guests; we are more than that. We are children, members of God's family, in the house of our Father. I do not mean in the outward

edifice; 'I mean the intercourse and communion which are symbolized by the emblems spread before us.

Let us make these symbols alive to-day, so that they will show us the truths they contain, finding a real presence of our Lord not in the bread and the wine, but in the experience of our hearts. So shall we dwell in the house of our Lord, the only position of joy. Here we shall be happy; here we shall be safe; here we shall be free from the enticements of the world and the molestations of Satan. Here we shall know the blessedness of which the psalmist speaks, for we shall be exercising our right as God's children to dwell in His house now, on earth, long before we reach heaven; and we shall ever be praising Him.

XIII.

THE INDIVIDUAL ELEMENT IN THE SUPPER.

THERE is one aspect in which I always like to look at the Lord's Supper,—that presenting the relation of the individual soul to its Redeemer. God never saves men in the aggregate, nor did Christ die for the world in the aggregate. God calls His people by name, and Christ died for each individual soul. Our Lord comes to each of us to-day, to each of us whose names are now recorded in heaven, who have been loved, called, saved.

The holy ordinance we celebrate is fitly named when thus viewed. It is a "supper." Now, a host does not summon the guests to a supper in the aggregate, but sends to each a special invitation, meets each with a special welcome, gives each a

seat at the table, sees that the wants of each are supplied. So the Lord Jesus invites each of us to the feast, is ready to greet each with his loving welcome, to lead each to his own table and there serve us with the choicest food.

Is there any timid soul here, — timid, I mean, at the thought of the world's highway along which we all have to pass; any soul beset with spectres and laden with forebodings; any soul that fears to meet the dark future or to face the threatening storm? Well, the disciples once strove all night against the high waves and boisterous winds of the Sea of Galilee, and at last saw Jesus walking on the waves and through the winds. The sight terrified them the more, and they cried out in their fear. Then Jesus spoke: "Be of good cheer, it is I. Be not afraid." Such are his words to all these timid ones. He is on the waves; he rules the storm, and whispers, "It is I. Be not afraid."

Is there any soul among us timid with a

far worse timidity,—any soul ashamed of Jesus; any soul that has hidden its talent in a napkin, that has concealed its uniform from sight, that is afraid to confess that it belongs to him, and to serve him before a world that hates him? Well, Peter was once ashamed of his Lord, and denied all knowledge of him once, and twice, and again. How did the Lord deal with Peter? He turned and looked at him. That look broke Peter's heart; and when a few days later Jesus at the seaside asked him, "Simon, lovest thou me?" his timidity had vanished, and the answer came from a heart bursting with devotion, "Thou knowest that I love thee." I think, were Jesus with us to-day in visible form, such would be his look and words to every soul that fears to own its allegiance to him.

Have we with us any wearied souls, — souls tired of the long, sharp conflict and ready to sink in despair? I think I know how the Lord would address these. "Could

ye not watch one hour with me?" This earthly life will soon be over; heaven's eternal rest is just before you; the heavenly mansion is now preparing for you. Can you not watch one hour?

And are there with us any Nathanael souls, — souls that look up into Jesus' face and say in full assurance of faith, "Master, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel"? I think I know his reply to these triumphing ones. "Henceforth you shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Because of the fulness of their faith such shall hold constant communion and communication with their God; the heavenly messenger shall be seen busy in their behalf, and Jesus shall form the link of intercourse between heaven and themselves.

It is a coarse, crude notion that because many are loved, the love for the individual is diminished. Jesus loves us all; but his affection for each is as warm as if each

were the only one in the universe. Let us recognize this truth, and come to his table to receive his blessing and the tokens of his personal affection. So shall our hearts be strengthened; so shall we be comforted and refreshed; so shall we be filled with joy and peace.

XIV.

THE SUPPER A MEANS AGAINST HEART-HARDENING.

WHEN the disciples upon the Sea of Galilee, after the feeding of the multitude, saw Jesus walking upon the water, they were sore afraid, and cried out for fear. The day before they had witnessed the miracle of the loaves and fishes, and had seen the sufficiency of the Master to meet every emergency; but now in a new emergency, they, in the words of the evangelist, forgot the miracle of the loaves, because their hearts were hardened.

Is not this a type of our experience? Has not each of us seen the miracle of the loaves? Has not each of us known special visits of God's grace when His loving kindness and His power were plainly seen? Have we not recorded, or thought we did,

such in our memories? Have not our hearts been full of gratitude for the marvelous service God's good hand had wrought for us? Have we not sung with the psalmist, "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live," and thought that nothing could ever make us tremble again? And then — then we passed on our way, and new events occurred, new circumstances surrounded us, new dangers loomed up before us, and the old terror seized us. Our hearts were hardened, and we forgot the miracle of the loaves.

Now the world about us, headed by Satan, the prince of the world, is ever trying to accomplish this work of hardening Christian hearts and so blunting the edge of Christian love and zeal ; and there is much in our own hearts that responds to this movement of the world. The hardening assumes many forms,— business relations, social connections, the make of the mind or its acquired habits of thought.

In some shape or other, to a greater or less extent, each of us meets it every day.

God in His compassionate and tender care for us has provided means by which we may resist this hardening process, and among these means is the Lord's Supper. He gives it to us as a rallying-point for our wandering faculties, that we may gather them together and concentrate them upon the most interesting event of Christ's eventful life on earth. There is nothing of mystery in the Supper, there is nothing dreadful in it. It is simply coming in obedience to God's command to remember Jesus and his work for the souls of men, and then expecting to receive the divine blessing because the divine command has been obeyed. The blessing is sure to come,—a new accession of strength, a consciousness of greater power to battle with the world and sin, a calm, certain knowledge of coming victory. The remembrance of the table at which we have sat,

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the remembrance of Jesus and our communion with him, will keep our hearts tender, and will ward off the hardening that would make us forget the fulness of grace offered us by our Lord.

XV.

THE SUPPER A MEANS OF GAINING ASSURANCE.

IT is one thing to know the Lord, and it is another thing to know that we know him. Every Christian knows the Lord, or he would not be a Christian; but every Christian does not know that he knows Him. Every Christian has knowledge of God, but every Christian has not the knowledge of this knowledge. God would have all His children know that they know Him, would have each of them be assured of union to Him; for upon this assurance depends all their steadiness in the Christian course. All our power in the Christian life rests upon the certainty that we belong to God,—not only the power to be useful and helpful to others, but also the power of enjoyment, the

inward, spiritual experience of our own hearts.

No Christian who knows that he knows Jesus ever becomes worldly. The thing is impossible. He keeps himself from the world, not by observing any set of rules, but because there is no sympathy between him and the world. Adopting the world's maxims, practising the world's methods, identifying himself in any way with the world, is repugnant to him.

There is a way in which we are to love the world, and there is a way in which we are not to love the world. We are not to love the world's vanity and folly; we are not to seek worldly companions; we are not to mingle in worldly society or to pursue worldly honors or to be engrossed in worldly business. We are to be separate from the world in all these. "Puritani- cal," says one; "illiberal," says another. It is Bible truth; it is the teaching of the Holy Spirit from Genesis to the Revela- tion. We cannot repeat this great funda-

mental truth too often. By virtue of our union with Christ we are to be separated from the world in all its shapes. If we value our Lord's honor and our own peace, worldliness must be excluded from our lives. We all know when we are worldly; there is no need for us to split hairs about the matter; there is no need to propose questions in casuistry. We know when we are worldly, and God knows it.

And there is a way in which we are to love the world; it is the way God loves it. God's love for the world prompted Him to seek the world's salvation; our love for the world should prompt us to seek the world's salvation. That is the only love for the world a Christian should have. It will make us eager to convert the world, will make us watchful for souls, will make us alive to the interests of the kingdom of God, so that no scheme of evangelization will fail to secure our co-operative sympathy.

This table with all its sweet associations is a means of making sure to ourselves

that we know the Lord, and of excluding worldliness from our hearts, not by any system of rigid self-denial, but by an absorbing love for Christ. Let us use the holy Supper in such a way, and assure ourselves of our knowledge of God.

XVI.

THE SUPPER A STRENGTH AND JOY.

THE Lord's Supper ought to develop two results within us,—it should fill us with strength in our Christian character and life, and it should fill us with joy and peace in our souls. The Supper is a feast, and a feast is for sustenance and for rejoicing. The emblems selected by God Himself, the bread to be eaten and the wine to be drunk, show the spiritual partaking of the flesh and blood of Christ; that is, show constant spiritual communion with him. Without him we can do nothing,—not nothing relatively, not nothing poetically or sentimentally, but nothing actually and absolutely. We can do nothing, we can say nothing, we are nothing, except as we derive our spiritual strength from him.

I said that the emblems denote constant communion with Christ, and remember that we had nothing to do with the selection of the emblems. We never came together and agreed that we should do thus and so in remembrance of Christ's death, as some have agreed to put flowers in a church to signify the beauty and fragrance arising from his resurrection. God appointed these emblems, and therefore He meant the Supper to be a channel of blessing to our souls. We get all our strength from communion with Christ, and at his table we are brought into the closest communion with him. And so it gives us new vigor,—vigor to overcome sin in our own hearts and vigor to witness for our Lord before men.

And at the table we gain accession of peace. All the sacrificial feasts of the older world were covenant feasts. Just as in covenant transactions between man and man a beast was slain, and hands struck, and the bargain consummated over its

dead body, so does God covenant with us over the slain body of our Redeemer. All God's covenants are pledges, and this thought should make us bold in claiming our right to sonship, our right to heaven and glory eternal. Such claiming is not presumption but humility, is not boldness but faith. The sonship and heaven and glory are pledged to us, are ours by covenant,—a covenant in which our only part is our acceptance of our Redeemer's finished work. We should no more doubt our sonship and all its glorious sequences than we doubt the existence of our Lord. I think we should never doubt it, were it not for our dallying with the world. Now, the absence of doubt regarding the future, the certainty that our sins are forgiven, the knowledge that our true relation to God has been established and heaven secured, will fill the soul with peace; and peace is the foundation of happiness and joy.

All this is emblemed in the Supper of

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our Lord. Let us use this memorial feast, this covenant feast, as God means us to use it, and thus, through our communion with Him, gain from it new strength (the source of usefulness), and new peace (the source of happiness), as we rest upon the pledge His love has furnished us.

XVII.

WHAT GOD SAYS IN THE SUPPER.

IF we analyze the holy ordinance we are about to celebrate, we shall find that God is speaking to us in it. He speaks to us in many ways, but we do not always listen to His voice. We allow the great world without us and our passions within us so to absorb our attention, that we do not hear what He is saying. He never slackens in His interest in us, but we often slacken in our regard for Him. Let us, His people, seated at His table to-day, hear what He would say to us in the holy Supper.

He tells us first of our own utter insufficiency. Just as bread and drink must be taken in order to secure the growth and strength of the body, so must Christ be taken in order to secure the growth and

strengthening of our spiritual life; and just as we must daily eat and drink in order to prevent bodily starvation and death, so must Christ be constantly applied to, if we would not have our spiritual life wither and decay. Christ is our Portion, and without him we can do nothing.

He tells us further that we need not only Christ, but a crucified Christ. God does not speak to us about a Christ of poetical fancy, or about a Christ of æsthetic culture, or about a Christ whose beautiful life we are to admire. The world that lies in wickedness would gladly accept such a Christ and keep its sins all the time. No, no; the broken bread and poured-out wine tell of a broken body and shed blood. They speak of suffering and death, of stripes through which healing has come to our souls. The Christ of whom God here tells us is the Christ who took our place, who bore our punishment, who released us from condemnation. And so our relation to this Christ, who is God's Christ as well

as our Saviour, is a very sure one. It is a relation sealed and ratified in blood. And it is a very close one. Christ becomes our life. We live in him; and God makes him everything to us, wisdom and sanctification as well as redemption.

As we sit at the table this afternoon, let us listen to God's whispers of all He has done for us by sending His Son into our world.

XVIII.

GOD'S LOVE FOR THE BELIEVER.

THERE is one way in which God loves every human being. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." But there is another way in which God loves His dear children. It is not the same love as the other, for it has in it an element — what shall I call it? a family element, a domestic element, which the other has not. The former is a holy love and is consistent with God's perfect character, but the latter is the love of a father delightedly exercising himself toward his darling child. And there is a curious thing about this love, — it follows our love. The former, God's love for the world, antedates our love. Our love is consequent upon it. "We

love Him because He first loved us ;” but the latter is different. In the gospel by John, in our Lord’s address to his disciples, we read, “For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved me and have believed that I came out from God,” — that is, the Father loves you because you have put your trust in me as your Divine Saviour, and have given me your hearts. This thought is also conveyed by the same apostle in his first epistle, “Our fellowship [our close intimate companionship] is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Again in John’s gospel, “He that loveth me shall be loved by my Father,” — there is the sequence; and a little further on, “If a man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him,” — there is the communion.

This thought of God’s paternal love for us following our love for Him, of our recognition of Christ Jesus in his representative character, and our acceptance of

him as our personal Saviour, being the source, or rather the occasion, of God's paternal affection for us, is not a new teaching. In the Messianic psalms we can trace the same thing. We can there see God's offering to us, — our salvation obtained through the sufferings and death of His Son; then, on the other side, the response of our hearts in faith; and then, communion, fellowship, the outpouring of the family tenderness upon us.

In the ordinance we celebrate to-day are the same thoughts. Here are the emblems of suffering, and yet it is a supper, a family feast, at which they are displayed. God takes bread and wine, the ordinary food of man, to denote the broken body and shed blood of the Lord Jesus, as if He would connect the two thoughts in our minds. How the remembrance of this holy intimacy with God, this recognition of Christ as the expression of the glory of God and yet our Brother, bringing us into the same relations to God which he sustains, saying to

us, "My God and your God, my Father and your Father," — I say, how the apprehension of this family relation, this paternal affection of God for each one of us, Christ's blood-bought people, gives us boldness! How it removes all fear as it whispers to every trembling heart that doubt and trembling are out of place! We are God's beloved children; we enter a Father's house, we sit down at a Father's table, and are greeted by a Father's welcome.

XIX.

GOD'S DELIGHT IN THE BELIEVER.

IN Psalm XXXIII. it is stated, "The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy." The phrase in the first clause is an Oriental one, and means a tender, loving, sympathizing eye. In Psalm CXLVII. we meet with the thought in another form. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy." The thought is the same, — the pleasure of the Lord in them that hope in His mercy.

We perhaps have never allowed these words to make their full impression upon our minds. We often think of our relations toward a God of grace, but not so often of God's gracious relations toward us. We think of our duties, of our love

that is so feeble when it ought to be so strong, but do we sufficiently meditate upon God's love for us? Do we realize that His love is a genuine affection, and that its exercise gives pleasure and joy to the divine heart, just as the exercise of our affection gives pleasure and joy to our hearts?

“The Lord takes pleasure in them that hope in His mercy.” That is our position to-day. We have all our hope in the divine mercy. We have no other hope than this, — the tender mercy of our loving God. Then, God takes pleasure in us, delights in us, rejoices in us, rests in us. It is a grand thought, almost too grand to be believed, and yet it is a true thought and ought to be believed. In spite of all our unworthiness, all our sinfulness, all our waywardness, the Lord takes pleasure in us, has confidence in us. You remember what he said to Abraham (the representative of them that hope in God's mercy) before the destruction of Sodom, “Shall I

hide from Abraham the thing that I do?" It is the warm, loving language of One whose deep and confiding affection is centred upon the man before Him, and longs to pour itself out upon its object.

Let us claim this privilege for ourselves, recognizing the tender affection God has for every one of us. It is not the affection of a far-off sovereign, though that would be much. It is the affection of a dear, trusting friend who has so much at stake (if I may use the expression) in us.

Let us dwell upon this thought as we partake of the holy Supper in memory of the Lord Jesus, through whom all this glory comes to you and to me.

XX.

THE BEAUTY OF THE LORD.

IN Psalm XC. Moses uses this expression, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." Five hundred years after Moses, David sang in Psalm XXVII., "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, — to behold the beauty of the Lord," echoing the inspired words of Moses uttered so long before. "The beauty of the Lord" — it is a very strong word in Hebrew. It does not refer to any external beauty; it refers to beauty of soul, and might be translated *sweetness*. "Let the sweetness of the Lord our God be upon us" — beauty of character, affection, tenderness, deep sensitiveness, — all are involved in the word.

At the holy table it is just this thought that is emphasized. We are here to

behold the beauty of our Lord. Our Saviour's wonderful sweetness, his tenderness of affection, can never be too highly appreciated by us. We have never appreciated it as we ought. It is hard for us to realize that the Lord of Glory loves us individually with a deeper, sweeter, intenser love than any human being can feel for us; and yet it is this that we have come here to commemorate, — the dying love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And here I think is the key to all true Christian life, — the appreciation of the sweetness of the Lord Jesus. Wherever that is strong the Christian life is flourishing; wherever that life is languid, the appreciation of the love, the tenderness of Jesus, is deficient. As we partake to-day of the emblems of his dying love, may we all better appreciate the sweetness, the loveliness, the beauty of our Lord!

XXI.

PSALM XXIII. AND THE SUPPER.

THERE is no more delightful work in which the Christian can engage than the work of finding the gospel in the Old Testament, of seeing it hidden away where one would scarcely think of looking for it, showing that the same blessed salvation belonged to the days of Abraham and of David and of ourselves. There has been but one salvation and one Saviour from the beginning.

Thoughts of Psalm XXIII. have been much in my mind to-day. It is a psalm in which the emotions described by the psalmist are the emotions of every Christian who lives close to his Lord. It speaks of a good Shepherd, and Jesus calls himself by that very title. It speaks of wanting nothing, and we at once think of the full supply

that Christ always gives his own, of that grace which is sufficient for every emergency of life. It speaks of paths of righteousness, — not man's righteousness, for it is God who leads through them, — a righteousness not our own, but purchased for us by him who is called "Jehovah our Righteousness," and bestowed on us by the God of our salvation. This truth the world has never discovered. It could never have been conceived of, except by revelation from the Spirit of God.

There is one verse of the psalm which is, I think, especially applicable to Christian experience. It is part of the figurative language of the psalm ; but the psalms were intended for our instruction, and we are to interpret their figurative language and apply it to ourselves. The verse is this: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." What does the psalmist, what does the Holy Spirit who indited the psalm,

mean? He means that in the presence of our spiritual foes, in the presence of our sins, in the presence of our great enemy who is ever trying to lead us into sin, God spreads for us the table of His bounty. We have it symbolized before us in the elements of bread and wine, which represent the gift of gifts, the grace which enables us, weak as we are, to withstand all the assaults of our spiritual foes and to come off more than conquerors. This table spread for us by God is the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom we partake by faith, in whom we become strong against our spiritual foes, and through whom we have power to resist their fiercest attacks.

Anointing with oil is symbolic of spiritual impartation, and represents the spiritual benefits we have in Christ. The cup is the emblem of joy. The verse belongs to us of to-day whom the Good Shepherd is leading in paths of righteousness, for whom God has spread a table in the midst of this wilderness of sin, at which all our wants

are supplied, at which we become strong in Christ, while our cup of joy is running over because of the divine intervention in our behalf.

The last verse of the psalm appropriately follows: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." This last declaration is one to be made our own by all of us who stand to-day on this mount of privilege. It is because the Lord is our Shepherd, because He leads in the paths of righteousness, because He has spread a table for us, because He has filled our cup to overflowing, that we know that we shall dwell in His house forever. Let us keep near to Him; let us live under His roof; let us not identify ourselves with a world that hates Him, but identify ourselves with His people in their life and work.

XXII.

THE TWO COVENANTS.

IN the remarkable and exquisitely beautiful benediction which closes the epistle to the Hebrews are these words, "the blood of the everlasting covenant." What does the phrase mean? It is something in which each Christian is personally interested, for it refers to our blessed Lord, and it is connected with our personal holiness. It is evidently Christ's blood that is spoken of, and Christ's blood always means his sufferings, his atoning death. Why is Christ's death called "the blood of the everlasting covenant"?

When we read the story of God's dealings with man, we find two covenants mentioned. One was the covenant God made with man at his creation, — a covenant stamped upon the intellectual and

moral nature of every man, and assented to by man's intellect and conscience. It ran in this way: "If man will obey his Maker, then his Maker will be his guide and guard forever." This covenant was broken when man disobeyed his Maker. It was not an everlasting covenant, but ended by man's discomfiture by reason of his weakness and wickedness.

The other covenant presents new features. The parties are the same, — God and man, — but the condition is very different. The old one was, "If man will obey Me I will be his guide and guard;" the new one is, "If man will trust Me, I will be his guide and guard." All that God asks from us is the trust of a loving heart. Obedience will flow from this loving trust, but obedience is not the criterion of our salvation. Salvation is brought us through God's everlasting covenant, and all we have to do in that covenant is to trust God.

The "blood of the everlasting covenant"

points us to Christ's sufferings and death as making the way by which these covenant relations could be established, as making it possible for the Holy Spirit to possess our hearts and guide and guard us. It is because of Christ's work that the covenant is an everlasting one. We can rest upon it, knowing that there will never be a time in the far-off future when it will come to an end. Its peace and joy are not like those of our earthly experiences, which always carry with them the thought of their termination. The peace and joy it gives will last throughout eternity. It can never be broken, for God sustains both sides of it. In the first covenant God sustained one side and man sustained one side—man's side broke down. In the new covenant God sustains both sides; He sustains His own side on His throne and man's side in the believer's heart. We have a right to rejoice to-day as those in everlasting covenant with God in Jesus Christ.

XXIII.

THE SUPPER AND DEPARTED SAINTS.

THERE is one thought connected with the Lord's Supper upon which I love to meditate, one of the many delightful aspects which it presents to the believing heart. It is the thought of the presence with us at these scenes of high and heavenly enjoyment of those glorified ones who once sat with us and who have now gone from us. Heaven is not far off but close at hand; and where would these, our friends and companions withdrawn for a little while from our sight, more readily throng about us, where would they contemplate us with intenser interest, than when we assemble around the table of our common Lord?

It is not true that the saints in glory care nothing for the affairs of this earth or for us who are still upon it. Christ stands in the same relation to them as he stands to us. The divine care and protection which we daily need and for which we pray, are theirs, are now bearing in them the full fruitage of glorification. And Christ stands in the same relation to us as he stands to them. He is our Saviour as he is their Saviour. The tie between them and us is still binding because we all are in Christ. They recognize this tie. They know us now far better than when they were bodily with us. They have a deeper interest in watching Christ's work advance in our hearts, for now they have the interest of heaven added to the interest they felt on earth. And they are looking forward to the day of re-union with us with an eagerness of anticipation which we cannot even imagine, for they know what heavenly joy is, and long with unspeakable longing for our participation in its blessed fulness.

Generations pass, but God's work remains. Their earthly part in this work is consummated, but there is much to be done. Since they have the mind of Christ, they must cherish the liveliest interest in the progress of his kingdom, in the triumphs of his grace. Can we not think of them as looking to us to do that work for him which they are no longer able to perform? God, the saints, and the angels are watching us. Let us in the strength gained through this holy ordinance faithfully strive to do our part in Christ's work, by conforming our lives to his will and by commending him to others.

XXIV.

REMEMBERING JESUS' WORDS.

ONE of the many memories we have of Jesus as we sit around his table, is the remembrance of his words. In the last address of the Lord to his disciples, just before his suffering and after he had instituted the Supper for the observance of his Church during all time, and so an address to all his disciples, we find three grand divisions of thought which are appropriate for us to-day. He first speaks of the need and the meaning of affliction; then, of the development of mutual love, of high and heavenly love for one another as a result of affliction; and then, of the power through which the result was attained, the working of the Spirit of God.

In the first, he likens himself to a vine, and his disciples to the vine's branches,

receiving all their vitality from it. He says that if any be separated from him, it is a dead branch, is without life, and fit only for the burning. He tells us that if any branch be apparently connected with the vine, but not actually joined to it, it will be cut off and destroyed. A remarkable statement follows. He tells us that though a branch be joined to the vine, be vitalized, be fruit-bearing, it requires cleansing, and that the heavenly vine-dresser will watch over it and perform the necessary work. The work is not for destruction, but for increased fruit-bearing. The branch is not cut off, but is purged and trimmed and pruned, until its shape, appearance, and strength are such as the gardener wills.

Then the Lord adds, "Now ye are clean through the word I have spoken to you;" as much as to say, "Don't misunderstand what I have told you. You do not need to be cleansed from the core of your being; that took place when you by faith accepted

me as your Master and received the purifying influences of the Holy Spirit. Yet you need cleansing. God will use the knife, but it will be to promote your purity and to increase your fruit-bearing."

God's afflictive providences are the knife with which He is cleansing His people to-day. He wants us to be more firmly united to the vine, to live closer to Jesus, to be more constantly in his presence. "Abide in me" are the Lord's own words, and sorrow and afflictions are parts of the process by which the abiding is to be attained. Why do bereavements come to us? Has God a controversy with us? "No," I answer, "emphatically no!" That is often said, but it is always wrongly said. God has no controversy with His people; His controversy with them was settled at the cross of Jesus. But He has a loving paternal interest in them, a longing for their advancement in spiritual power and in divine knowledge, a desire to have them purer and holier; and so He sends afflictions upon them.

Then, too, He means by this process to quicken our love for one another, our hearty sympathy, our tenderness, our forbearance, our self-denial, so that we may use the mighty engine of our mutual affection for the conversion of the world, forcing it to say in amazement at the spirit we exhibit, — a spirit so different from the world's selfishness, — “See how these Christians love one another.”

And then the last division, — the power to be used. It does not come from human reasonings or from our natural impulses, but from the Spirit of God dwelling in us and teaching us to use the affliction for our growth. Let us remember these things as we sit around the table of our Lord to-day. If the Lord Jesus on the very brink of his sufferings, — sufferings greater than the world ever saw before, greater than the world has ever seen since, — if our dear Lord, going down into the valley of the shadow of death, could for the sake of the joy set before him, the grace he should

give the world, if he could be cheerful, certainly we, in view of his work for us, — the emblems of that work are spread before us, — in view of his loving words of comfort and encouragement, can be joyful and hopeful even while we are undergoing the cleansing and feeling the knife.

XXV.

THE MEMORY-TIME.

CERTAINLY each one of us wishes to possess the greatest amount of spiritual comfort and peace and joy. Well, one way to obtain these is indicated by the Lord's Supper and its key-note, "Remember Jesus;" not only remember him at his table, but remember him in every place throughout the daily life. I am sure it would be highly promotive of our spiritual growth, if we should set aside a certain portion of every day to think over what Jesus has done for us; to think of what we were before he found us and gave us life; to think of what we now are, of what we shall one day be; and to remember that all this is the work of Jesus for us. Let it be entirely apart from our time for Bible-study, our time for prayer, our time for

meditation upon God's truth. Let it be a memory-time, a time to remember our dear Lord. Our love will surely be made more glowing by such an exercise; and when our love is strong and ardent, then comes our obedience, and then the abiding of Christ with us, and then our spiritual comfort and peace and joy are gained.

XXVI.

CONSCIOUSNESS OF GOD'S PRESENCE.

GOD has brought us into a holy familiarity with Himself. We have communion with Christ; we have fellowship with the Father and with the Son. Now, this union between God in Christ and the believer is always existing, the connection, once formed, is never broken; but all believers do not appreciate the fact. Why should not all appreciate it; or rather, how can all appreciate it?

In the fourteenth chapter of John's gospel we read these words of our Lord: "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself unto him." And again: "If a man love

me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." Here is the secret. Every Christian loves Jesus and Jesus loves every Christian; but the manifestation of the Lord's love and all the glory and privilege which that love confers, depends upon the Christian's condition. If the love of Jesus is so strong in the heart that it controls the will and affections, if it has full sway over the entire man, then the close connection between Christ and the believer will be known and felt; then the fellowship between the soul and God will be understood; then a mighty power and an unspeakable happiness will be enjoyed.

There are obedient Christians and there are disobedient Christians. Both classes belong to Christ; but to one Christ is ever present, his glory is ever seen, his love is ever acknowledged; while the other knows nothing of all this, or knows it only by hearsay. God's love and holiness are in every child of God, but they lie dormant

in some. They admit of gradations and degrees, and the New Testament is a constant urging of them to reach a higher grade and a larger degree. You remember that Paul commended the Thessalonians, not for their faith and love and hope, because every Christian possesses these, but for their work of faith, their labor of love, and their patience of hope, — that is, for an energetic faith, for a love that labors in the fulness of power, and for a hope so strong that it makes the soul calm and serene, and lifts it above all the troubles of life.

How shall we gain this; how shall we learn to keep Christ's words; how shall we grow into the consciousness of the presence of our Lord? Let me tell you one of the means. When Josiah brought about his great reformation and purged the land of Judah, it all sprang from a newly-discovered Bible. When Luther set in motion the great reformation of the sixteenth century, it all came from a newly-discovered Bible. All the strength of that

reformation came from a Bible put into the hands of the people, a Bible read, and studied, and searched, and prayed over. We cannot afford to neglect God's word; we cannot afford to be outside of the Bible's reach for a single day. Whenever we separate ourselves from it, our Christian graces wither, our spiritual energy is exhausted, our communion with God is cut off.

What is to be done? Surely none needs to be told. If when we leave this mount of privilege, — and leave it we must, — we would be conscious of the presence of our God, if we would have the daily manifesting of Christ to our souls, we will use God's word honestly and earnestly. As we honor it by our careful and prayerful searching, God will honor us, will fill us with warmer love for Himself, with more ardent zeal in His service; and as we thus keep Christ's words, we shall have those manifestations of his love and power which he is ever ready to give his own.

XXVII.

BEING TROUBLED.

THE question naturally arises in the heart of the believer at the table of the Master, "How can I best show my gratitude to my Lord?" and the ready answer is, "By moulding my life into greater conformity to his will." "Well, then, how shall I obtain this greater conformity? What shall I do that my life may henceforth be upon a higher plane of Christian activity and Christian experience?"

Let me give you one thought in this direction before we separate. When an earthly friend tells us, "Don't be troubled about this matter," we recognize his words as words of sympathy, and we take them for what they are worth. They produce an effect, they give us comfort; but they end there. They do not remove the trou-

ble, nor do they decrease our care and anxiety. They are simply the expressions of a kindly heart which can wish for our release from all that distresses us, but which can do nothing but wish. When Jesus tells us, "Let not your hearts be troubled," a new element is introduced. It is now not a human exhortation, but a divine command. It is full of infinite sympathy, but it also contains an order from the Infinite God. To let our hearts be troubled after He has thus spoken, is not a mark of humility, but is a mark of want of faith.

When the disciples were upon the sea in the storm, and awoke their sleeping Master, he rebuked them. Their act displayed their lack of confidence in him who was in the ship with them. Now, Jesus is in the ship with each of us all the time, and he wants us to have calmness of mind, whatever the storm of earthly care and anxiety. He does not say, "Don't be so much troubled," but he says absolutely,

“Don't be troubled about anything. Don't worry over cares of any kind.” He will take care of everything for us, and will see that nothing touches us which can do us harm.

I know of no better way by which Christ's people can impress the world — and so evangelize the world — than by this quietness of spirit, this want of care and anxiety at all times. It is not carelessness; it is not thoughtlessness; it is not callousness. It is a deliberate and firm resting upon Him who has pledged His almighty power to sustain us everywhere and everywhen.

XXVIII.

HOW JESUS IS GLORIFIED.

IN our Lord's last communications to his nearest disciples, he seems to have opened all that was in his heart and to have spoken to them with greater freedom than he had ever used before. One of his remarkable statements is this: "He, [that is, the Holy Spirit] shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine and shall show it unto you." The Holy Spirit should take of the things of Christ and reveal them to the disciples of Christ, and in this way Jesus would be glorified. Our Lord goes on: "All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore, said I, He shall take of mine and shall show them unto you." The things of Christ which the Spirit shows to us are eternal and divine things, are God's things, are the grandest things in the universe. Christ is glorified as we receive them from the Spirit's hands.

At the table of our Lord we see the fulfilment of a part of this declaration. In these simple elements — elements which the world despises because of their simplicity — the Holy Spirit takes Christ's things (and Christ's things are the Father's things) and shows them unto us, — not to our natural eyes, but to the eyes of our understanding, which he has enlightened. What things does he here show us? Christ's love leading him to give himself for us and our salvation coming out of that love.

What are we to do in return? In his first epistle to the Corinthians Paul says that in the Lord's Supper we believers show forth the Lord's death. This is what we are to do. The Holy Spirit shows us the things of Christ, and we show forth the death of Christ; that is, each of us accepts that death for himself and exhibits the results of that death gratefully and faithfully. This exhibition of our faith Christ wants from all of us, and this is all he wants.

XXIX.

OUR SINFULNESS AND CHRIST'S LOVE.

THE thought of the shed blood of Christ ought always to bring two other thoughts before our minds. The first is the thought of our own sinfulness. No matter how exalted may be our position in the spiritual life, because of our faithful use of the means of exaltation furnished by God's grace, no matter how high our attainments in sainthood may be, we must never forget our native sinfulness. Indeed, it is as we grow older, — not in years, for sometimes as we increase in years we shrink in grace, as we advance in our earthly life we stagnate in our spiritual life, — as we grow older in the life of faith, the life that makes us more and more like our dear Lord, that constantly draws us

nearer and nearer to him, — it is as we grow in this life that we learn to appreciate the fact of our utter unworthiness. “I abhor myself” is a cry that marks a high degree of Christian experience. It does not belong to the beginning of the Christian course; he is far along that course when the saint of the Lord learns how thoroughly corrupt his heart is, and that in his flesh no good thing can be found. It was to provide a way by which our sins might be removed from us, that Christ's blood was poured out; and so, one thought prominent in our meditations to-day is the thought of our sinfulness.

The other thought is that of Christ's love,—the love that came before the pouring out of his blood, that infinite love which is beyond all computation. Do we, Christ's people, appreciate that love as we ought; do we make Jesus the first in our affections; do we turn to Jesus in our times of trial to receive from him the comfort, the guidance, the support, he is

ready to bestow? The thought of the death to which this love led him will surely enkindle our love in response to his; the thought of our sins will make us humble and grateful; the thought of his love will fill us with abundant peace and spiritual joy, and so we shall be made perfect before God.

XXX.

CHRISTIAN BOLDNESS.

A HOLY boldness in claiming and using our privileges in Christ will always help our faithfulness. The converse is equally true: our faithfulness will help our boldness. The two act and re-act upon each other. In the first epistle of John (iii: 21, 22) we read, "Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we boldness [I quote from the Revision] toward God, and whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight;" that is, if we keep God's commandments and do the things pleasing to Him, — not a perfect keeping, not a perfect doing; we can never do this while we are in the flesh, — but if we run in the way of God's commandments, if

we are honestly trying to obey Him, to live as becometh saints, then our hearts do not condemn us; and when our hearts do not condemn us we are bold before God.

I know of no thought more profitable to carry away with us than this of the action and re-action of these truths. Our boldness in claiming our sonship and saintship will help our faithfulness, and our faithfulness in our Lord's service will help our boldness,—the two together forming what God would have us be.

The grace of our Lord is specially represented in the holy Supper. It is the Lord's Supper, not ours; it is the Lord's table, not ours. We are here because he has invited us. The emblems before us symbolize eternal realities,—the love, the sustentation, the strength, the joy, the Lord bestows upon His people. His divine grace does all. We are to lean upon that grace, to magnify that grace; and whenever we are tempted to depend upon

anything else, to correct the error by remembering that God's grace does everything. The remembrance will not make us careless, but will draw us nearer to Christ.

One more thought: on this happy and solemn occasion we are joined by the dear ones who once sat beside us, but who have gone before us to the other world. They have not forgotten us. There is no division between us except the little division caused by the flesh. There is no great gulf fixed between us, but only a little space over which their love and our faith can reach. There is no such thing as death for the sons of God. God is the God of the living, not of the dead. The Abrahams and Isaacs and Jacobs did not die; they could not die. "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." We may not see these departed ones, — we do not see them, — but that does not alter the fact. Our dear ones are living, are present with us, are now joining with us in

praising God for His great work of salvation. It will not be long before we shall be with them and see plainly what we now see through signs, enjoying to the full the knowledge of the divine love and grace which we began to know here.

XXXI.

IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST.

“**B**URIED with Christ in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God.” Perhaps no other figure can so thoroughly present our condition to-day. “Buried with Christ” from the former life, “risen with Christ” into the new life. It is more than a figure; it is a reality; it is the identification of the believer with his Lord.

The identification is a complete one; we died when Christ died; we rose when Christ rose. All that he accomplished by his death, we accomplish; all that he attained by his resurrection, we attain. What means that phrase, “joint-heirs with Christ,” if this be not so? How can we be joint-heirs with him, unless we have the same rights that Christ has? What

means the twenty-fourth psalm, unless we enter heaven as our right, because we enter in him? "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." That will be sung as you and I approach the entrance to the blessed abode. It is because we are one with Christ that we enter into the fulness of joy. There is no thought that will give us more strength against sin, none that will give us greater elevation of soul, none that will more aid us in living a consistent life, than this of our thorough identification with our Lord. It is the best means of growing into his likeness,—it is the only means.

Now, this whole work is the "operation of God." There is nothing natural in the renewing of man's soul. Faith, the human grasp upon the divine work, is necessary; but the work is God's work in contradistinction from all human works. The Lord of glory became man, and at every point identified himself with our race. We

accept what he did for us, and so identify ourselves with God's work. Our simple act of faith brings us into relation with the operation of God; our simple faith identifies us with Christ.

The Lord's Supper is a grand token of this. It is not simply that we eat and drink with him. That is included; there is this thought of intimate friendship; but there is more than this. We sit at our Lord's table and we eat and drink him. We eat his flesh and we drink his blood; and just as the bread and wine we eat become part of our bodies, become so identified with us and we with them that no separation is possible, so is our spiritual feeding upon Jesus the complete identification of our souls with him. The Lord's Supper has this as its central thought. We see his broken body and shed blood in the bread and the wine; we see his death, and know that we are buried with him; and having thus died with him, we rise with him triumphant over sin.

We are Christians notwithstanding our ill-desert, notwithstanding our waywardness, notwithstanding our sinfulness; we are, through the operation of God received by our faith, made one with Christ. In him we died to sin; in him we have risen to newness of life,—a life in which sin has no dominion, a life which sin cannot destroy or mar. This life is our present possession. Because of our deadness to the world and because of our eternal life in Christ, we are the children of God and the heirs of glory unspeakable. Let us hold fast to this truth of our oneness with Jesus in his death and in his life.



XXXII.

ABIDING IN CHRIST.

BOOTH the Saviour and the Apostle John enjoin us to "abide in Christ," and the injunction would not have been given, were there not a possibility of quitting him. It is addressed to Christians, to those who are indissolubly joined to Christ, and yet it bids these to abide in him. No one can carefully collate all the passages in which this phrase is used, without seeing that this abiding is the condition of greatest good to the Christian, that all the efflorescence and fruitage of the Christian's life depend upon it. Now, if we look over the mass of Christ's people in the world, we shall soon find it necessary to do as the Bible does, — divide them into two classes. One of them is full of comfort and peace and sus-

tentation in the hour of trial; the other has none of these things. One is full of the joy of the Holy Ghost; the other scarcely knows what the joy of the Holy Ghost means. One exhibits all the blessed fruits of godly living; the other can hardly be distinguished from the world. What makes the difference? One is abiding in Christ; the other is not.

What, then, is meant by "abiding in Christ"? It is not "believing in Christ," for every Christian believes in Christ, every Christian trusts in Christ as his Saviour. Abiding in Christ must be something different from this. I think it is surrounding ourselves with Christ. We are then in him. It is placing Christ as a wall of defence on every side, and building the wall so high that we are never tempted to look beyond it. We engage in our daily business and we feel Christ in it all; we look at our domestic and social relations, and we see Christ there; we think over our plans for our future

earthly life, and our first thought is the Christ there. And, in this conscious nearness of our Lord, in this sure knowledge of his constant presence with us, in the fuller and fuller appreciation of his beauty, his gentleness, his loving interest in us and for us, all that we do is done as he would have us do, our lives become more and more assimilated to his, and thus more and more conformed to God's will, more and more like God's. We abide in him, and so we bring forth much fruit.

But suppose that we have been careless, neglectful of our duty, wanderers from his side; how are we to abide in him? Well, we certainly will have to adopt some radical measures; we will have to cut off some line of conduct that causes our view of Christ to be defective, to break off some worldly association that causes Christ's presence to be not felt. "The excision will hurt." Yes, but what of that? The excision is for Christ's sake. Let us bear

the pain for Christ's sake. Surely our love for him is strong enough for that. Let us who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and cleansed by it from the power of sin, offer our testimony to his truth by such excision, and show a godless world the power of the new life that is in us. Perhaps, in bearing this testimony, we shall find the shortest road to the abiding in Christ.

XXXIII.

THE INDWELLING OF CHRIST IN THE SOUL.

GOD never intended that His children should go through this world without the knowledge of His divine parentage. God never intended that a single child should be in doubt regarding his relation to his Heavenly Father. The teaching that we are never to be sure of our salvation is not the act of a true faith. We are saved not by anything in us, but by the love and the power of our blessed Lord. Are we not doubting that love and circumscribing that power, when we remain in ignorance of our salvation; do we give Jesus the honor that is due him?

One of the "we knows" in the first epistle of John is this: "Hereby we know that we dwell in him and he in us, because

he hath given us of his Spirit." Every child of God should have this testimony. Every one of us should say, "I know that Jesus dwells in me and that I dwell in him, because of his Spirit which actuates my life. I know that this motive-power is not mine; I know that it is something from God. I know that there has been a new creation, that a new life has been given me, and that all this has come to me as the result of Christ's dwelling in me and of my dwelling in him." It is not modesty that refuses to say this; it is unbelief.

It is a wonderful thing, this dwelling of Christ in the soul and of the soul in Christ; we cannot comprehend it. It is a union such as no earthly union can do more than shadow. It means a oneness with Christ that is marvellous, and yet is a fact.

At the table of our Lord let this thought be our comfort and our strength, imparting new devotion and leading us to a happier Christian life.

XXXIV.

THE EVERLASTING CONSOLA- TIONS.

IN the second chapter of the second epistle to the Thessalonians we read these words: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." God in His love for us has granted us everlasting consolations (of which these are the pledges) against every form of earthly distress, of earthly opposition, of earthly trial. He has taken away all fear of the future, and He tells us that all is beautiful in our heavenly home. He has taken away all dread of death, and shows us that death is a mere form for us. Because of these

wonderful gifts, these high privileges which we possess as saints of the Lord, he expects us to be established in every good word and work.

He has a right to expect this from those to whom he has given everlasting consolations. If we did not have these, if we were always trembling before trials, if we were always fearing the future, if we were always dreading death and all that follows death, we should be in no condition to do good word or work. But God has freed us from all these, and our freedom enables us to do good works and to speak good words for our Lord. Let us remember that we cannot separate our privileges, our responsibilities, and our duties.

XXXV.

THE BELIEVER'S SONSHIP.

OUR true position before God to-day is indicated by the Holy Spirit in these words: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us in that we should be called the sons of God." Let us accept the declaration in all its fulness. We cannot by faith partake of these emblems of Christ's death for us, unless we have a right thus to accept it. It is because we are the sons of God that we are here assembled around our Lord's table. We are here because we love the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour, because we are united to him, the Eternal Son of God. And so our presence here is proof positive that we have a right to appropriate these wonderful words to ourselves. We know what manner of love the Father has bestowed

upon us; we know that we are the sons of God. Let us have this confidence of faith and the gratitude by which a confident faith is always accompanied, as we partake this afternoon of the emblems of the broken body and shed blood of our once crucified but now exalted Saviour.

XXXVI.

THE BELIEVER'S SAINTSHIP.

IN the tenth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews we read, "By the which will we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all." The thought is a fitting one as we sit together this afternoon,—the thought that through the will of God and the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all (of which offering the emblems before us are reminders), we are sanctified, are made saints. Let us grasp the fulness of that declaration of our God. We do not do this. We make excuses to ourselves; we shrink from it. "We saints!" we cry, "we holy ones! Oh, no. There may be saints on earth. There were Saint Paul and Saint John, and Saint Peter and Saint James; but we cannot put ourselves by their side. We cannot be *saints*."

Brethren, such language is the language of unbelief. We are not to look in upon ourselves. No wonder we are sickened at what we find there. We are to look away from ourselves, to look at what God's word tells us, to see what seals of saintship it points out. It is the "will of God;" it is "through the offering of the body of Christ." These are the seals that secure our saintship.

The holy Supper is one of the pledges of this. We did not invent it; it is not an invention of the Church. The Church is only a company of believers, and has no right to invent anything. It is God's ordinance; it is God's pledge. We receive this pledge in humble faith,—not looking at ourselves, but looking at Jesus, and at Jesus only; and thus we emphasize the fact that unworthy as we are, we are the saints of the Lord.

The reason that so many do not comprehend this, and therefore do not enjoy the high delights and blessed privileges of the

position is this,—they look in upon themselves. How many of us were taught to do this! how many of us were taught to hold firmly to the doctrine of self-examination,—something never demanded by God of a Christian! It is true that Paul wrote to the drunken Corinthians who had turned the Lord's Supper into a scene of revelry to examine themselves; but it was their outward lives they were to look at, to see how ignorant they were, how carnal they were, how far from all spirituality they were. All the examination taught in the Bible is God's examination. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts." God must do the work. We do not, we cannot know ourselves. All self-searching will either puff us up or cast us down. We are to look not at ourselves but at Jesus; to look at Jesus all the time, and as we look at him, we know that we are sanctified, that we are saints.

They who know this have a firm foun-

dation on which to build. They who feel their sanctification in Jesus are those who abhor sin, who shrink from its pollution, and who dread its power. They resist temptation and gain the victory over the world. Let us, as we partake of these emblems, remember that we are the saints of God, sanctified by the will of God and by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

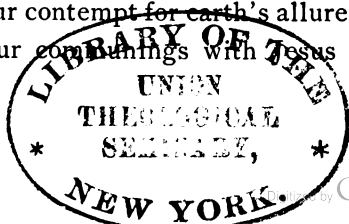
XXXVII.

THE BELIEVER'S GLORY.

IN the remarkable prayer that followed the last discourse of our Lord with his disciples, the intercessory prayer which was the declaring and expounding of his great work for man, in that remarkable prayer Jesus said to his Father with regard to all who should believe on him — and that includes you and me, — “The glory which Thou gavest me, I have given them.” It will take all eternity to get to the bottom of that truth, and yet we may begin to appreciate it here. The glory which God the Father gave God the Son when he was upon earth, that glory has the Son of God given us, — not will give at some future time, but has given now.

What an estimate Christ puts upon our salvation! and how far short do we ourselves come of that estimate! If we could

only reach the thought that is in Christ's mind regarding it, we should be lifted above every form of earthly trial, every form of earthly temptation. All of us here this afternoon have this glory,—the glory that God gave Christ. God recognizes us as possessors of that glory, and the angels recognize us. What can be the meaning of the Scripture that says that our names are written in the heavenly record known as the Lamb's Book of Life, unless it be that we belong to heaven's nobility, that we are numbered with the princes of God? Let us, each for himself, appropriate this glory; let us, each for himself, accept this grand truth; let us, each for himself, live up to its standard, live according to the requirements of our nobility in Christ. This memorial Supper tells us that we are united by faith to God forever, that as one with Christ, we are the sons of God. Let our lives speak for our God and Father by our contempt for earth's allurements and by our closings with Jesus always.



Crosby H.

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At the Lord's Table

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