

Christ in the Bible

Epistles of John

by A. B. Simpson

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Chapter 1

THE LIFE

“For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and declare unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.” (1 John 1:2.)

“This is the true God, and eternal life. (1 John 5:20.)

Could we compress into a single word all the voices of nature and redemption on Easter morning, that one word which would come throbbing from the full pulses of the spring, the flowers, the bursting buds, the songs of birds, the open grave of the risen Lord, and the overflowing hearts and thankful praises of rejoicing saints would be -- LIFE.

And this one significant word is the keynote of the profoundest books in the New Testament, the Gospel and the Epistles of John. The others tell us of the truth and character and righteousness, but these tell us of life. The others tell us what to do and be, but these tell us the secret of what we may become and how we may accomplish the things set before us. The mystery of nature is life. The one thing short of which all man's wisdom and resources reach is life. Science can give us the principles of things and can even construct the forces of nature, but only God can give this strange and subtle thrill which sets all in spontaneous motion and gives it life.

The Sermon on the Mount tells us what an ideal life should be, but the Gospel of John tells us how that ideal may become a reality. It starts with the mysterious secret of the new birth where life begins, and it leads up to the highest developments of the sanctified and glorified life in the age to come. The Epistles of John still more fully unfold the source, the evolution and the outflow of divine life. Let us follow it through five successive stages.

I. CHRIST IS THE ETERNAL LIFE

Before a planet rolled, an insect buzzed, or an angel sang, Christ was Himself the eternal life. Our text has in the original a stronger emphasis than the received version expresses, and it reads literally thus: "We show unto you that life, the eternal, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us." And so our second text more fully expresses the same thought, "This is the true God, and the life eternal." Jesus is the Life and from Him all life has come. The life of nature is the outflow of His creating power. The life of mind and thought and intellect is but a radiation from His infinite mind. The power that moves the universe from the mightiest sphere to the minutest spray is His personal life, for "By him all things consist," and "In him we live and move and have our being." The tint of the Easter lily, the fragrance of the hyacinth, the teeming

life of the vegetable world all come from Him. The birth of every newborn soul is begotten of His life. The Church of every age and clime is the new creation of His life and power. The life of every saint is sustained every moment by the life of his living Head. It is so good therefore, to know that His life is life eternal and that in Him there is a fountain of life that never can run dry, a sufficiency that never can fail. The word "eternal" here does not merely convey the idea of existence that has neither beginning nor ending, but it lifts us into a higher sphere of life. It is a kind of life that belongs to a loftier plane than the things that are seen and temporal. It is a life that is as infinite in its scope as it is enduring in its length; a great, unfathomable ocean of infinite fullness and glorious all-sufficiency. This Easter morning let us adore the Prince of Life, the Living One, the glorious Son of God who stands before us in His radiant and eternal life, proclaiming, "I am he that lives and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore."

II. THE LIFE MANIFESTED

"The life was manifested." This includes the whole story of the incarnation and earthly life of the Lord Jesus. This also covers the meaning of the phrase so often used by John in his Gospel and Epistle, "The Word of life." Here it is in the original, "The Word of the life." Just as a word is the expression of a human thought, so He is to us the expression of God's thought and will, the manifestation to us of what was already there, but unrevealed. Instead of giving us merely a written word He sends to us a living person to exhibit in the actual details of His earthly life the character of God, and His purposes of love to the human race. The story is a familiar one of the missionary who had failed to bring conviction to the savages of the Congo by years of preaching, at last stopped in the midst of a course of lessons on the Sermon on the Mount and announced to the Africans that he was going to live this chapter himself among them. Before the day was over they gave him ample opportunities of doing so by claiming all his worldly goods and he, unresistingly, gave "to him that asked and from him that would borrow turned not away." At nightfall the missionary's wife was in dismay, for her home was stripped and starvation stared them in the face. But that was only the first act in the drama. Before the night was over the natives began to reflect upon the strange example they had witnessed. This man, they said, is not like the traders. He does not ask us for things, but he gives us all he has. He must be God's man, and we had better be careful how we treat him. And so the following day witnessed the scene of yesterday reversed and everything brought back with compound interest. This was the second act. The third act was a great revival, the conversion of a thousand souls, and the organization of the largest church on the Congo. "The life was manifested" and they saw it, and it was an object lesson more mighty than any words. So Christ has manifested in His life the message of the Father and the meaning of the Gospel. His earthly life was a complete pattern of all that God expects a true human life to be. For the first time in the history of the race the Father beheld a man of whom He could say, "In him I am well pleased." Christ's human life covered every side of our experience touching the physical and the spiritual and every earthly relationship that we are called to sustain. The life was manifested in every tint and shade and in every minute detail of a typical human experience so that there is no situation which can arise to which we may not apply the simple watchword, "What would Jesus do?" In our zeal for the great doctrines connected with His death, let us never depreciate the value of His life, and the importance of His perfect example, both as a

revelation of God and as an ideal for humanity.

III. THE LIFE CRUCIFIED

While we must not undervalue the life of Christ, we cannot overestimate the significance of His death. There is a school of teachers who say much about Christian Socialism and the application of Christ's example to the practical details of all our social and secular questions. But these men stop short of Calvary and leave out of view that great event which is the key to all Scripture and all Christian hope and experience. And so we very soon come, even in this deeply spiritual epistle, to that expression which bids us pause with a hush of holy awe and tenderness -- the blood. John has hardly got started in his letter before two deep crimson shades cover all the page, the one the dark stain of sin, the other the precious blood of Christ. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1: 7.) This is the great fact back of Easter and the resurrection, the cross of Calvary, the death of Jesus Christ, the life so divine, so human, so beautiful, laid down in sacrifice and self-surrender, not only as an example of submission and resignation, teaching us how to die; but a ransom for the guilty and a satisfaction to the righteousness of God for the sins of men. With all his deep insight into the spirit and life of Jesus, John, above all the disciples, recognized the sacrificial meaning of His blood. "Behold the Lamb of God," seems to ring out as the undertone of all his beautiful Gospel. "The blood of Jesus Christ" is the background of his epistle. "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood," is the keynote of the oft-repeated redemption song of his sublime Apocalypse. The blood of Jesus Christ just means His life, with all its infinite value given as a substitute and ransom for our forfeited life.

Now it is not enough for us to appreciate in a sentimental way the sufferings of our Lord, and weep in sympathy over His shame and agony -- all this we may do over some pathetic story of human sorrows; all this we may do under the spell of moving eloquence, and yet know nothing of the power of Christ's blood. The death of Christ stands for a great and potential fact, and it is of no value to us until faith enters into partnership with Him in that fact, and knows by personal appropriation "the fellowship of his sufferings." The death of Christ simply means for me that when He died I died, and in God's view I am now as if I had been executed for my own sin and was now recognized as another person who has risen with Christ and is justified from his former sins because he has been executed for them, "For he that is dead is freed from sin." Not only so, it is the secret of my sanctification, for in that cross of Calvary, I, the sinful self, was put to death, and when I lay myself over with Him upon that cross, and reckon my self dead, Christ's risen life passes into me and it is no longer my struggling, my goodness or my badness, but my Lord who lives in me, and through whom, while I abide in Him, I am counted even as He and enabled to walk even as He walked.

Beloved, have you entered into the death of Christ and counted it yours, and through it are you now alive unto Him in "the power of His resurrection"?

IV. THE LIFE RISEN

It is just as wrong to stop at the cross as it is to stop before coming to the cross. It is just as

wrong to have merely a dead Christ as to eliminate the death of Christ from our theology. Christ's death is only the background for His resurrection. The life that was laid down was taken up again and now He stands before us saying, "I am he that lives and was dead." It is not the cross with the Savior hanging on it, but it is the cross on which He hung, but where He hangs no longer; the grave in which He lay, but open now, and the very gateway of life immortal. And so this passage is full of suggestions of the risen Lord. That which our hands handled of the Word of life brings back to us immediately the memory of the morning when He stood among them and said, "Handle me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see me have." There is something infinitely touching in language like this from the pen of John, for he had leaned upon the Master's breast, and doubtless he had proved the reality of his Master's resurrection and claimed once more the familiar place and touch of love.

And this leads us to notice that this expression, the blood of Christ, has a higher and a deeper meaning in connection with the resurrection, for "the blood is the life," and it is the life of Jesus Christ, His risen life as well as His atoning death which cleanses us from all sin. We are "saved by his life," quite as truly as by His death. In one of the ancient types of Exodus we read of an occasion when Moses having sacrificed certain bullocks at the foot of the mount and shed their blood upon the altar, took part of the blood in basins and sprinkled it upon the people, and took it up with him into the mount where they met with God and were accepted because of the blood. This second action of the blood seems to denote the resurrection life of Christ, the life taken back again after it had been once laid down. And so this glad morning we celebrate the victory of our risen Lord and hail Him as the Prince of Life and the Living One, living now as the Conqueror of death, as the possessor of a new life, and as the Source and Head of that new life for all who are united to Him in His death and resurrection.

V. THE LIFE INDWELLING

For this life is not for Himself, but for us, and having risen from the dead He now comes to relive His life in us. This is the secret of sanctification as it is unfolded in the First Epistle of John, and it is the solution of every puzzling problem in connection with that epistle. Perhaps no portion of the New Testament has so many seeming contradictions on the subject of holiness as the First Epistle of John. For example, we are told in the first chapter, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," and again, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." And yet a little later we are told with equal emphasis he that "is born of God does not commit sin; for his seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Now how can these be reconciled? It is all very simple. First it is true that we; that is, the human we, have sin and have sinned. There is no good in us and we have renounced ourselves as worthless and helpless; but on the other hand, we have taken Him to be our life and His life is a sinless one. The seed that He plants in us, as spotless as that beautiful bulb and blossom which you plant in the unclean soil, but which grows up as pure as an angel's wing unstained by the soil around it, belongs to another element and is in its own nature essentially and inherently pure.

The key to this whole mystery is supplied by two verses in this epistle. He that "abides in him

sins not." (1 John 3: 6.) Here is the secret of holiness, it is "not our holiness but Him." There is no account made here of our perfection, but it is only as we cling to Him and draw our life each moment from Him that we are kept from sin. It is the indwelling life.

Again, "Whosoever is born of God sins not; but he that is begotten of God keeps himself, and that wicked one touches him not." (1 John 5: 18.) Here again the same truth is expressed in a different way. The only begotten Son of God, dwelling in us, keeps us from the power of sin and the assaults of Satan; and although the devil often strikes yet we are like the little insect with the pane of glass between it and the bird of prey, "and that wicked one touches us not."

There is one more passage which belongs to this connection. "He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life." (1 John 5: 12.) Here it is our union with the person of the Lord Jesus that constitutes the source of our spiritual life. The secret therefore which Paul had found, "Christ in you the hope of glory," is the secret also of the disciple who leaned yet closer on the Master's breast. God grant that it may be the secret of our life, too, and that we may know in all of His fullness the life eternal, the life manifested, and the life crucified, the resurrection life, and the life indwelling, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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Chapter 2

THE WALK

He that says he abides in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. (1 John 2:6.)

The life naturally leads to the walk. The term describes the course of life, the conduct, the practical side of our Christian life. The reference to the walk of our Lord Jesus Christ recalls His character and life. The character of Jesus stands out as the divinest monument of the Bible and the Gospels.

Even men who do not believe in Him as we do have been compelled to acknowledge the grandeur and loftiness of His incomparable life. Here are some of the testimonies that the world's illustrious thinkers have borne to Jesus of Nazareth. Renan says, "The Christ of the Gospels is the most beautiful Incarnation of God. His beauty is eternal; His reign shall never end." Goethe says, "There shines from the Gospels a sublimity through the person of Christ which only the divine could manifest." Rosseau writes, "Was He no more than man? What sweetness! What purity in His ways! What tender grace in His teaching! What loftiness in His maxims! What wisdom in His words! What delicacy in His touch! What an empire in the heart of His followers! Where is the man, where is the sage that could suffer and die without weakness or display? So grand, so inimitable is His character that the inventors of such a story would be more wonderful than the character which they portrayed." Carlyle says, "Jesus Christ is the divinest symbol. Higher than this human thought can ever go." Napoleon said, "I am a man, I understand men. These were all men. Jesus Christ was more than man. Our empire is built on force, His on love, and it will last when ours has passed away."

But if Jesus Christ thus appears at a distance to the minds that can only admire Him, how much more must He be to those who know Him as a personal Friend and who see Him in the light of love, for

The love of Jesus, what it is,
None but His loved ones know.

The character and life of Christ have a completeness of detail which no other Bible biography possesses. The story has been written out by many witnesses, and the portrait is reproduced in all its lineaments and features. He has traversed every stage of life from the cradle to the grave, and represented humanity in every condition and circumstance of temptation, trial and need, so that His example is equally suited to childhood, youth or manhood, to the humble and the poor, in life's lowliest path, or to the sovereign that sways the widest scepter, for He is at

once the lowly Nazarene and the Lord of Lords. He has felt the throb of every human affection. He has felt the pang of every human sorrow. He is the Son of man in the largest, broadest sense. No, His humanity is so complete that He represents the softer traits of womanhood as well as the virility and strength of manhood, and even the simplicity of a little child, so that there is no place in the experiences of life where we may not look back at this pattern life for light and help as we bring it into touch with our need and ask, "What would Jesus do?"

God has set forth the life of Christ as our example and commanded us to imitate and reproduce Him in our lives. This is not an ideal picture to study as we would some paragon of art. It is a life to be lived and it is adapted to all the needs of our present existence. It is a plain life for a common people to copy, a type of humanity that we can take with us into the kitchen and the family room, into the workshop and the place of business, into the field where the farmer toils, and the orchard where the gardener prunes, and the place where the tempter assails, and even the lot where want and poverty press us with their burdens and their cares. This Christ is the Christ of every man who will receive Him as a Savior and follow Him as an example and a master. "I have given you an example," He says, "that you should do as I have done." He expects us to be like Him. Are you copying Him and being made conformable unto His image? There is but one pattern. For ages God "sought for a man and found none." At last God produced in humanity a perfect type, and since then God has been occupied in making other men according to this pattern. He is the one original. When Judson came to America the religious papers were comparing him to Paul and the early apostles, and Judson wrote expressing his grief and displeasure and saying, "I do not want to be like them. There is but one to copy, Jesus Himself. I want to plant my feet in His footprints and measure their shortcomings by His and His alone. He is the only copy. I want to be like Him." So let us seek to walk even as He walked.

The secret of a Christlike life lies partly in the deep longing for it. We grow like the ideals that we admire. We reach unconsciously at last the things we aspire to. Ask God to give you a high conception of the character of Christ and an intense desire to be like Him and you will never rest until you reach your ideal. Let us look at this ideal.

I. THE MOTIVE OF HIS LIFE

The key to any character is to be found in its supreme motive, the great end which it is pursuing, the object for which it is living. You cannot understand conduct by merely looking at facts. You want to grasp the intent that lies back of these facts and incidents, and the supreme reason that controls these actions. When a great crime has been committed, the object of the detective is to establish a reason for it, then everything else can be made plain. The great object for which we are living will determine everything else, and explain many things which otherwise might seem inexplicable. When the ploughman starts out to make a straight furrow he needs two stakes. The nearer stake is not enough. He must keep in line with the farther one, the stake at the remotest end of the ridge, and as he keeps the two in line his course is straight. It is the final goal which determines our immediate actions, and if that is high enough, and strong enough, it will attract us like a heavenly magnet from all lesser and lower things,

and hold us irresistibly to our heavenly pathway. The supreme motive of Christ's life was devotion to the will and glory of God. "Do you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" This was the deep conviction even upon the heart of the child. (Luke 2:49.) "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." (John 4: 34.) "I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father which has sent me." (John 5: 30.) "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me." (John 6:38.) This was the purpose of His maturer life. "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You gave me to do." (John 17: 4.) This was His joyful cry as He finished His course and handed back His commission to the Father who sent Him. Is this the supreme object of our life, and are we pressing on to it through good report and evil report, caring only for one thing, to please our Master, and have His approval at the last?

II. THE PRINCIPLE OF HIS LIFE

Every life can be summed up in some controlling principle. With some it is selfishness in the various forms of avarice, ambition, or pleasure. With others it is devotion to some favorite pursuit of art or literature or invention and discovery. With Jesus Christ the one principle of His life was love, and the law that He has left for us is the same simple and comprehensive law of love, including every form of duty in the one new commandment, "A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another; as I have loved you." (John 13:34; 15: 12.) This is not the Old Testament law of love with self in the center, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But this is a new commandment with Christ in the center, "that you love one another, as I have loved you." Love for His Father, love for His own, love for the sinful, love for His enemies, this covered the whole life of Jesus Christ, and this will comprehend the length and breadth of life of His followers. This will simplify every question, solve every problem, and sweeten every duty into a delight. It will make our life, as His was, an embodiment of that beautiful ideal which the Holy Spirit has left us in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians: "Love suffers long, and is kind; love envies not; love vaunts not itself, is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil; Rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

III. THE RULE AND STANDARD OF HIS LIFE

Every life must have a standard by which it is regulated, and so Christ's life was molded by the Holy Scriptures. "These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." (Luke 24:44.) It was necessary that Christ's life should fulfill the Scriptures and He could not die upon the cross until He had first lived out every word that had been written concerning Him. It is just as necessary that our lives should fulfill the Scriptures, and we have no right to let a single promise or command in this holy Book be a dead letter so far as we are concerned. God wants us while we live to prove in our own experience all things that have been written in this Book, and to bind the Bible in a new and living edition in the flesh and blood of our own lives.

IV. THE SOURCE OF HIS LIFE

Whence did He derive the strength for this supernatural and perfect example? Was it through His own inherent and essential deity? Or did He suspend during the days of His humiliation His own self-contained rights and powers, and live among us simply as a man, dependent for His support upon the same sources of strength that we enjoy? It would seem so. Listen to His own confession (John 5: 19, 30; 6: 57.) "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do. . . . I can of my own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge. . . . As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eats me, even he shall live by me." This seems to make it very plain that our Lord derived His daily strength from the same source as we may receive ours, by communion with God, by a life of dependence, faith and prayer, and by receiving and being ever filled with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Would we therefore walk even as He walked, let us receive the Holy Ghost as He did at His baptism. Let us constantly depend upon Him, and be filled with His presence. Let us live a life of unceasing prayer. Let us draw our strength each moment from Him as He did from the Father. Let our life for both soul and body be sustained by the in-breathing of His, so that it shall be true of us "In him we live and move and have our being." This was the Master's life and this may be ours. What an inspiration it is for us to know that He humbled Himself to the same place of dependence to which we stand, and that He will exalt us through His grave to the same victories which He won.

V. THE ACTIVITIES OF HIS LIFE

The life of Jesus Christ was a positive one. It was not all absorbed in self-contemplation and self-culture, but it went out in thoughtful benevolence to the world around Him. His brief biography as given by Peter is one of practical and holy activity. "He went about doing good." In His short life of three and a half years He traveled on foot over every portion of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea, incessantly preaching, teaching, and working with arduous toil. He was constantly thronged by the multitudes so that Luke tells us "there was not time so much as to eat." Once at the close of a busy day He was so weary that He fell asleep on the little ship amid the raging storm. Leaving His busy toil for a season of rest, still the multitudes pressed upon Him, and He could not be silent. After a Sabbath of incessant labor at Capernaum, we find Him next morning rising a great while before day that He might steal from His slumbers the time to pray. His life was one of ceaseless service, and even still on His ascension throne He is continually employed in ministries of active love. So He has said to us that we must copy Him. No consecrated Christian can be an idler or a drone. "As my Father has sent me even so send I you." We are here as missionaries, every one of us with a commission, and a trust just as definite as the men we send to heathen lands. Let us find our work, and, like Him, "whatsoever our hand finds to do, do it with our might."

VI. SEPARATION

The true measure of a man's worth is not always the number of his friends, but sometimes the number of his foes. Every man who lives in advance of his age is sure to be misunderstood and opposed, and often persecuted and sacrificed. The Lord Himself has said, "Woe unto you

when all men speak well of you. Marvel not if the world hate you. If you were of the world the world would love his own." Like Him, therefore, we must expect often to be unpopular, often to stand alone, even to be maligned, perhaps, to be utterly and falsely assailed and driven "without the camp" even of the religious world. Two things, however, let us not forget. First let us not be afraid to be unpopular, and secondly let us never be soured or embittered by it, but stand sweetly and triumphantly in the confidence of right, and our Master's approval.

VII. THE SUFFERING LIFE

No character is mature, no life has reached its coronation until it has passed through fire. And so the supreme test of Christ's example was suffering, and in all His sufferings He has, as the apostle Peter expressed, left "us an example, that you should follow his steps." (1 Peter 2: 21.) He suffered from the temptations of Satan for "he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," and in this He has called us to follow Him in suffering and victory, for "in that he has suffered being tempted, he is able also to succor them that are tempted." He suffered from the wrongs of men, and in this He has left us an example of patience, gentleness, and forgiveness, for "When he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judges righteously." Never was He more glorious than in the hour of shame. Never was He more unselfish than in the moment when His own sorrows were crushing His heart. Never was He more victorious than when He bowed His head on the bitter cross and died for sinful men. He is the crowned sufferer of humanity, and He calls us to suffer with Him in sweetness, submission, and triumphant faith and love.

VIII. THE FINER TOUCHES OF HOLY CHARACTER

The perfection of character is to be found in the finer touches of temper and quality which easily escape the careless observer. It is in these that the character of Christ stands inimitably supreme. One of the finest portraits of His Spirit is given by Paul in the third chapter of Philippians as he tells us of His humility -- He might have grasped at His divine rights, but voluntarily surrendered them, emptied Himself and gladly stooped to the lowest place. (Phil. 2: 5-8.) His unselfishness in dealing with the weak and the selfish is finely expressed in Romans 15: 1, 3, 7, "For even Christ pleased not himself ; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached you fell on me." His gentleness and lowliness is finely expressed in His own words, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." The highest element of character is self-sacrifice, and here the Master stands forever in the front of all sacrifice and heroism. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Here we are taught what it means to walk even as He walked. It is the surrendered life. It is the life of self-sacrifice. So the apostle has finely expressed it in Ephesians 5: 2, "Walk in love as Christ also has loved us, and has given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." This is love, self-sacrifice, and this is to God as sweet as the fragrance of the gardens of Paradise. There was something in the spirit of Jesus, and there ought to be something in every consecrated life, which can only be expressed by the term sweetness. It is

with reference to this that the apostle says in 2 Corinthians 2: 15, "We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish." God give to us this heavenly sweetness that breathes from the heart of our indwelling Savior.

The refinement of Jesus Christ is one of the most striking traits of His lovely character. Untrained in the schools of human culture, He was, notwithstanding, as every Christian ought to be, a perfect gentleman. His thoughtful consideration of others is often manifest in the incidental circumstances of His life. For example, when Simon Peter was distressed about the tribute money at Capernaum, and hesitating to speak to the Master about it, the Lord "prevented him"; i.e., anticipated his very thought, and sent him down to the lake to catch the fish with the coin in his mouth, and then added with fine tact, "That take, and pay for me and you," assuming the responsibility of the debt first for Himself to save Peter's sensitiveness. Still finer was His high courtesy toward the poor sinning woman whom the Pharisees had dragged before Him. Stooping down He evaded her glance lest she would be humiliated before them, and as though He heard them not He finally thrust a dart of holy sarcasm into their consciences which sent them swiftly like hounds from His presence, and only when they were gone did He look up in that trembling woman's face, and gently say: "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more." So let us reflect the gentleness and courtesy of Christ, and not only by our lives but by our "manner of love" commend our Christianity and adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

There is one thing more in the spirit of the Master, which He would have us copy, and that is the spirit of gladness. While the Lord Jesus was never hilarious or unrestrained in the expression of His joy, yet He was uniformly cheerful, bright, and glad, and the heart in which He dwells should likewise be expressed in the shining face, the springing step, and the life of overflowing gladness. There is nothing more needed in a sad and sinful world than joyous Christians. There was nothing more touching in the Master's life than the fact that when His own heart was ready to break with the anticipation of the garden and the cross, He was saying to them, "Let not your heart be troubled. Let my joy remain in you and your joy be full." God help us to copy the gladness of Jesus, never to droop our colors in the dust, never to hang our harps upon the willows, never to lose our heavenly blessing or fail to "rejoice evermore."

IX. THE POWER OF HIS LIFE

But we must hasten to notice finally some of the positive elements of forcefulness and power in the life of Jesus. It is possible to be sweet and good and yet to be weak and unwise. This was not the character of Jesus. Never was gentleness more childlike, never was manhood more mighty and majestic. In every element of His character, in every action of His life, we see the strongest virility and we recognize continually that the Son of man was indeed a man in every sense of the word.

Intellectually His mind was clear and masterful. There is nothing finer in the story of His life than the calm, victorious way in which He answered and drove from His presence the keen-witted lawyers and scribes who hounded Him with their questions, and who were successfully humiliated and silenced before the jeering crowd until they were glad to escape from His

presence, and after that no man dared to ask Him any more questions. So majestic and impressive was His eloquence that the officers which were sent to arrest Him forgot all about their commission as they stood listening to His wonderful words, and went back to their angry masters to exclaim: "Never a man spoke like this man." There was about Him a dignity which sometimes rose to such a height that we read on one occasion as He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, "As they beheld him they were amazed, and as they followed they were afraid." In the darkest hour of His agony He reached such a height of holy dignity that even Pilate gazed with admiration, and pointing to Him even amid all the symbols of shame and suffering, he cried: "Behold the man!" Even in His death He was a conqueror, and in His resurrection and ascension He arose sublime above all the powers of death and hell.

In conclusion, how shall we walk like Him?

1. We must receive Him to walk in us for He has said "I will dwell in them and walk in them."
2. We must study His life until the story is burned into our consciousness and impressed upon our heart.
3. We must constantly look upon the picture and apply it to every detail of our own conduct and so "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."
4. Do not be discouraged when you meet with failure in yourself. Do not be afraid to look in the glass and see your own defects in contrast with His blameless life. It will incite you to higher things. Self-judgment is the very secret of progress and higher attainment.
5. Finally, let us ask the Holy Spirit, whose work it is to make Jesus real to us, to unveil the vision and imprint the copy upon our hearts and lives, and so shall we be "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Christ in the Bible

Epistles of John

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 3

THE FATHER

"I write unto you, little children, because you have known the Father. (1 John 2: 13.)

"Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. (1 John 3: 1.)

The Fatherhood of God is one of the most misused and abused religious phrases of current literature. The Bible recognizes no divine paternity apart from our relation to Jesus Christ. Indeed, the doctrine of God's Fatherhood of individual saints was even unknown to the Old Testament writers and saints. God was recognized as the Father of Israel as a nation, but no individual Hebrew ever dared to appropriate the name to himself. It is the special revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Neither knows any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." It is He who has taught us to say "Our Father which art in heaven." No wonder, therefore, that it was received by His first disciples as a truth of the highest importance and regarded by them with wondering veneration. "Behold," exclaims even the beloved disciple who had grown familiar with the love of God. "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." The exclamation in the original is in an unusual form and expressive of the strongest emphasis and the most profound admiration. No wonder that the Greenland chief when first he heard it exclaimed, "It is too great, rather let me kiss His feet." Let us look at this wonderful love.

I. WHAT THE DIVINE FATHERHOOD MEANS

1. God is not our Father by creation. He is our Creator, and the Creator of all things. But this is not Fatherhood. Speaking of the sparrows the Lord Jesus says, "Your heavenly Father feeds them." But He is not their heavenly Father. Human beings by nature are not the children of God, but our Lord very plainly tells them that they are the children of the devil. "You are of your father, the devil." Men do not like this and so they try to change their pedigree in the church registers. But their names will not be found in the family record of the skies. The only children that God will ever recognize are those that have been born of the Holy Ghost through Jesus Christ.

2. We are not the children of God by a special act of adoption. Earthly families are sometimes increased by the addition of the foundling child, or the drawing up of legal papers by which a fatherless orphan is added by adoption to the family circle. This may be all very well as a theological discussion and diversion, but it never can satisfy a heaven-born soul. No, it is said with beautiful force in our second text not only that we are "called the sons of God," but in the

revised version it is added "and we are."

3. We are the sons of God by the new birth. We have been begotten of the Father and quickened by the Holy Ghost into a divine life which makes us partakers of the very nature of God Himself. We have all heard of the little fellow who lost heart in his home and became reckless in his life because he had listened to the street boys who had told him he was only a little foundling. When at last his mother learned the secret of his waywardness, and took him in her arms and reassured him, he looked up through his streaming tears and asked her again and again, "Am I really your very own boy? Did you born me?" It was a child's expression, but back of it was an instinct as deep and high as our eternal hope. Thank God that hope is not disappointed, for "as many as receive him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God. . . . which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

4. We are the sons of God through union with Jesus Christ. We are not only born into the family, but we are married into the family. We are not only children of second birth and a lower grade, but we are the first-born sons of God even as He, our elder Brother. In Oriental countries, and indeed in all the older social conditions of the world, the eldest son usually inherits a larger fortune and a higher dignity than his brothers, but by our union with Christ we all rise to the place of the elder Brother and the first-born ones. It was this that He meant when He taught us to say, "Our Father which art in heaven," for the "our" consists of Christ Himself and His brethren. It was this that He meant when He hastened to say just after His resurrection, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." This is the meaning of that precious assurance, "Because you are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Not only have we the legal status of sons, but we have the very heart and spirit of the Son of God Himself, feeling toward the Father the very same sentiments of confidence and love that He felt, and entering in actual experience into the very spirit of His own Sonship. This is the scriptural doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. The divine family circle is not a mongrel crowd of promiscuous souls singing the heathen song:

Father of all in every age,
In every clime adored,
By saint, by savage, or by sage
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord.

No, it is a select and beautiful company of redeemed and called-out ones all bearing the likeness of the one blessed Head, and deriving their heavenly life from the very heart of Jesus Christ Himself. These are the children of God, and these He is not ashamed to call His brethren.

5. We are the children of God by the witness and seal of the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." He does this by imparting to us the divine consciousness of our union with Christ and the filial spirit which instinctively cries "Abba, Father." He does not bear witness to our spirit as one person would to another, but conjointly with our spirit by coming into it and breathing into us the feelings and sentiments of a loving,

trusting, happy child. He gives us a filial heart. He makes us to feel at home in our Father's presence. He enables us to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. He sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, and He gives to us the simplicity, freedom, and holy affection of little children, so that we know we are the sons of God, and it is natural for us to love and trust our heavenly Father even as it was for the Lord Jesus Himself. Such then is the meaning of sonship.

II. ITS PRIVILEGES AND BLESSINGS

1. It brings us the divine nature. It puts into us a new and higher life. This makes all our experience delightfully spontaneous and easy. We do not have to act against our nature, but according to our nature. There is something within us which causes us to walk in our Father's will and love to please and obey Him.

2. The peculiar love of the Father is one of the privileges of sonship. God has a love for the world which is very strong, but it is the love of compassion. It was strong enough to induce Him to send His only begotten Son to die for sinful men, but it is a very different love that He has for His children. This is the love of complacency. It is of this that it is written: "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." This is a love that is based on something in His own heart. The instinct of fatherhood and motherhood in us loves our children not because they are beautiful, dutiful or good, but because they are ours. We are bound to them. We cannot cease to be part of their life, and they cannot cease to belong to us. Our heart follows them in their sufferings and even in their sins. Their degradation is our dishonor. Their honor is our delight. Their pleasure is to us a double pleasure. So the Father loves His children. The measure of His love to us is His love to Christ. As He delights in the eternal Son so He delights in all His sons and daughters. Our Savior's parting prayer was infinitely tender and sacred in that last utterance in which He gives away to His beloved disciples the very love the Father had to Him, "That the love wherewith You have loved me may be in them, and I in them." Dear child of God, do you believe this? Do you realize it? Will you let it comfort you, consecrate you, and make it impossible for you henceforth either to doubt or grieve your Father's love?

3. Intimacy, access, and fellowship. The child has the freedom of the house. In the old wartime when no one else could get the President's ear there was one that could always get inside, and many a message did he carry unofficially to the Chief Magistrate of the country, and many a troubled heart obtained a hearing through that irregular boy. No official sentries and no door fastenings stood between him and his father's arms. And so we have access to the Father. We may draw near. We may abide in the secret place of the Most High and dwell under the shadow of the Almighty. We may have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. There is no moment when His ear is not open to our cry. There is no situation where we may not claim His presence. And even when our lips cease to pray, and our communion no longer expresses itself in articulate language, there is a silent fellowship of the filial heart upon the Father's breast, which is deeper and sweeter than even the words of prayer, where we may abide continually in the communion of the Holy Ghost.

4. The protection and provision of the Father's house. We are entitled as children to sit at the King's table and to enjoy His almighty care. "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" And in the higher realm of spiritual blessings, "How much more shall he give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" To His own beloved children He says: "Son, you are ever with me, and all that I have is yours." Have you ever come to some hard place in life and sat down and thought, If my father were only here, my earthly father, who was always so kind and helpful, and if he had the power to help me in this hour of need, there is nothing that he would not do for my relief? But God is my Father more truly than he. He loves me better and His power is unlimited, His resources are unbounded. Will He not, therefore, do for me all that my earthly father would if he were here? And your heart has become encouraged. Your faith has grown bolder and you have been able to take from God the supply of all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Why should it not be ever thus? Has He not said to us in the very earliest teachings of the Son of man, "Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things? Seek you first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

5. The training of a child and the discipline and education of the family -- this is one of the privileges of the sons of God. There comes a time in the life of the child when soft indulgence must give place to sterner discipline, and when the little one must learn the difference between right and wrong, self-will and obedience, indolence and duty. Sometimes the father's heart has to be sorely pained by the penalty that hurts him much more than it does his child, but he loves too wisely to neglect the training of his child, and some day that child will bless his memory for a father's firm and faithful love. So God, our Father, sends us to the school of discipline, of suffering, of life's severe experience, of the Holy Spirit's faithful training. Therefore in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews we have seen that the word chastening literally means child training, and it is introduced as the highest proof of the Father's love, and although not now joyous, but often grievous, nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby. Let us trust our Father's faithful love even here, and when we cannot understand His hand let us always lie close to His heart and be like the child whom his father was about to strike with the rod of chastening, when with one bound the little fellow sprang into his father's arms where the rod could no longer reach him.

6. The inheritance of glory is the right and privilege of every child. "If children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." And therefore the children of God, like their elder Brother, are often hidden in the present world, and it is true as the apostle says, "Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

There is a day spoken of in the eighth chapter of Romans as the day of the manifestation of the sons of God. It is the day when they shall emerge from their obscurity, and when the King's children who have been in disguise, going to school in the lowly places of trial and suffering,

shall come forth into the light and appear in all the glory of their royal robes and everlasting crowns. Then it shall little matter what the world thought of us once, and how the heart ached and waited through the dark and trying hour. It shall be forgotten in a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

And so as we enter into the full realization of all that our sonship means, duty and trial will become easy and light, and the song of hope will be heard above the sorrowful echoes of the veil of tears. Then it will be so easy to let the world go by and even to surrender our rights and often suffer our wrongs because of the joy set before us.

Just after the close of the Civil War, the army that had marched in triumph through Georgia under General Sherman was to be reviewed in one of our great cities and march in triumphal parade. The night before the parade General Sherman called General Howard to him and said: "You know, General, you were the head of one of the divisions that marched with me through Georgia, and you ought rightfully to ride at the head of your division in the parade tomorrow. But I find that through political influence a plan is being pressed to have the general who preceded you in the command represent the division, and as political pulls are sometimes stronger than personal rights, I hardly know how to meet the case." Very naturally General Howard replied, "I think I am entitled to represent my division, as it was I who led them to victory." "Yes," said General Sherman, "you are, but I believe you are a Christian, are you not? And I was wondering if Christian considerations might not lead you to make an exception and even to yield your rights for the sake of peace." "Oh," said good General Howard, "If it is a matter of Christian consideration, of course I yield, and he can have the place." "All right," said General Sherman, "I will so arrange, and will you please report to me tomorrow morning at nine o'clock and you shall ride with me at the head of the army."

Beloved, that is the way that the Father someday will make up for our disappointments and wrongs. Let us trust His everlasting love. Let us love Him as our Father. Let us be followers of God as dear children. Let us obey implicitly His commandments which are "for our good always," and let us go forth into good report or evil report, unmoved because He is ever whispering to us through the darkness or through the light, "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love." "Son, you are ever with me and all that I have is yours."

Christ in the Bible

Epistles of John

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 4

THE ANOINTING

“But the anointing which you have received of him abides in you, and you need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in him.” (1 John 2: 27.)

After the revelation of the Son and the Father, the person and work of the Holy Spirit naturally follows. This is presented under the significant symbols of the anointing.

I. THE ANOINTING OF JACOB

The first reference to the rite of anointing is in connection with the vision of Jacob in the twenty-eighth chapter of Genesis, where God first appeared to the lonely wayfarer in Bethel's cave as he slept on his stony pillow, and revealed to him the mystic ladder that reached from earth to heaven. When he awoke from his wondrous sleep he realized that he had met with God, and his first act was to anoint the stone on which he had rested his head as a sacred shrine and enter into his first covenant with God. This anointing was a sign of dedication. He was setting apart his first sanctuary to God. It was a very imperfect consecration, full of doubts and fears. It was the first touch of the Holy Spirit in the awakening of the new life. And so it stands for the work of the Holy Ghost in calling the soul to God in the experience of conversion. There was the recognition of God and the consecration of service to Him. But there was the accompaniment of much bondage and unbelief. "Surely the Lord is in this place," he cries, "and I knew it not;" but he adds with all the force of the old natural heart, "How dreadful is this place!" And then his consecration of the tenth to God is only Old Testament consecration, for the New Testament teaches us to give not a part, but the whole. But even this he accompanied with a doubtful if, "If the Lord will be with me, etc., then the Lord shall be my God." So the anointing first comes to us revealing God to the soul and calling us to yield ourselves to Him as our covenant God. But the heart still has its "ifs" and its "buts" and has much to learn before it is ready for the full anointing and indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

II. THE ANOINTING OF THE TABERNACLE

"And you shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that is therein, and shall hallow it, and all the vessels thereof; and it shall be holy. . . . Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." (Ex. 40: 9, 34.) We are now coming to the deeper meaning of this blessed anointing. The tabernacle here represents the consecration of our body and life to the Lord, and the anointing denotes the baptism and filling

of the Holy Spirit.

This incident marked the beginning of the second year of the history of Israel. During the first year the Holy Spirit had been present with them through the cloud as it marched before and followed behind, or sometimes covered the brow of Mount Sinai. Now, however, after the tabernacle was anointed the cloud came down and entered into the sanctuary and took its permanent residence within the Holy of Holies as the Shekinah that hovered between the cherubim. God was now residing in the midst of Israel. So we come to the second year of our spiritual record, and the Presence that has led us to Christ and guided us from a distance, now becomes resident in our inmost being, and the promise is fulfilled, "I will dwell in them and walk in them." Our body becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost and the anointing abides in us.

All this was preceded by a series of acts of obedience and consecration. The preceding chapter tells in full detail of the successive steps that Moses took in finishing and setting apart the various sections of the tabernacle and its furniture. Again and again we read the phrase, "As the Lord commanded Moses, so did he," until at last it is added, "According to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel made all the work. And Moses did look upon all the work, and behold they had done it as the Lord had commanded, even so had they done it . . . So Moses finished the work." Then it was that the cloud descended and the Spirit came. So we shall find that there are steps of obedience and consecration to be taken, the heart and the life surrendered to God in every detail as the Lord has bidden, and when we have yielded our members and all our being completely, then the Holy Ghost comes down, and comes in, and makes the surrendered heart His dwelling place and His peculiar possession.

III. THE ANOINTING OF THE PRIESTHOOD

The next anointing of which we read is the anointing of the priesthood represented by Aaron and his sons. "And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him. . . . And Moses took of the anointing oil, and of the blood which was upon the altar, and sprinkled it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon his sons' garments with him; and sanctified Aaron, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him." (Lev. 8: 12, 30.)

Here the figure advances from the anointing of a building to the anointing of living persons, and still more perfectly represents the pouring of the Holy Spirit upon the consecrated believer. For we are all recognized as a holy priesthood. Aaron represented the Great High Priest and his sons represent believers as the priests of God. Their anointing in conjunction with Him teaches us that we are baptized with the Holy Ghost in union with the Lord Jesus Christ. We share His priesthood and His anointing. Therefore the name Christ is given to Him, meaning the Anointed One, and the name Christian applied to us means anointed ones. The true Christian is one that has received the anointing of the Holy Ghost and is thus a Christ one.

In the thirtieth chapter of Exodus we have a very full account of the preparation of this anointing oil and its application. There were certain ingredients in it which were known, and certain which were unknown. Even so the person of Christ, the Anointed One, is not only human, and thus

familiar to us in His human nature, but there is also the deep mystery of His deity. The anointing oil was to be separated from all other preparations as a holy anointing oil, and under the most solemn penalties all counterfeits or imitations were prohibited. "Whosoever compounds any like it, or puts any of it upon a stranger, shall even be cut off from his people." (Ex. 30; 33.) It was carefully guarded from desecration by being applied to any improper object. "Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured," was the sacred restriction and prescription. (Ex. 30: 32.) And so the Holy Ghost is given only to the separated and consecrated life. He cannot be received by the carnal heart. He will only dwell with the holy. Nor may we imitate Him or counterfeit His blessed influences. Man's modern imitations of divine things He will not acknowledge. The operatic music, the eloquence born of mere emotion, the worship inspired by earthly feeling, the fervor that is wrought up by our feelings, the revival that is the product of human sensation and excitement -- all these things are but human counterfeits and strange fire. But in contrast with them then there is a divine anointing, a sacred fire, a heavenly inspiration, a touch of the supernatural and divine that God will give to the holy heart and the consecrated life, and through which we may draw near in our heavenly priesthood and know the living power of God as truly as when His presence shone in the Shekinah flame and the pillar of fire. Have we received this divine anointing? And has it brought us near to God in fellowship and ministry, making us the priests of God and ministers of the heavenly sanctuary?

This ancient anointing was for service, and so all true ministry must begin with the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Without that baptism even Jesus would not presume to preach the message of His Father, and without it our ministry is a presumption and a failure. Only through the Spirit's power can we perform any service which will be effectual to man or acceptable to God. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God gives: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen." (1 Peter 4: 11.)

IV. THE ANOINTING OF THE LEPER

In Leviticus 14: 15-18 we find a new link in this chain of blessing. It is the lowest link attaching all the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost to the lowest and vilest sinner. The leper represents the full effects of the curse both upon the body and the spirit of the sinner, and his condition is one of utter helplessness and ruin. In this condition he is brought unto the priest, and the first steps in his salvation and restoration are connected with the atoning blood. The sacrifice of the two birds represents the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The sprinkled blood upon the right ear, the right thumb, and the right foot tell of the quickening life of the Lord Jesus. Then comes the anointing oil mingled with the blood, representing the power of the Holy Ghost applied in turn to the different members of our being, until at last when the right ear, the right thumb, and the right toe have been successively anointed, the rest of the oil, representing the fullness of the Spirit, is poured upon the head, and the whole being bathed in the Spirit's power. Here we see the fullness of the Spirit placed within reach of the vilest sinner, until step by step he rises from the depths of misery to the heights of grace and glory, and where sin abounded grace does much more abound. This is an uttermost salvation. It saves from the

uttermost to the uttermost. It is the only salvation large and full enough for lost humanity. Is there a poor leprous life reading these lines? Beloved, this anointing is for you, and if you will receive it the measure of your fall will become the measure of your restoration and your hope, and, "As sin has reigned unto death, so shall grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

V. THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

During the ministry of our Lord we are told that He sent forth His disciples not only to preach the Gospel, but also to heal the sick. And in closing the New Testament canon we find the apostle James, who was the head of the apostolic council at Jerusalem, and especially fitted to represent the ecclesiastical action of the New Testament Church, committing to the Church of the present dispensation the permanent ordinance of anointing for healing. "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." This was the divine prescription for sickness among the children of God in the Early Church, and it only fell into disuse when the spirit of faith disappeared through the entrance of worldliness and unbelief. The anointing here is evidently a religious and not a medical application. It is administered by an elder and in the name of the Lord, and it is not the anointing, but the prayer of faith that saves the sick, and the Lord that raises him up. Nothing but the most strained and specious and plausible reasoning can turn aside the plain meaning of the passage, and construe it as a medical prescription. To attempt this is to handle the Word of God deceitfully and find an excuse for our unbelief and failure. In the present day God has too frequently fulfilled this promise to make it possible to deceive any longer the candid inquirer. But let it not be forgotten that divine healing, real and blessed as it is, is not a matter of mere rite or ceremony, or even intellectual faith, but the work of the Holy Spirit and connected with the divine anointing. It is nothing less than the life of Christ in our body, the very quickening of the divine Spirit in our mortal frame. We cannot come to Christ as they did in the days of His flesh, as a visible and material presence. We can only approach Him through the Holy Ghost and know Him as the Spirit reveals Him. Therefore a spiritual preparation is indispensable to receiving Him as our Healer. There is a double anointing. First the heart becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost, and then it becomes also true: "Know you not that your body is the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" Beloved, have we received the physical anointing, of the divine Spirit? This will not only bring us healing from disease, but a higher type of physical life even in health. It unites us with the risen Lord and lifts every function and force into blessed fellowship with His risen life and power.

Such are some of the scriptural illustrations of the divine anointing. Turning from all figures of speech, which might be largely increased, it means simply this: that the third person of the Godhead who dwelt in the Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry, comes to dwell in us when we yield ourselves fully to His possession and control. He brings to the heart the revelation and realization of our union with the Lord Jesus. He quickens us with His life, comforts us with His love, and illuminates us with the vision of His person and the light of His truth. He makes the Word of God a living reality to our spiritual consciousness. He becomes to us the spirit of

peace, joy, and rest. He teaches us to pray and inspires our communion with God. He gives us our messages and clothes them with power. He becomes to us the spirit of purity and holiness. He fills the heart with love, and the life with sweetness and beneficence. Even our very body He quickens with divine strength, lifts us above the power of disease, and makes us partakers of the risen life of our glorified Lord. He is our Guide and guards us from seducing spirits and from dangers seen and unseen, and the promise becomes true, "The anointing which you have received of him abides in you, and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in him."

Beloved, are we thus abiding and does the anointing so abide? Or have the channels become obstructed and is the divine life interrupted by some hidden cause? Let us watch and pray. Let us search and try our ways to turn again unto the Lord. And if our communion is interrupted, our peace is broken, our power is gone, our spiritual life waning and unsatisfactory, we may find, we surely shall find the cause if we will dare to be true.

Someone relates the fact that when the water supply in a certain public institution failed and an examination of the premises was made, it was found that the water was all right in the reservoir and the main supply pipe, but that at the point where it connected with the house a great toad had gotten into the pipe, and feeding on the water as it flowed by, had grown so big that he had completely blocked the channel. Is it not sometimes true that some of the devil's brood have got into the channels of faith, obedience, and of communion, and while the living water is still flowing as freely as ever around us it cannot enter our heart or satisfy our being because the channels are clogged by worldliness or sin? Therefore with peculiar fitness in this chapter has the apostle warned us against the world and all its unholy lusts as the enemy of God and the great obstruction to the spiritual life of the believer. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." May His wisdom make us watchful and wise. "And now, little children, abide in him, that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

Christ in the Bible

Epistles of John

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 5

THE LOVE OF GOD

“He that loves not knows not God; for God is love.” (1 John 4:8.)

It was peculiarly appropriate that it should be given to John, the beloved disciple, to unfold the Father's love. It was in keeping with the principle which he himself has announced in this chapter, that as it takes sin to know sin, so it requires love to understand love. "He that loves not knows not God." John was the disciple of love and therefore the revealer of love. In this passage he has given to us the seven great principles of divine love.

I. GOD IS LOVE

God is not justice. God is not wisdom. God is not power. God has all these attributes but none of them is great enough to constitute His essence. But love is His very nature and in love all other attributes find their completeness. Just as in the process of color printing all the cardinal colors when combined produce a perfect white; so when all the attributes of God meet they form the immaculate purity of divine love. Wisdom without love would be harsh. Justice without love would be severe. Power without love would be terrific. But love modifies, directs, and softens every one of them, and blends them into the beautiful harmony of the divine character.

We should, therefore, always recognize the love of God as His supreme purpose in everything He does. He always loves, and He loves all as much as it is possible under the circumstances for them to receive. And when His love cannot avail, even then His heart is full of sorrow and compassion and He gives them at least the love of pity if not of approval. This is made very plain and very pathetic in our Savior's bitter tears over Jerusalem when they would not let Him save them; at least He would let them know that He loved them still. Perhaps it will be true in the last great day that the final remembrance which lost men will have of the Father's face and the Savior's heart will be a look of infinite tenderness, and perhaps once more a flood of tears.

We should look at everything that comes to us in the light of love, and believe that God means it for good. This may not appear at first. Again as in the process of color printing, the first impression may be crimson and the dark tints may follow, one upon the other, but when the last color has been put on it will always result in the spotless white. So if God's providence has seemed so far to be strange and painful, wait a little longer. The process is not finished. Trust Him through every testing and when His work is finished, you, too, like Jacob, will be compelled to say, "He redeemed me from all evil," or, like Paul, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

II. CHRIST IS THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S LOVE

Had it been left for us to read the revelation of God upon the face of the earth and sky we could certainly have discerned two mighty words in letters of light and fire, God is. But there the sentence would have paused and the universe waited for the next great word. The sunshine could have painted goodness there. The blossoms of the spring might have added richer tints to the same word. The joyous festival, the laughter and the song of youth -- all these might have emphasized the same gracious inscription. But as we look and wait, lo, there comes the angry lightning, the wild tempest, the sinking vessel, the raging conflagration, the funeral procession, the deep, dark, lonely grave, and lo, the writing is blotted out, and instead we read, God is power, God is justice, God is mystery, and the heart falls back in helplessness and perplexity and cries, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him;" "Show us the Father, and it suffices us." But now another hand takes up the pencil and the brush and writes across the sky, the earth, the guilty conscience, the broken law, the gloomy grave, the very judgment seat, God is love.

So long as man is innocent, so long as the fact of sin does not intrude, nature reveals nothing but beneficence. But when we come up against the fact of disobedience to law and personal wrong on the part of the sinner, all this is changed. Nature has nothing but retribution and pain for the transgressor. It is just here that love comes in with its glorious triumph and finds a way by which even sin can be forgiven and sinners loved and saved by a holy God. The very scene where divine love most sublimely triumphs is the fall and the ruin of the human race, and the dark cloud of man's condemnation becomes the background on which Calvary and redemption have written in eternal luster, "God is Love." Just as the Gulf stream flows northward through the cold Atlantic, warming its waves into tropical mildness until at last it embraces in its bosom the icebergs of the pole and melts them in its embrace; so God's love was poured through the dark waters of time and met man's guilt in the embrace of its mighty sacrifice and melted it away. And so John adds, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. . . . And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world."

III. LOVE BEGETS LOVE

It is the love of God to us that calls forth our love to God. "We love him, because he first loved us." (1 John 4: 19.) Here is the divine order of Christian morals and Christian holiness. Here is the essential distinction between law and grace. Here is the key to all true spiritual motives. We never can work up our love to God by trying or fearing. Only when we fully believe in His love to us will our love flow forth spontaneously in return. Therefore, redemption meets man with unconditional mercy, forgives him without his deserving it, and finds that as the fruit of forgiveness a new life and a responsive love flow from the ransomed soul and make every service and sacrifice a delight.

The proud English Queen tried in vain to break the spirit of her would-be assassin by

threatening her with punishment, or even by asking her what she would do if she received a pardon. "Madam," said the haughty French maiden, who had sought her life, "Grace with conditions is no grace at all." "Then," said the Queen, "I forgive you without conditions," and the girl fell at her feet and cried out with tears of gratitude, "Then I am your servant forever." But the unsought, unmerited love of God in Christ breaks down the sinner's heart. Well may he say as the Cornish miner is made to say in the old ballad:

There's a word that burns in my heart like a fire,
 And will not let me be.
 Jesus, the Son of God, who loved
 And gave Himself for me.

IV. LOVE IS THE ORGAN BY WHICH WE KNOW LOVE

"He that loves not knows not God; for God is love. . . No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and his love is perfected in us." Our love is the alphabet by which we understand God's love. Hearts, therefore, that know little of love know but little of God. Therefore God has given us every human tie of love and affection as an organ of divine knowledge that through these we might rise to the comprehension of His greater love. I have known two hearts to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost in the moment after they met after a long separation, and both bowed together at the throne of grace. As those two brothers mingled their tears and wept on each other's necks, the blessing for which their frigid hearts had been breaking for many years found right of way through the open channels of love, and poured in until the love of man overflowed into the mighty billows of the love of God.

On the other hand I have known a soul so ignorant of human love that she could not comprehend at first what I meant when I told her of the love of God. She had been poor, neglected, abused, and wronged so long that her hand was against every man and every man's hand was against her. I found her in the outskirts of the city, one of our neglected poor, and tried to lead her to the knowledge of Jesus. But she looked up in my face and said "I do not understand you. Nobody ever loved me and I do not even know what love means." I went home that night to my proud and wealthy church and I told them I wanted them to make a poor sister understand the meaning of love. And so they began one by one to visit her, to give her little tokens of their interest and regard; until at last one day, months later, as I sat in her humble room, she looked up in my face and said with much feeling, "Now I think I understand what love means, and can accept the love of God." Beloved, has God given to you earthly friends, earthly ties, earthly affections? They are stepping stones to Him. Have you ever felt a throb of pure heart love? That is just a taste of what it is to lie forever on His bosom and drink in His everlasting love. Do not rest in the human love as an end, but receive it and rise from it to the love of your Heavenly Friend. And as you receive His love you will better understand it, until at last your heart shall grow into all the depths and heights of heavenly love.

V. FAITH IS THE MEANS BY WHICH GOD'S LOVE IS REVEALED

So we read again, "We have known and believed the love that God has toward us." (1 John

4:16.) We know the love of God by believing it. But we cannot know it until we believe that it is for us. I remember visiting a sick man once in a yellow fever hospital. He was not prepared to meet the Lord and he told me he did not know how to become a Christian. I explained to him the Gospel and the way of faith. But he told me that he believed in the Gospel and always had believed it. I suggested that we take a verse as a specimen to see if he believed it. I took that verse in this epistle, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanses us from all sin." I asked him if he believed it. Of course he did. "What do you believe?" "Why," he said, "I believe the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse us from all sin." I told him that was not the verse and to read it correctly because the verse says "Cleanses us." Then he tried again. "Well," he said, "I believe that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses all Christians from all sin." Still I held him to the words of the text, and insisted that it meant "us." "That is," I said, "you and me. Now, do you believe that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses you and me from all sin?" Then he saw that he did not believe the Bible as true for him, and before we parted he put the "us" in it and the "me" in it, and the light of faith and joy came into his heart so that which he believed first he came to know experimentally as a fact, in his own personal consciousness. Then he could say in the words of the text, "We have known and believed the love that God has toward us." Do not, therefore, wait to feel the love of God, but believe it on the testimony of His Word. Take it as for yourself. Tell Him so. Rise to the place of confidence, to the place of the disciple whom Jesus loves, and God will place you where you dare to put yourself and make real to you every promise that you reckon true.

VI. LOVE LEADS TO CONFIDENCE

Just as in the beginning faith leads to love, so in the end love leads to higher faith, and brings to us the perfect confidence which this passage so beautifully describes, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love." There is a kind of faith that fights its way to the throne and claims its rights by a logical process. But there is a kind of faith that wins its way to the heart of God and takes its rights as a matter of course, because it knows that He is far more willing to give than we can be to receive. Therefore the prayer of love is the quickest to reach the ear of God, and the confidence and boldness of faith are only born of perfect love. There is a confidence that comes from holding fast to His Word. But there is a confidence that grows out of ten thousand cords of memory and blessing. Promises fulfilled, prayers answered, deliverances given, mercies as countless as the sand, weave themselves at length into a cable of a thousand strands that never can be broken. Or, like the great banyan tree of India, which first starts with a single root and trunk, but after awhile sends down a hundred smaller trunks from the branches to take fresh root in the soil until its spreading arms are upheld by innumerable props that grow out of its very life. So the life that has been spent in the intimate fellowship of God becomes so interlinked with Him by every memory and experience of blessing that all the power of earth and hell cannot separate it from His love or make it ever doubt His perfect faithfulness. This is the perfect love that casts out fear and it is our privilege to abide in this love and rest under the shadow of His wings.

VII. THE LOVE OF GOD LEADS TO THE LOVE OF ONE ANOTHER

It cannot be confined within the limits of even religious selfishness, but it overflows in beneficence to our brethren and all mankind. Therefore the apostle reaches the great conclusion "If a man say, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loves God love his brother also." (1 John 4: 20, 21.) Divine love is therefore practical and leads to every Christian duty, sacrifice, and service for our brethren and for a suffering and sinning world. God has made us His representatives and His channels to reach humanity, and without us He cannot bring to them the blessings of the Gospel. It is not His fault that men and women are dying in sin, but it is ours. He has "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." But we have failed to supply the missing link between His love and their need, and we have hoarded to ourselves the grace that was meant for all and sufficient for all.

"How can you say your Father loves you?" a skeptic harshly asked of a little boy who had just testified in a mission to the goodness of God in saving him, though he was clothed in rags and looked half starved. "If he loves you," said the critic, "why doesn't He tell somebody to send you clothes and feed your hunger and supply your need?" The little fellow looked at himself for a moment and colored with mortification. But in a moment he was himself again and looking up manfully, he said, "My Father does love, and perhaps He does tell somebody to help me, but somebody forgets." Was there ever a more truthful or touching reproof and appeal! Ah, beloved, if we loved we would not forget. This is just the essence of love that it remembers, and its sweetest tokens are the little acts of thoughtfulness that show that it was not indifferent or forgetful of the comfort and happiness of the object beloved. And so if we truly love as He loves we will remember, we will sacrifice, we will send or go or give to save a dying world.

Christ in the Bible

Epistles of John

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 6

THE CONFIDENCE

"This is the confidence that we have in him." (1 John 5: 14.)

The universe is held together by the one great law of gravitation. Society is held together by the one great law of confidence, in the family, the commercial world, and the larger circle of tribes and nations. The spiritual world is held together by the law of faith which binds man to God, and adjusts him to his fellow man, even as the law of gravitation binds the solar system and the larger universe.

The apostle John, whose great heart and divine intuition reached to the essential principles of things rather than mere outward forms, having unfolded already the great principles of life and love in this epistle, now leads us to the law of faith and the principle of confidence, which underlies all spiritual life and experience. Again and again we find in this epistle the expression "we know," and in the closing chapter it rises to the highest and most comprehensive range of spiritual truth and experience.

I. WE KNOW WE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life." No truth has become more pronounced and more practical and powerful for good in the Christian teaching of our day than this; that it is the privilege of every child of God to possess not only a hope of heaven, but a full assurance of his acceptance in Christ. Two blessed facts enter into this assurance. First, we have eternal life, and second, we know we have it. Nothing less than this can satisfy an earnest soul. The more valuable an object is, the more necessary it is that our title to it should be sure. You are willing to purchase a bill of goods for fifty cents without a title of deed, but you would not purchase a house and lot at ten thousand dollars without a title guarantee. The foundation of this assurance is very clearly stated in this passage. It is not our personal consciousness, our happy feelings, our new experience or our better life. But it is a record that God has given and that God requires us to believe. "This is the record, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God." The record is very simple and easy to be believed. It is not that we may have eternal life, but that God has already given it and laid it at the feet of every man who will receive it. The gift has been bestowed, the proffer has gone forth. God is committed to us and we have only to

endorse the Word that He has given, put our name in the promise and claim the salvation as our own. Not only may we do this, but we are commanded to do it and very solemnly told that "he that believes not God has made him a liar; because he believes not the record that God gave of his Son." In His great love God has adjusted the offer of the Gospel to our intelligent nature. He has given us an understanding, a will, and a reasoning mind, and He meets our intelligence with a simple business proposition offering to us the free gift of eternal life on the simple condition that we accept it and begin to count it our own. Then He reckons it to us according to our reckoning by faith. He puts us in the place we put ourselves, and the gift is ours for the taking. A man, therefore, may have eternal life just as simply and certainly as a citizen of the United States could have become the owner of a free grant of land in the great West by putting in his claim according to the offer of the government and settling upon the land as his own. As we read these lines, if the question is still unsettled, we may decide it now and receive the precious gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

But it is not all a matter of intellectual faith or decision of the will to believe. The moment we commit ourselves to God's Word, and count it true for us, God Himself, by the Holy Spirit, imparts to the soul a distinct sense of its acceptance and a conscious assurance of His peace and love. This is what is meant by the statement, "He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself." In the very act of believing there comes to the soul a rest, a satisfaction, and a confidence born of the Holy Ghost and attesting the great fact which our faith has already claimed. There are two seals. First we must affix our seal to the simple document. "He that has received his testimony has set to his seal that God is true." That is the seal of our faith. But now comes the second seal of the Holy Spirit's touch. "After that you believed, you were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." Thus we may know that we have eternal life. Beloved, have we this confidence?

II. "WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE THE PETITIONS THAT WE DESIRED OF HIM"

Having settled the question of our salvation by faith we now go on to apply the same principle of faith to our whole Christian life, and we receive the answers to our prayers by the very same principle which enables us to take the first step. Indeed, a right faith at the start will be of infinite help to us all the way through, and a halting confidence for our salvation will make us halting Christians to the end of the chapter. The first thing required of us when we pray is that we ask according to His will. "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." We should spend more time in determining what to pray for than in pleading for it afterwards. His will is revealed in His Word, and every promised blessing within the covers of the Bible is a proper thing to ask and believe for. His will is very large and generous and covers all our needs of spirit, soul, and body.

Then, having asked according to His will, we are next to believe that we have the petitions that we desired of Him. This is according to the command of our Lord during His earthly ministry. "What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them." We may not have the actual thing for which we have prayed in tangible and visible

possession, but we have the petition. His consent has been given. The request has been honored. The decree has been passed. The blessing is on the way and the delivery will come in God's due time. We can afford to wait. We can afford to suffer. We can afford to be tested. We have His Word and we count the things that are not as though they were. This gives to prayer a definiteness and a force which are most satisfying. Without this our prayers are mere ventures, like the soap bubbles which a child may blow into air and they float away and disappear, and he never expects to see more than one in a score again. True prayer, like the echo, should come back to us, first in the shout of praise and then in the glad song of deliverance. This is the prayer that can help others and can call into action all the forces of omnipotence for the work of Christ and the salvation of men. This was the way Christ prayed. "Father, I thank You that You have heard me. And I know that You hear me always." And this is the way that Christ has bidden us to pray, for He has said, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you."

III. WE KNOW THAT HE SANCTIFIES AND KEEPS US

"We know that whosoever is born of God sins not; but he that is begotten of God keeps himself, and that wicked one touches him not." Most of our spiritual failures arise from discouragement. We go out expecting to fall, and of course we fall. If we would but know that there is One within who is mightier than our weakness and stronger than all the strength of our foes, and that He is keeping us and will keep us, we should not fear and would not fall. It is confidence that keeps the soul.

This confidence, however, must be founded upon a right understanding of God's way of sanctification. First we must learn to distinguish between our new self and our old self. We must count the old life as wholly renounced, and refuse any more to fear or obey it. We must recognize ourselves as having a new life, born of God, and as free from sin as the rose is free from the soil or the sand that touches it, but cannot defile it; as the seafowl is free from the defiling strain of the miry waters in which it plunges; as the Son of God was free from the pollution of the world through which He passed with His immaculate holiness. Then we must learn that sin consists not in the temptation of the evil one or in the various moods and feelings which he may throw over our minds and hearts, but in the deliberate attitude of our will. The evil thoughts which Satan hurls upon us like fiery darts, are not our sins but his, unless we accept them and endorse them. We can throw them off as the rose washes off the dust of the highway, as the seafowl sheds the brine from its burnished wing, as the ship throws off the waves that threaten to submerge her. We can say to the tempter that these thoughts are yours, not mine. I refuse them. I am not defiled. I will not sin and I will not fear. God accepts our will as our real action and counts us victorious according to the fixed purpose of our hearts. Then we must also understand that sanctification is not our holiness, our self-perfection, our goodness, but, as so well expressed here, the keeping of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in Him we stand, in Him we overcome, in Him we are perfect. So He that was begotten of God keeps us and that wicked one touches us not. To know this is to be armed with omnipotence and clothed with victory. Beloved, is this the confidence that we have in Him?

IV. WE KNOW HIM

This is the best of all. Our confidence is not merely in His Word, His answers to our prayers, His help in our conflicts, but in His own character and love as He has revealed Himself to us and taught us as the sum of all knowledge to know Him. And so the most sublime height of this whole epistle is reached at last. "We know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." Higher than all blessings received, deeper than all truth revealed, back of all that He has said and all that He has done, is what He is Himself and what He is to us. But, before all this can become a fact and an experience, there must come to us a divine revelation and a divine understanding. And so the apostle tells us that He "has given us an understanding, that we may know Him." This is something the natural heart cannot know itself. This is something that genius and learning cannot find. This is something that eloquence cannot make plain. This is something that must come to us through the direct vision of the Holy Ghost, giving us a new conception, a divine intuition, a personal revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ in our very hearts.

Therefore, it comes to pass that many of the most gifted minds of earth are dark and blind with respect to the knowledge of God. To them He is but a name, a possible force, a remote and unreal fact. By all their searching they cannot find out God. Talk to them about the delights of His presence and it is all to them as an unmeaning sound. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him. But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit." There is nothing more sad than the helplessness of the human heart to reach the conception of God and to realize the presence of Christ. It is one of the most precious gifts of divine love. It is as new a sense in the soul as the instinct of a bird. And so on the other hand, there are souls that are illiterate and unrefined. But their whole being is alive with the spiritual sense. Christ is more real to them than any material thing. His presence is a fountain of perpetual joy. They live in a world of ever changing, ever fresh delight and their happy heart is a heaven below. God has given them an understanding that they may know Him that is true, and they are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Then there comes with this the deep delightful assurance that the soul has found at last the true, the real, the eternal. Everything else has disappointed us. Everything else has failed us. Everything else has proved transitory or false. But this is true. This satisfies the heart. This meets every intuition and longing of our nature. This fills the fullness of our being, and the transported heart sinks into infinite rest and sings with holy gladness,

Here rest, my long divided heart,
Fixed on this blissful center, rest.

Somehow we know that this will never fail us, this will never change, this will never pass away. This will grow deeper, sweeter, stronger, through all time and all eternity. This is truth. This is God. This is everlasting rest. Oh, the satisfaction that it brings to the poor tempest tossed heart after it has been buffeted by the billows of skepticism, by the storms of doubt, by the assaults

of Satan and sin, by the disappointments of life, by the sorrows, sickness, and heartbreaks of this vale of tears. It has got home at last and it understands the sublime strains of the ancient song that first echoed on the plains of Paran, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations." Beloved, have you found Him that is true? Have you come to know Him? Have you received the revelation of His face, of His presence, of His love? Have you entered into His rest?

Perhaps as you read these lines your heart is chilled with a sense of loneliness and disappointment. Perhaps the very joy these words describe only makes you the more conscious of your strangeness to it all. Perhaps the very happiness of the hearts around you only depresses you with a deeper discouragement because it is all a blank to you. Listen! He is waiting to make this vision real to your heart. He is ready to give you this revelation of Himself. You have tried to think it out. Your religion has been too much in your head, your hands, your feet, what you are pleased to call your practical nature. There is something else in the human soul that needs to be educated and fed. It is the heart. It is the spiritual sense. It is that which feels and knows and loves. It was made for God, and God alone can awaken it and satisfy it. Ask Him to do so. Fall at His feet in helplessness, and yet in confidence say to Him, Lord, I beseech You show me Your glory, and upon you will open the vision of God, and to you will come the joyful testimony:

You have bid me gaze upon You,
And Your beauty fills my soul,
For by Your transforming power,
You have made me whole.

Simply trusting You, Lord Jesus,
I behold You as You are,
And Your love so pure and changeless,
Satisfies my heart.

Ever lift Your face upon me,
As I live and work for You;
Resting 'neath Your smile, Lord Jesus,
Earth's dark shadows flee.

Brightness of my Father's glory,
Sunshine of my Father's face,
Keep me ever trusting, resting,
Fill me with Your grace.

Christ in the Bible

Epistles of John

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 7

THE CONFLICT

"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." (1 John 4: 4.)

The picture which John has given us of divine life and love, has been so full of brightness that we have scarcely seen the shadows. The testimony with which he began his letter, that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all," has given the keynote to the whole epistle. Yet back of the light and the love, there ever follows the shadow of evil. The very brightness of the light makes the shadow deeper and darker; and our study of His blessed message would not be complete unless we looked for a time at the shadow side, and then at the light which illumines it, and is able to "turn the very shadow of death into the morning." Or, to change the figure, back of all the notes of victory which ring through this epistle, there is the noise of battle, and the form of the conflict and the foe. Just as surely as the apostle sees the vision of his Almighty and all-victorious Lord, does he also behold the dark form of the wicked one and the legions of his hostile forces and our spiritual foes.

Six different adversaries are set forth in the First Epistle of John.

I. THE DEVIL

The devil is himself described as "that wicked one." (1 John 5: 18, 19.) "He that is begotten of God keeps himself, and that wicked one touches him not. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness." Certainly John had no skepticism about the existence and power of the devil, and no one who knows God will ever doubt the reality of Satan. It is the men who have never had their eyes open to behold the Father, who are still blind to the reality of the wicked one. The light reveals the shadow. Infernal wickedness always follows supernatural power and love. The period of Christ's earthly ministry was coincident with the outbreak of satanic evil, and the revelation of God in a human life always brings the experience of deep and fiery temptations. It is in the heavenly places that the spirits of wickedness fight their most desperate battles against the saints of God.

John's language here points out the devil in the most emphatic manner, as the very impersonation of all that is evil. "That wicked one" indicates a personality about whose identity there can be no mistake. There he stands, patent to all eyes, the embodiment of evil, the one who has no double, the prince of darkness, preeminence above all other things as the paragon of wickedness and the enemy of God and man. This world is still his throne, and the most

helpless of his subjects and victims are those who least understand their master, and are so deceived that they even doubt his existence. He has blindfolded them with delusion, and bound them with the silken fetters of self-confidence and deceit, and as the Word of God describes it, they "are taken captive by him at his will."

II. FALSE SPIRITS

Satan has many emissaries and agents whom he sends forth to carry out his behests in the hearts and lives of men. Therefore, the apostle warns his readers (1 John 4: 1), "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." There are supernatural beings inhabiting the realms of evil, and permitted to have access to the hearts and minds of men. The origin of these beings, we do not know. A distinguished writer, who has become familiar with the subject of demonology by much contact with it, has suggested that they may be the spirits of a former human race before the fall of Adam. Of their existence there is no question. The hearts of men were filled with them in the days of Christ, and their casting out was one of His chief ministries.

There are two ways in which these evil spirits control men, directly and indirectly. Sometimes they take possession of men, dominate their will, driving them to insanity and self-destruction. This is actual demon possession in spite of the consent of the victim, and is one of the most distressing calamities that can come to a human soul. Then there is the indirect influence, which they seek to gain over the wills and hearts of men, deceiving, alluring, infatuating human hearts with their subtle wiles and leading them into sin. This form of spiritual influence is universal. It controls much of the literature of our age, much of the art and culture, nearly all of our popular amusements, and much of our philosophical teaching. These bright, seductive and intelligent beings paint the vision of error and the fascination of pleasure in such attractive colors, that multitudes of human souls are beguiled like the mother of our race, and are following the course of this world, "the prince of the powers of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience."

The most portentous form of spiritual peril is in connection with the system known as Spiritualism. There is no doubt of the reality of these manifestations of their power, but they are certainly evil and of the devil. Many are drawn lightly and thoughtlessly by idle curiosity into the mysteries of Spiritualism, only to find that their souls have been scorched by its fearful sorceries, and only by the narrowest escape have they ever got back from the very brink of the lake of fire. Do not play with it even in its most simple and insinuating forms, as it comes to you, perhaps, as a parlor amusement in the form of table rapping, or through the ministrations of some clairvoyant medium, or in the more dangerous circle of the spiritual seance. It is sorcery. It is devil worship, and it is soul destroying. So also it comes in many forms of religious fanaticism through teachers, miracle workers, divine healers, so-called, and inward visions and revelations which are presented as the voice of God, and appeal to spiritual pride as a higher revelation, and an evidence of deeper light. The simple test of all these things is the Word of God, and the practical test of righteousness and holiness. Let us be prepared for false spirits and let us not fear to try them, for if God is giving us any message or revelation, He will always

give us ample time to be quite sure that it is God.

III. FALSE PROPHETS AND ANTICHRIST

Besides the spirits of evil that come unseen, there are human spirits and prophets, who are also the emissaries and agents of the wicked one. The apostle speaks of many antichrists, and particularly of some of whom he gives us the touchstone by which they may be tested. "As you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists." (1 John 2: 18.) "Many false prophets are gone out into the world . . . every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." (1 John 1: 3.) The description here given fits so exactly the latest form of false religion, that one is almost forced to apply it. The very corner stone of Christian Science, so-called, is the point raised by John in this passage; namely, has Jesus Christ come in the flesh? Was the incarnation real? Did Christ have an actual human body? Is there such a thing as matter and a material body at all? All this Christian Science denies, and, of course, denies that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, thus constituting itself, by its own direct testimony, to be at least one of the antichrists of the last times. Indeed, it is a wonder how the intelligent American mind can be deceived by teachings so absurd, and so contradictory even to common sense, to say nothing of Scripture. And, indeed, it is not new. It is but a rehash of the old Sabbellian heresy of apostolic times, and the idealism taught in England in the seventeenth century by David Hume and Bishop Berkely. At the time of Hume's death, his foolish philosophy was labeled by the inscription on his tombstone:

Within this circular idea,
Vulgarly called a tomb,
Impressions and ideas rest
Which constituted Hume.

Berkely had a still more serious setting down by a plain woman in his congregation, who one day found him lying in a ditch and begging to be helped out. Looking down upon her pastor with a smile of mischievous triumph, she cried, "So, Doctor, you've got into a real ditch at last." "Oh, no, Madam," said the doctor, as he tried to spit out the mud and keep himself afloat, still manfully sticking up for his principles, "I-I-I've got a painful idea that I've fallen into a ditch." This, alas, is but one of the fanaticisms abroad today, seeking to counterfeit the truth and mislead the simple. May the Holy Ghost give us that blessing so finely described in Philippians 1: 9, 10, "That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That you may approve things that are excellent; that you may be sincere and without offence until the day of Christ."

IV. FALSE BRETHREN

Not only are we opposed by false teachers, but by unworthy fellow workers and brethren, who often prove untrue. "They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made

manifest that they were not all of us." (1 John 2: 19.) It would be harsh and serious for us to say that all who turned aside from the fellowship of the truth and the cause for which we are standing are false to God, and yet it is one of the trials of Christian work, that we often have to bear the painful severance of the bonds of fellow service that have held us in fellowship with former workers, and we have often to see the most sacred interests betrayed by those that should have been most true. This should not distress us, but rather make us glad and thankful that we learned before it was too late that they were not of us. Better they should withdraw if they were not true, than to continue in a false position and do more harm from within than they can do without. No work can be injured from the outside if it is right and true within the heart, and in all the constituent elements that form its inmost center.

V. THE WORLD

"This present evil world" is the next great adversary. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides forever." (1 John 2: 15-17.) Here the apostle presents the world as a great trinity, or rather, anti-trinity of evil as the counterfeit and rival of God. The three persons in this trinity are the lust of the flesh, representing the grosser forms of worldliness and animal indulgence; the lust of the eyes, representing the more refined and aesthetic tastes which find their gratification in earthly things; and the pride of life, expressing the loftier ambitions of the human mind for preeminence and power in the world of fashion, of commercial competition, of political prominence, of intellectual greatness, or even of ecclesiastical honor and influence. For every one of these varied forms of human desire the devil has a proffered prize.

But it is not the world that hurts us, but the love of the world, or rather, the lust of the world. It is the thing in us that wants the world that does all the harm. It is the spark within the soul which kindles the conflagration. An angel might pass through all the beauty, brilliancy, and wealth of our world, and not feel one heart throb of attraction, because he had just left the dazzling glories of heaven, and was immediately to return. It is the earth hunger within us that makes us want the earth, and if this in any measure possesses us, it excludes the love of the Father and makes the smallest earthly thing an idol and a curse. The humble housewife setting her heart upon the paltry savings of a few hundred dollars, and miserly farmer, laying up in a long life of saving his paltry treasure of a few thousands, yes, the very minister of the Gospel building up a church for his own ambition, very much as the merchant is building up a business -- these men may be just as worldly as the millionaire pursuing his larger prize, or the social queen seeking the worship of her more brilliant court of splendid admirers. It is very solemn that the last message of John, in this epistle is this: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." The idol is anything in our heart or life which takes the place of God. And this is just what the world does in the heart where it becomes the ruling motive, and thus the mammon of unrighteousness. Well may we heed the warning, and ask the Father's love to counteract the danger, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."

VI. THE POWER OF SIN

The last and most terrible of all our foes is that subtle power which Satan injects into the soul, and which perverts every good and holy thing from a divine to a selfish and a wrong direction. It is sin. And so we read, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (1 John 1: 8, 10.)

The reality and malignity of sin are only fully appreciated by the soul that has learned the secret of deliverance from sin. It is only holiness that can rightly measure sin, and it is only the heart that has learned to know God, that fully knows the exceeding evil and bitterness of sin. Some forms of modern philosophy and religious teaching lightly ignore it, as they do a personal God; but it is only the deeper evidence of the power of sin in binding the minds of them that believe not. It is those who are dead that know not even that they are dead. It is the poison of sin in the human soul that gives the world its power to allure, and the devil his vantage ground to assail. Passing through an infected land with disease lurking in the air, if there be a scratch upon the skin, the poison is apt to be absorbed and the blood infected. But if the skin is whole the traveler passes unscathed. Sin has left its deep wound in the human soul, and everything becomes defiled by its subtle and malignant power. It is the worst of all our foes, but thank God it is the one evil with which divine grace and power have grappled first, and grappled victoriously. For the victory which this blessed epistle reveals, is the victory over sin as well as Satan, and the world, and we go into the battle from the very beginning with the blessed assurance, "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son cleanses us from all sin."

Christ in the Bible

Epistles of John

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 8

THE VICTORY

You . . . have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world. (1 John 4: 4.)

We enter this conflict with the prestige of victory. We meet the enemy as a conquered foe. This is the high standpoint of faith. This is the only ground where the child of God should meet temptation. You have overcome them!

The elements and resources of our victory are unfolded with as much fullness as the resources of the foes.

I. THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S

"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." (1 John 3: 8.) The battle is not ours but God's. Christ is the leader in the conflict. From the beginning it has ever been so. When the battle first began in Eden it was the seed of the woman that was to bruise the head of the serpent. And, ever since, God has recognized the great conflict between good and evil as a personal issue between the Prince of Darkness and the Son of God. When He came to earth as the captain of our salvation, He met the adversary in single combat and overthrew him once for all. And now He still comes to lead us in triumph and overcome for us and in us. Let us enter every conflict with the confidence that the Lord is fighting for us, and that we are simply following His banner and fighting His battle.

II. THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

The next element of victory and weapon of warfare is the blood of Christ. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7.) "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony," must ever be the battle cry in the conflict between good and evil. Not by ethical principles, social culture, and moral example, do we overcome the forces of evil. The crimson banner of Calvary must lead the conflict and claim the victory. The great fact of sin must be recognized and met by atonement and sacrifice. The death of Christ must be reproduced in the death of the believer to self and sin. The old life of nature is not capable of reaching the divine ideal. It must die and be superseded by a heaven-born life, by the nature of God Himself, implanted in the soul through the resurrection life of Christ within. And so the blood of Christ, which signifies and sets forth the idea of sacrifice and crucifixion, as signally sets forth the idea of the new life imparted to us from the very life of our risen Lord. The

blood is evermore the life, the life shed for us, the life breathed in us. And, as we enter into the deep, full meaning of the cross, sin loses its power, and Satan can no more reach us than he can reach the risen, ascended Lord Himself.

III. THE WORD OF GOD

God's Word is the weapon of our warfare. "I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one." (1 John 2: 14.) It is through the Word of God that the power of the blood is applied to our soul. Believing the Gospel we enter into the enjoyments of its blessings and come under the power of divine grace. It is the Word of God upon which faith rests its claims and from which it draws its comfort and inspiration to purify the heart and transform the life. It is the Word of God that detects the subtleties and snares of the devil's temptations, exposes the false spirits that have gone forth into the world, and enables us to overcome all the wiles of the wicked one. "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." It was by this weapon that Christ overcame in His threefold conflict with the enemy in the wilderness; and by it we are established in the truth and the Word of God abides in us, that we shall overcome the wicked one and be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. As for him, the Psalmist could say, "By the words of your lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." Beloved, are you armed with the Word of God? Is it for you the supreme test of truth and error, of right and wrong, the manna of your soul, the guide of your life, and the sword of the Spirit, before which Satan cannot stand?

IV. THE ANOINTING OF THE SPIRIT

This is our safeguard against the adversary. "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which you have received of him abides in you, . . . and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in him." (1 John 2: 26, 27.) It was the Holy Ghost that led Christ into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil and it is He that still guides and guards us in our spiritual conflicts. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." The true antagonist of the spirit of evil is the spirit of good. As the devil is the counterfeit of the Holy Ghost, so the Holy Ghost is the conqueror of the devil. Good reason has he to dread his divine victor, and well may we take refuge under the guardian wing of the blessed Comforter, if we would be safe from the dragon's power. Just as the burnished covering on the plumage of the seafowl preserves it unstained as it plunges into the brine, so the anointing of the Holy Ghost protects us from the defiling touch of the serpent and carries us unspotted through all the pollution of a sinful world. Hence we are never safe until we receive the seal and anointing of the Holy Ghost. Do not go forth into the conflict without it. Having received the Lord Jesus as your Savior, accept the Holy Spirit as your Keeper, Comforter and Guide, and learn to put Him between you and everything you meet. So shall He prove "a wall of fire round about, and . . . the glory in the midst," and sheltered beneath His feathers we shall ever sing:

I am safe from all danger
While under His wings.

V. THE DIVINE INDWELLING

"Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." (1John 4: 4.) The interior life is what is meant by this. To most Christians their religion is external. It is a matter of their convictions, their creed, their intellect. It consists in what they believe and know. It is theology, doctrine, and religious discussion. Or perhaps it is ceremony, churchgoing, rites, religious worship, singing, praying, and performing acts of religious service, so-called. Or it may be more than this. It may have to deal chiefly with their conduct, their practical life from day to day, the things they do and say, or do not do or say; their acts of benevolence, their Christian work, service, so-called, for others, preaching, teaching, seeking to help and save. All this is good and has its place. But all this is external. The true secret of divine religion is this: "This says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I will dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." This is the home that God is seeking. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit"; that is, in the depths of the human spirit, "for the Father seeks such to worship him." God is only longing to find a welcome and a home in human hearts. He is standing at the door and knocking, and ever crying, "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." "If man loves me," the Lord Jesus has told us, "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." It is when God thus comes to dwell within and undertakes to work out our life from the interior, that He is able to do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us."

The great question therefore, is, Where do we meet God? Where does He reside? Is He for us a God in heaven, or the God in the heart? Is the throne of His omnipotence within the secret place of our being? Then, indeed, it is true, "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." Enthroned in the depths of our being, God and our heart are in such perfect alliance that nothing can come between them. He is instead of every evil thing, every unholy presence, every threatening danger, nearer to us than our own very consciousness, a very present help in time of trouble. Beloved, have you learned the secret of the interior life? Have you become the temple of the Holy Ghost? Is God more real to you than the facts of your own consciousness and the operations of your own soul?

VI. FAITH IS THE VICTORY

"This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4.) It is through faith that we become united to the Son of God, that we become the subjects of the cleansing blood, that the truth becomes effectual in our lives, and the Word of God abides in us, that the anointing is received, and the indwelling presence of the Holy Ghost is constantly and joyously realized. Faith is the spiritual sense which brings us into contact with the unseen and the divine. It is a sort of sixth sense opening to us a new world of external realities which others cannot see or know. Just as a man who has never had the sense of smell is ignorant of a whole world of

sweetness, so a soul without faith can never come in contact with the divine realities of the world to come, and bring them to bear as a personal matter upon our life and conduct. Therefore faith unites us with divine omnipotence, and it is true, "All things are possible to him that believes," as much as it is true that "All things are possible with God." Therefore faith is represented by a military figure as the "shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." The shield covers the soldier so that the darts do not reach him. So faith hides behind the person of Christ, and all the blows fall upon Him.

There are two kinds of shields constantly referred to in the figurative language of the Bible. There is the buckler as well as the shield. The buckler is a shield which is so attached to the arm that it cannot be lost. It is fastened to the soldier. Through the thickest of the conflict he finds it still there, even should his fingers cease to grasp it. So there are two kinds of faith. There is our faith, which we may easily lose, and there is the faith of God, which holds and keeps us. This is one of the deepest secrets of the Christian life, that Christ within us becomes the power of an overwhelming faith. There is nothing more wonderful than that spirit of trust, which, through the darkness and the light, clings and fears not, but knows by an unspeakable instinct that He will not fail us, that He loves and leads and keeps, and will carry us through. Sometimes the thought comes to us, what if we should lose this trust; what if our confidence should fail! What if in some dark and dreadful hour we should be stricken with panic and sink in despair, and lose our confidence? This would be dark and terrible indeed! Perhaps we have come to such an hour. The writer once came to such an hour, and in the darkness of that dreadful moment, when Satan seemed to have destroyed by one fell blow, all his faith, he became afraid even to pray, and sinking in desolation he could only cry, "What shall I do? I cannot even trust!" It was then that for the first time he learned the faith of God, for, as he sank in the depths of his desolation and helplessness, there stole over his heart such a strange, new sweetness, such a sense of God's love, God's arms, God's overshadowing presence, and a trust that could not die, that he looked up and loved, and leaned, and rested with a simplicity at which he could only wonder and weep, and say, "How blessed! How safe! How good God is! How wonderful His love, His trust, His presence!" And so, beloved, we must lose our faith to find His, and when we find it, we have something that Satan cannot steal, and that the world can neither give nor take away.

Therefore, it is against our faith that Satan hurls his fiercest darts. Therefore it is the "trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire." Therefore it was of Peter's faith that Jesus said: "I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." Therefore, we are exhorted in view of the devil's rage and hate, "whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." Therefore, again, we have the admonition: "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense of reward." "The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

Lord, give us such a faith as this,
And then whate'er may come,

We'll taste even here the hallowed bliss,
Of our eternal home.

Christ in the Bible

Epistles of John

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 9

The Ministry of Letter Writing

“The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth.... The elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.” (2 John 1; 3 John 1.)

The letters we write are a mirror at once of the character of the writer and the person addressed. We can usually form a fair picture of both lives from a confidential correspondence between two human friends. The best biographies in literature are largely made up of personal letters. And so the New Testament consists, to a great extent, of personal correspondence. The epistles were all written to churches or individuals, and had a direct and local coloring as well as a general application. Many of them, however, were written to single persons. Happy for us if all our letters were as wisely and nobly conceived, and as finely expressed. These two letters of the apostle John, form a necessary supplement to his first epistle, and bring home to our hearts some additional messages in the less conventional form and the more direct and personal channel of his private correspondence. The first of these letters is addressed to an honored sister in the primitive church, the mother of a family, and the intimate friend or relative of some Christian lady with whom John was at the time residing.

I

1. The first lesson we learn from this letter, and indeed from both, is the lesson of humility. John might have called himself an apostle, or the last of the apostles, as he probably was at this time, and certainly the dearest to Christ of all the twelve. But he says nothing of all this, but modestly speaks of himself as one of the very humblest officers in the Church of Christ, just an elder. Surely, this is in fine contrast with the self-importance and lofty pretensions of ecclesiasticism through every age. When we find men announcing themselves by a long array of titles, and even in some cases with glaring fanaticism claiming to be the very apostles of the Lord to speak with the authority of divine inspiration, we may well lower our estimate in inverse proportion to their self-exaggeration. These claims belong to the school of Simon Magus and Lucifer, rather than the meek and lowly Jesus. Modesty will always be found to be the badge of merit, both in the literary and spiritual world.

2. The next lesson we learn, is a Christian friendship. John addresses this sister in the terms of the tenderest regard, and yet as a regard sacredly guarded. "Whom I love in the truth, . . . For the truth's sake, which dwells in us, and shall be with us forever." This is a love that is founded on spiritual bonds, and will be as lasting as the truth itself, which is eternal.

3. We have an example of a Christian family, for this sister had children and John especially refers to them that they were walking in the truth. And so it is the privilege of the child of God to claim the same salvation for his family as for himself. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house." And yet not all her children were saved, for the expression here is, "I found of your children walking in the truth"; that is, I found many of your children, but there were still some lost lambs even in this fold; that no doubt, a mother's faith and an apostle's faith were gently and patiently bringing in.

4. An example of a true Christian life. Two things especially enter into it, practical obedience and holy aspiration. Christian life is first of all obedience to God. For "this is love, that we walk after his commandments. . . . That, as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it." (2 John 6.) But it is not all plod. There is a lofty plane of noble ambition and a great reward to win. And so he adds: "Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." There is a prize to be obtained, and a constant vigilance and courage are essential to the victory, and the final recompense.

5. We are especially taught here our attitude toward error and evil. The Antichrist is described in almost the same terms as we noted in the first epistle, and all who bring false doctrine are to be avoided and renounced so distinctly that we can have no complicity with their errors nor responsibility for their evil courses. This is a most emphatic and needed prohibition. "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not in your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that bids him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." We cannot be partners in error. We cannot cooperate with those with whom we are not of one accord. It is not enough merely to love the Lord, but we must hate evil. We cannot say God bless you to every person with whom we talk or pray. We are to lay hold suddenly on no man nor to be partakers of other men's sins. But we must always take such a stand in gentleness and love.

II

The second letter was addressed to the well-known disciple of whom we read elsewhere in the New Testament, that he was the companion of Paul, and the host of the Church of God. He was probably a man of sufficient means to be at least independent, and to be able to do much to help the brethren. It is needless to dwell on the many beautiful points in this letter which are identical with the previous one. There is the same spirit of personal love, Christian fellowship, and beautiful modesty. But there are five distinctive and important points.

1. We have the apostle's views upon divine healing, and temporal blessing, in answer to prayer, very fully brought out in the second verse. Literally translated it is, "Beloved, I pray above all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers." This is very strong language and yet very safe. He does not put divine healing and outward blessing above spiritual things, but he makes them conditional upon our spiritual state. He prays for his friend that he may prosper and be in health just as much as his soul prospers. The word prosper, here, denotes more than mere sanctity and soundness. It expresses rather a condition of spiritual fullness, and rich and abundant blessing, and it implies that we cannot expect the Lord's blessing upon our bodies and our business, if we cherish in our hearts those spiritual

conditions which bring divine chastening and produce misery and pain. When the heart is overflowing with the love of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, then the blessing will reach every fiber and extremity of our mortal frame, and the providence of God will cover our temporal interest, protecting and providing for all our conditions and needs. Let us not, therefore, hesitate in the face of this bold announcement to come to our heavenly Father as freely for our temporal needs as for our spiritual conditions, for, He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us." The inworking will always bring the outworking.

2. We have a fine testimony to a faithful life. "Beloved, you do faithfully whatsoever you do to the brethren, and to strangers." It is not a brilliant life, but it is a faithful one. He is true to every obligation, trust, and relationship. He is a faithful servant to his Master. This is not only true of his Christian relationships, but in his dealings with strangers and the world outside. What a world this would become if this were always true of every disciple of Christ. Here is a pattern for you business men. You may never be great, brilliant, nor marvelously useful, but you can be faithful, and we know that in the great day when the rewards shall be given, the commendation will be not for our services or our talents, but "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter you into the joy of thy Lord."

3. We have the picture of a missionary at home. "Which have borne witness to your charity before the church: whom if you bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, you shall do well. Because that for his name's sake they went forth taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth." Here we have a fine example of a Christian layman, who cannot himself go forth to preach the Gospel to the heathen, living and working to send others, and like good old Gaius bring them forward on their journey after a godly sort. Perhaps Gaius did it by his hospitality, and his personal gifts as they visited him on their way. We can do it through the organized missionary movements of our time, as well as the individual opportunities afforded us in the providence of God. It was stated by one of our most successful missionary workers, that many hundreds of the missionaries of the Presbyterian and American Boards, now in the field, were supported either by individual congregations or single persons at home. It was added that the number of churches and individuals, who might easily assume the support of a missionary, might be extended to the thousands and tens of thousands, and thus the number of missionaries on the field multiplied many times over. At a session of the Ecumenical Council, it was stated by the president and others in the great meeting of laymen, that if the business men of this country would supply the means, the number of missionaries sent forth to the heathen fields could easily be doubled, or even still more largely multiplied within a very short time, as there were thousands of earnest young lives ready to go out but were depressed and discouraged by the constant cry of retrenchment, and the lack of financial resources on the part of the missionary societies. Let us pray, let us plead, let us labor until the Church of Jesus Christ awakens to realize the responsibility of those in the home land, whom God has raised up in order that we may be trustees of His bounty, and His grace to our perishing fellow men.

4. We have a picture of the true foreign missionary. "For his name's sake they went forth,

taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth." Here is the true missionary motive, "for his name's sake." Nothing less than love to Christ, and a sense of His supreme call, can ever sustain a successful missionary life. "Taking nothing of the Gentiles." This is the spirit of true missionary self-sacrifice. The most difficult task of the missionary is to convince the heathen that he is disinterested. They cannot really believe that anybody can love them well enough to leave home and country, and every prospect of earthly gain and pleasure, simply for the purpose of teaching and helping them, and when at last they become convinced of the sincerity and unselfishness of the messenger, they accept the message and they become themselves the most beautiful examples of self-sacrifice and devotion. In China, to which today, the eyes of the world are turned with the deepest concern, almost every heathen mind believes that our missionaries have some ulterior motive, and are seeking to make something out of them, and this is the real secret of the anti-foreign prejudice, and the wild stories that are everywhere circulated about our missionaries, digging out the eyes of babies to make medicine, and discovering gold by a process of second sight behind every rock and river bed. The answer to all this must be an unselfish life, and a spirit of devotion, such as is exhibited today in that dark land, which is ready to give all, even life itself, for the sake of the people that do not even appreciate their love. It is very sad, when missionaries use their opportunities to promote their selfish interest and aggrandizement, and it seems most unfortunate when they allow themselves to be tempted to go into the service of the wealthy natives for the sake of large emoluments. Nothing can repay the loss of influence sustained by a surrender of independence, and the suspicion of any sordid or selfish motive. But the self-sacrifice of the missionary should not be confined to him but shared by the missionary at home, who stands behind him, and by self-sacrifice in living and giving, carries out the apostle's exhortation "We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth."

5. We have one more picture in this letter; namely, a backsliding church. Already the spirit of declension, that afterwards culminated in the great apostasy, had entered the primitive churches. Paul tells us that "All they that were in Asia" had turned away from him, and now John makes the still more painful confession "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, receives us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and has forbidden them that would, and casts them out of the church." It was out of this spirit of ecclesiastical ambition and pride, contending for preeminence and earthly honor, that apostasy first arose, and the same cause is destroying the purity and separation of many in the Church today. We must not blame the pulpit for it all, although it takes its most hideous form in ministerial pretensions, high sounding titles and selfishness and luxury on the part of the preachers of the Gospel. The spirit of the pew will soon be reproduced in the pulpit. And why should there be a severer standard for one than for the other? If the church warden, the official steward, the wealthy trustee, and the fashionable parishioner insist upon going to the opera and taking part in the dance and the card party, do not be surprised if the General Conference shall itself some day begin to talk about modifying the Book of Discipline, and make it easier for the people to live up to the advanced spirit of our cultured age. It is said that a minister who had grown tired of preaching

against all these things, at last thought he would give his people an object lesson in worldliness, and so he announced one day, that the prayer meeting would be omitted that week, as the pastor and his family had a prior engagement at the opera. The following week he begged to be excused from Board meeting of the Trustees, as his wife and he had to entertain a card party. Before the third announcement could be made, however, the Church Board had been called, and that preacher tried and deposed from the ministry for conduct unbecoming a preacher of the Gospel. It was in vain that he pleaded that he was only doing what his people did. They could not see the rightness of it when presented in such a striking object lesson. But his logic was sound, and the lesson, if ineffectual, was at least consistent. The spirit of selfishness and worldliness, which is sapping the vitals of modern Christianity, is but the outgrowth of a lower standard of Christian living, and the demand of the people for a liberty which would shock and disgust them, if they saw it carried out to its legitimate fruit on the part of those to whom they look up as examples of true Christianity. It is very seldom to find that even as early as the days of John, the doors of the Church were shut against true spiritual testimony. Let us not be surprised if we often find that we must stand alone. But it is blessed to be in the minority with John the Beloved, Paul the Apostle, and Jesus the ascended Lord.