

H. L. Rossier

**Comments on
the book of Joshua**

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Chapter 1

The Book of Joshua gives us, in type, the subject of the Epistle to the Ephesians. The journey across the desert had come to an end, and the children of Israel had now to cross the Jordan led by a new guide, and to take possession of the land of promise, driving out the enemies who dwelt there. It is the same for us. The heavenly places are our Canaan, into which we enter by the power of the Spirit of God, who unites us to an ascended Christ, and seats us together in Him in the glory, so that thus we enjoy anticipatively this glory which He has acquired for Himself, into which He will introduce us, and which we shall share, ere long, with Him.

But, meanwhile, we have to fight the fight of faith against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, in order to appropriate every inch of ground which God has given us to inherit. The difference between the type and the reality is, that the wilderness journey was over for Israel before they entered Canaan, whilst for us the desert and Canaan exist together, but this only increases the blessing. If the wilderness teaches us that we still need to be humbled and proved to know what is in our hearts, it

is there that, in answer to our infirmities, we experience the preciousness of divine resources in the midst of this "dry and thirsty land where no water is": God opening His hand to feed us with manna, to refresh us with water from the rock, and to make us taste the inexhaustible resources of His grace, for His people have "lacked nothing." "Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years." (Deut. 8:4) Moreover, we find ourselves at the same time, if not at the same moment, in the green pastures and still waters of a rich country whose firstfruits we taste; we can sit at peace at the table spread on the other side of Jordan, and enjoy its food, delighting ourselves in a heavenly Christ seated in the glory at God's right hand.

The Leader.

At the moment when this new stage of Israel's history begins, Joshua is called to take the leadership of the people. This remarkable man appears for the first time in Exodus 17, at the time of the war against Amalek, and this gives us the key to his typical character. Whilst Moses, type here of divine authority intimately associated with the heavenly priesthood and the righteousness of Christ, stands on the top of the hill during the

combat, there is a man down in the plain associated with the people whom he leads, a man "in whom is the spirit," as the Lord said to Moses (Num. 27:18), and who conducts the battle of the Lord. This Joshua is Christ, but Christ in us, or amongst us down here, in the power of the Holy Ghost. Moses, as their leader, had been inseparable from Israel in the desert, and so it will be with Joshua as leader of the people in Canaan. It is said of this last: a man "which may go out before them ... and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd ... And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient." (Num. 27:17, 20)

The Land and its Boundaries.

In verse 2 the Jordan is mentioned, a barrier between the people and the promised land which they must cross under the guidance of Joshua to enter Canaan. Their inheritance was a pure gift of the grace of God: "the land which I do give ... to the children of Israel" They were entitled to it by God, but it was a question for the people not only of possession, but of entering into possession: "Every place that the sole of your foot

shall tread upon, that have I given to you." (v. 3) So it is with us spiritually: we have all these things, but we cannot enter into them except as having passed through death with Christ, and entering by the power of His Spirit where He is. In short, it is as we occupy ourselves with these things, and enter into them diligently and personally, that we lay hold of each one of our blessings, and prove their heavenly reality. In one word, the Christian must himself appropriate them by faith in order to enjoy them; otherwise he would be like a poor king, ill and living abroad, who had never travelled in his own kingdom.

In verse 5 we find another important feature which characterises the land: the enemy is there, obstacles are there, wherever we put our foot an adversary arises. We see here clearly, as has often been remarked, that Canaan is not heaven in the sense in which we shall reach it by actual physical death, but heaven in which the enemy is found, heaven the scene of present warfare for the Christian. But, precious promise: "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee," said the Lord to Joshua, "all the days of thy life"; that is to say, until he should have established the people definitely in possession of the land. And what security there was for the people in this promise. Scarcely, says

God, will you have encountered the enemy on your path, ere he shall be dispersed. The people might have shouted: Victory! Satan cannot stand before us! Poor Israel, you will soon see it before Ai; you are but a toy in the hands of Satan, you have no strength to resist him, but the power is in Christ. "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee," said the Lord to Joshua; whilst the promise to the people was, "I have given to you." (v. 3)

We may notice another point in verse 4. God gives them an exact description of the boundaries of Canaan. What are they? In their full extent they were never reached by the people, but will be given to them in millennial glory. Likewise for us, the heavenly places are our present conquest wherever we place our foot, but shall we ever measure the extent of our inheritance? Now we "know in part," but the day is at hand when that which is perfect shall have come, and that which is in part shall be done away; "then shall I know even as also I am known."

The boundaries of the land were a great desert, a great mountain, a great river, and a great sea. That is what was to be found outside this fertile country, that on which the people could not or ought not to tread. Do we not find here the world with all its

moral characteristics: its aridity, its power, its prosperity, and its agitation? As to its aridity, Israel had gone through it, only to prove that it had no resource for them, and that the bread from heaven alone could feed them in these solitudes. Such, beloved, is the character of the things which are not ours. But Canaan — heaven, is ours; Canaan with its warfare no doubt, but its victories; Canaan with the peaceful enjoyment of infinite possessions, resuming themselves in, and concentrating themselves around the person of a risen Christ seated in the glory.

The Moral Qualifications for Entrance into Canaan.

In verse 6 we find spiritual energy, what the Apostle Peter calls "virtue." Faith led them to tread everywhere with the soles of their feet; "virtue" was to be added to faith; but it is worthy of note that this energy is not to be found in us; for the people it is found in Joshua; it is in Christ for us. "Be strong and of a good courage, for thou shalt cause this people to inherit the land, which I sware to their fathers to give them." "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee ... they go from strength to strength." This principle is of the utmost importance. How many Christians there are who seek to discover strength in

themselves, to feel themselves strong for the combat! Their quest, if it does not lead to discouragement, ends in what certainly is not worth more, self-satisfaction. Power is not there, it is in Christ, but in Christ for us. And why is it given to us? Is it to render us great in our own eyes, or to puff us up? Far from it; but to lead us into the path of obedience. (v. 7) It is little children who learn to obey. Strength makes us small; it makes an atom of man, in order that the power of Christ may be exalted.

We find a beautiful example of this truth in Judges 6. "The angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, and said to him: The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." These two things are closely united: strength was his in the Lord Himself. "Go in this thy might," said the Lord looking upon him; and he is immediately seized with the sense of his own nothingness: his family was the poorest in Manasseh, and he the least in his father's house. And the Lord said to him: "Surely I will be with thee."

Obedience is always governed by the word of God. God gives strength to Joshua, in order, He says, "that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law of Moses." But besides the spir-

itual energy necessary to obey, there must be something more. He adds in verse 8: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein." There must then be; besides divine energy, diligent care to appropriate the thoughts of God. He says: meditate therein in order to obey. Is that our aim when we study the word of God? Often we like to read for the sake of instruction, which is of itself a good thing; at other times, so as to be able to impart to others, also an excellent thing in its place; but, let me say again, do we habitually read it for the purpose of diligently obeying? If it were so, how it would change the whole current of Christians' lives!

He adds: "Meditate therein day and night." There are some Christians who read a chapter (alas, a verse perhaps!) every morning as a sort of amulet to preserve them throughout the day. Is that meditating day and night on the word of God? What about our occupations? do you say? Well, let me ask you in return: In the midst of your occupations, is it the word given by God which nourishes you — that word given for your soul's

enjoyment, and to guide you in the path of Christ? That is the way to "have good success in our ways and to prosper."

In verse 9 we find a further principle: "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage." What power the assurance of God's mind gives! All indecision as to the path, all terror, all fear of the enemy disappear. Satan cannot harm us; has not God commanded us? Such then are the principles which should govern the heart that would enjoy heavenly things and fight the battles of the Lord. It is blessed to see them stated quite at the beginning of this book, before Israel has taken a single step, in such a way as to place him in possession of well-furnished weapons wherewith to obtain the victory.

Those who enter Canaan.

After showing us the Leader, the land, and the moral qualifications necessary for entrance therein, the word of God speaks to us (vers. 10-18) of those who are called to enter in. They comprise the people, and also the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh. These last do not refuse, as the previous generation had done, to enter, when the spies caused their hearts to melt. On the contrary, they associate themselves with

their brethren, and are in the first rank of combatants, but not to take possession of the land. Their portion is on the other side of Jordan. It was their circumstances which led them to choose it: they had much cattle: "the place was a place for cattle," adapted to their circumstances. (Num. 32:1)

It is the same with numbers of Christians; indeed, one might say that to-day it is rather the nine tribes and a half who have chosen their dwelling on the other side of Jordan. The main point in the christian life of believers is the circumstances of this life, the everyday needs, abundance or want, enclosures for their cattle, or cities for their families. (Num. 32:16) Moreover, these Christians are not, properly speaking, lacking in faith: on the contrary they experience that the Lord can enter in grace into all their circumstances, adapting Himself to them, and that He does so, He who came down to bring divine blessing to this earth. Theirs is not a worldly Christianity, but an earthly one. Israel were a type of worldly Christianity when they refused to go up to the mountains of the Amorite. "Were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt." (Num. 14:3-4) Also their carcasses fell in the wilderness. The two and a half

tribes are the type of those who lower Christianity to a life of faith for the earthly circumstances they traverse, making their life to consist in these things. "They had much cattle." Moses is at first indignant, but he afterwards bears with them, seeing that although their faith was weak, still it was faith, and that these earthly links did not separate them from their brethren.

Beloved, this tendency to lower Christianity vaunts itself on every hand as a tenet in the present day. With much pretension to power, little is known beyond a Christ in whom to trust for His providential care, and in the details, great or small, of daily life. Christ is known as a Shepherd: "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me"; but even in this way, how feebly the extent of His resources is appreciated! If He leads us through this world, it is not here that He gives us rest. The green pastures and the still waters are not the fields, nor the sheepfolds, nor the cities of Gilead, but the rich pastures of the land of Canaan.

It is blessed to confide in Him for everything, and God forbid that we should seek to diminish in the saints aught of this confidence; but let us know something of the joy of entrance even now there where a glorified Christ is to be found, of being attached outside this world, drawn away from this scene, to be

introduced, dead and risen with Him, into a heavenly Canaan. There, the motive for our walk will no longer be "much cattle"; it will not be a question of arranging our life more or less faithfully according to what we possess; but, having left all behind, self, and the affairs of this life, in the bottom of the river of death, we have now to fight to take possession of all our privileges in Christ, realising them by faith, and enjoying them in the power of the Spirit.

Notice, too, that whether they will or not, all cross the Jordan. Our brethren fight with us against infidelity, and against the power of Satan, who displays his tactics in the world; but death and resurrection is for them only a fact (it is so for all), not a realisation. The soul must realise it in order to take possession of the land.

Chapter 2.

Rahab.

In the second part of Joshua 1 we have seen two classes of persons called to cross the Jordan to enter the land of promise, type of heavenly places: the people, and the two and a half

tribes, whose moral character is not on a par with their vocation, but who take part in the combat to ensure to Israel the possession of their inheritance. In Rahab we find a third class of persons: the Gentiles who share by faith the enjoyment of the promises in common with God's ancient people. Rahab the harlot was a Gentile; she belonged by birth to that large company of which the Epistle to the Ephesians speaks; "Ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." But more than this, Rahab was a degraded person amongst the Gentiles themselves.

But the word of God comes to her: "We have heard," she said to the spies. It was a word which assured grace and deliverance to some, and judgment to others. Faith in this word places her immediately, as to her conscience, under the weight of the judgment. "As soon as we heard it our hearts did melt." (v. 11) Like her people she is filled with fear; but whilst they had lost all courage, for her this very fear is the beginning of wisdom,

for it is the fear of the Lord, a fear which makes her look to God, and immediately she acquires the certainty ("I know," v. 9) that this God is a God of grace for His people. She seeks her resources in this God who is the resource of His own. Faith is not mere human imagination which likes to deceive itself, and which sees things in whatever light it pleases. It is not the human mind building its conclusions on possibilities or probabilities; she says simply, "I know," because she had heard what the Lord has done.

Rahab looks to God. She is threatened with judgment, but she sees that God takes interest in His people. She says to herself: If God is to be gracious to me, I must be with His people. So when the spies appear, Rahab by faith receives them "with peace" (Heb. 11:31); and whilst the world seeks them everywhere, so as to rid itself of the testimony of God, she hides them safely, and values them as being the means which God would use to preserve her from future judgment. Her deliverance depends on their preservation. Not only does she believe in Israel's God, but, as some one has said, "she identifies herself with the Israel of God," and her faith receives an immediate answer. She does not need to acquire the certainty by seeing

Jericho surrounded by the army of Jehovah. That would not be faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Notice how perfect and worthy of God is the answer. She had said: "Swear to me ... that ye will deliver our lives from death"; and the messengers reply: "Our life for yours." Her faith finds in others (we, in Christ) the guarantee by substitution that death would not reach her.

That is not all. A scarlet thread, unpretending type of the death of One who could have said: "I am a worm and no man," suffices her as token and safeguard. Just as the blood of the paschal lamb on the lintels of the doorposts averted the judgment of the destroying angel, so the scarlet thread suspended from the window of a house which was "upon the town wall," was to preserve the house and all in it when the wall itself should fall down at the noise of the trumpets of Jehovah.

One more point: they are living witnesses who are the guarantees that death is Rahab's safeguard. In the same way for us, Christ is the living witness before God of the perfect efficacy, in redemption, of His blood shed for us on the cross. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he

entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." (Heb. 9:12)

Dear reader, how beautiful is Rahab's faith! She does not wait, as recommended by the spies, until the people "be come into the land" (v. 18) to bind the scarlet line in the window; they are scarcely gone when she hastens to put it there, testifying thus to what she has believed; her faith does not linger, it speaks henceforth loudly; she proclaims from her window Christ and the efficacy of His work to save the most miserable of sinners.

Finally, Rahab is not only an example of faith, but also of works. "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" (James 2:25) Works must follow faith. There is such a thing as dead works which are not the product of faith; and there is a dead faith which does not produce works; but Rahab's works can only be the fruit of faith. An Abraham to offer up his son as a burnt offering, a Rahab to betray her country, or a Mary to break a costly box of alabaster to waste her all, an odour of great price — human wisdom condemns, and the authors of such deeds are blamed or punished by the world; but what renders them approved of God is the

faith which is the motive spring, and faith which sacrifices all for God, and which surrenders all for His people.

Rahab finds her recompense: a place of honour is reserved for her with those who, amongst God's earthly people, form the lineage of Messiah. (Matt. 1:5)

Chapter 3.

The Jordan.

The two preliminary chapters with which we have been occupied bring us now to the main point of the narrative. Israel had to cross the Jordan to enter Canaan; and what is the Jordan?

From Egypt up to this, the deliverance of the people is characterised by two great events: the Passover and the Red Sea; and in order to understand the third great event, that is, the crossing of the Jordan, it is well to seize the meaning of the first two. All three are types of the cross of Christ; but its aspects are so rich, so various, so infinite, that we need all these, and many others, in order to comprehend its depth and extent.

The Passover shows us the cross of Christ as a shelter from the judgment of God. "For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment." (Ex. 12:12) Now Israel themselves could only be sheltered by the blood of the paschal lamb placed between the people as sinners and God as a Judge who was against them. This is expiation. The blood stays God, so to speak; keeps Him outside, and places us in safety inside. "When I see the blood I will pass over you." Only let us not forget that it is the love of God which provides the sacrifice capable of meeting His own judgment. Love thus spares the people who could not of themselves escape judgment any more than the Egyptians.

But we learn more than this in the Passover. The blood was that of the paschal lamb wholly roast with fire; a type of Christ who endured in the fullest way both externally and in the depths of His whole being the judgment of God for us and in our stead. Whilst under the shelter of the blood, the Israelites, and above all the believers amongst them, found food for their hearts in the thought of Him in death, yet with a deep feeling of the bit-

terness of sin, as typified by the bitter herbs, but of a sin completely atoned for.

At the Red Sea we find a second aspect of the cross of Christ, which is redemption: "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth thy people which thou hast redeemed." (Ex. 15:13) Now if God delivers and redeems us, He is for us instead of being against us; indeed, it says: "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." (Ex. 14:14) The Passover stayed God Himself as a Judge, and set Israel in safety; at the Red Sea God intervenes as a Saviour (Ex. 15:2) in favour of His people, who have nothing to do but to look on at their deliverance: "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." (Ex. 14:13) In redemption God, so to speak, acts as if the enemies which were against us, and which we were quite powerless to overcome, were against Him.

What a terrible and critical situation was that of the people of God at this solemn moment! The enemy seeking to recover possession of his prey, pursuing hard after Israel and driving them to an extremity towards an impassable sea. It is the same with sinners. The power of Satan hurries them on towards death, and death is the judgment of God: "It is appointed to men once to die, but after this the judgment." Now the soul

must have to do with this last directly and perfectly, must come into immediate contact with death which is the expression of it. There is no means of escaping. The people were weaponless and resourceless in presence of the enemy and the power of death, and it is in this extremity that God intervenes. The rod of judicial authority is stretched out, not over Israel, but in their favour, over the sea, and death becomes, instead of a gulf, a pathway for the people. They can cross it dry-shod. What a new pathway it was, and what a solemn hour for Israel as a nation, when they passed between these liquid walls formed on their right hand and on their left by the action of "the east wind," between these floods, which instead of engulfing them proved their rampart! The solemnity of the scene remained; the horror of it was for ever obliterated.

We find in this scene a type of death and judgment borne by another, and for us the Lord presents Himself in it: "For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me." "The waters compassed me about even to the soul." (Jonah 2:3, 5) Christ endured to the full the horror of death, and felt it alone in the infinite depths of His holy soul.

But the people cross the sea dry-shod. Judgment finds nothing in them, because it has spent itself in death, and for us on the person of Christ on the cross.

They come out on the other side safe and sound, and here we have a type not merely of the death of Christ, but also of His resurrection for us.

This is what may be learnt from the Red Sea. The army of the adversary is overthrown, and finds its grave where we have found a pathway. All fear is over; we can stand in peace on the opposite shore in the power of a resurrection-life which has passed through death.

It is by faith that we share in this blessing: "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do, were drowned." (Heb. 11:29) Whilst faith passes through it, the world, which seeks of itself to meet death and judgment, will be engulfed.

Having now considered the meaning of the Red Sea, typical of the death and resurrection of Christ for us, let us ask ourselves, What is the extent of the deliverance therein operated in favour of the people?

It is salvation, a simple word in itself, but one of unparalleled importance to our hearts. Salvation has its negative and its positive side. The first comprises the destruction of the enemy, of his power and all its consequences. Grace, in the person of Christ, has taken our place in death under all this: "It is the grace of God that brings salvation." Thus, Satan's power, the world, sin, death, wrath, and judgment, are overcome and destroyed for faith in the cross of Christ.

But there is also a positive blessing to be found in this blessed work. "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength to thy holy habitation." (Ex. 15:13) "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself." (Ex. 19:4) "Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." (1 Peter 3:18) "For through him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." (Eph. 2:18)

Infinite blessing! The people have not only escaped, but they have arrived by a new and living way which has brought them to the end, into the presence of God Himself, a God whom we know as the Father. "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of

God." (1 John 3:1) Let us celebrate with Israel only in a higher key, the song of deliverance! No more separation, or distance; the port is gained, which is God Himself, He whom, by the Spirit, we call "Abba, Father."

What share did Israel take in all this work! Absolutely none. Salvation is brought to us by the free grace of God who exacts nothing, and who does not claim His rights over us, but who finds His satisfaction in being a sovereign and an eternal Giver.

But to return to the Jordan. At the Passover atonement was made; at the Red Sea redemption was accomplished, and salvation obtained; but here it is another question. In order to take possession of the land of Canaan, the people must be in a certain condition.

Between the Red Sea and the Jordan Israel had crossed the desert, and this journey is divided into two distinct parts. In the first part, up to Sinai, it is grace which leads the people — the same grace which had redeemed them from Egypt, and by which they experience the resources of Christ in the midst of all their infirmities. In the second part, after Sinai, Israel is under the reign of law, and it is then that they are proved to know

what is in their hearts. The trial only demonstrated that they were "carnal, sold under sin"; that they had no power, that their will was enmity against God, that it was not subject to the law of God, finally showing itself in positive open rebellion when it was a question of going up into the mountain of the Amorites, and entering into possession of the promises.

The condition of Israel was an absolute obstacle to their entering Canaan. When they come to the end of their experiences in the flesh, they find the Jordan, an overflowing flood, as a barrier to their onward progress. The Red Sea hindered their escape from Egypt, the Jordan prevents their entrance into Canaan, and to attempt to cross it would be their destruction. Here we have a fresh type of death. It is the end of man in the flesh, and, at the same time, the end of Satan's power. How can we, who are without strength, withstand it? It separates us forever from the enjoyment of the promises. "Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

But the grace of God has provided for it. The ark goes before the people; it not only makes them know the way by which they should go, for they had not passed this way heretofore (Joshua 3:4), but it associates them with itself in the passage.

The priests, the representatives of the people, were to take up the ark of the covenant and pass on before Israel. (v. 6) It was indeed the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth (v. 13) which was to pass on before them across Jordan, but not without them. The ark maintained its pre-eminence: "There shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure" (v. 4); but as the eyes of the people were fixed upon it (v. 3) they beheld at the same time the priests of the tribe of Levi who bore it. As soon as the soles of the feet of the priests rested in the waters of Jordan, they were cut off and ceased to flow. A power was there which was victorious over the power of death, and which associated Israel with the victory.

If it was thus for Israel, how much more for us! All that we were in the flesh has found its end in the cross of Christ. We can say: I am dead to sin, dead to the law; I am crucified with Christ. My eyes, fixed on the ark — on Christ — see in Him the end of my personality as a child of Adam; but in Him also a victorious power, now made mine, introduces me in resurrection life in Him, beyond death, into the full enjoyment of the

things which this life possesses: "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me."

Death itself, of course, is not yet swallowed up: "When the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come up out of the midst of Jordan ... the waters of Jordan returned to their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before." (Joshua 4:18) But when "this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." (1 Cor. 15:54) Then Christ's place, beyond all that which could hinder us, will be ours, even as to our bodies. But before the fulfilment of these things, we can already say: "Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 15:57)

We find then in the Jordan, in a special way, death to that which we were in our former status, and the beginning of a new status in the power of life with Christ, with whom we are risen. His death and resurrection introduce us now into all the heavenly blessings, and what we have just said explains the reason of our not finding enemies here as at the Red Sea. At the Jordan the Israelites are not pursued by Pharaoh and his host,

but the enemy is in front of them, and does not begin to act until they have crossed the river.

Now they enter upon a new series of experiences. In the desert of Sinai the old man has been proved to be sin; then follows, in type, at the Jordan, the knowledge acquired by faith, that we have been taken out of our association with Adam, and set in a new association with a dead and risen Christ; finally, in Canaan, we have the experiences of the new man, though not without weakness and failure if there be a lack of vigilance, but with a power at our disposal, of which we can make constant use in order to be strong and to fight valiantly and resist the subtle wiles of the enemy.

Chapter 4.

The Twelve Stones at Gilgal.

In the preceding chapter we have seen that it is faith in Christ which enables us to apprehend (after an experience often as long as the forty years in the wilderness were for Israel) our deliverance from our old estate, and introduction into a new one in Christ. The soul, long exercised, learns at length — and it is

God who reveals it to faith — that what it was striving vainly to attain to, has not to be done, but is a present reality, for faith a fact, an accomplished fact, in Christ.

I used to wonder at the extreme simplicity of the language produced by the discovery of this important truth in Romans 7, whilst it takes a whole chapter to describe the experiences of a soul previous to knowing deliverance. More than this, the despairing utterance caused by the hopelessness of the situation, changes without any interlude into one of gratitude and joy: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The reason now seems simple enough. When the soul makes this discovery it learns that the deliverance which it was incapable of attaining, God had already wrought by and in Christ, so that it is no longer a thing to be accomplished. The soul discovers and appropriates it as an accomplished fact, prepared long ago for faith. Then calmly and peacefully the believer can say: Henceforth I am dead, because I am in Christ; dead with Christ, dead to the law, to the world; and "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." (Gal. 2:19-20; Rom. 6:10; Col. 2:20; Gal. 6:14)

It is a truth which is outside the region of the intelligence; reason cannot explain it, memory cannot retain it. How often

have I seen souls seeking, by similar efforts, to lay hold, so to speak, of deliverance! What was the result? When, after much painstaking, they thought they had grasped its import, a single night sufficed to disperse the illusion, just as dead leaves are swept away by a breath of wind between the evening and morning.

Ah! deliverance is not obtained in a moment, for just as there was no Jordan for Israel before the desert, so, for us, deliverance comes after we have made the discovery of what the flesh is, and not before. Deliverance is not a mere experience, but the result of the standing which faith grasps. It is only experimental in the sense that I see myself in Christ, instead of laying hold of a work accomplished outside of myself as in redemption.

Such for us is the import of the Jordan. But God desires that the memorial of this victory should be continually under our eyes. Joshua commands the representatives of the twelve tribes to take twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the feet of the priests stood firm. They were to be for a memorial to the children of Israel, and were to be laid in the place where the people passed their first night in the land of

Canaan. The place was Gilgal, but what was the signification of the stones? They represented the twelve tribes, the people, snatched from death by the ark which had stood in the very spot where deliverance was needed, and which had stayed the waters of Jordan so that Israel could pass over. They became a monument at the very entrance of Canaan, at Gilgal, a place to which (as we shall see later on) the people had always to return; they were henceforth to be a sign constantly under their eyes and those of their children.

Now we, like Israel, stand as trophies of the victory achieved over the raging waters of the river. Christ went into death because we were there: "If one died for all, then were all dead." (2 Cor. 5:14) But it was in order to deliver us out of death, and bring us into a new life in His own resurrection. "When we were dead in sins he has quickened us together with Christ ... and has raised us up together." (Eph. 2:5-6)

But the monument of this memorable work is permanently established on the other side of Jordan to serve for the maintenance of Israel's faith, a monument to be recognised at all times by the people at the entrance of Canaan. For us it is Christ, the object of our faith, the Firstborn from the dead, risen and

entered into the heavenly places, but a Christ who represents us there, associating us with Himself, even as He associated Himself with us in death.

Moreover God desires that Christ thus set before us should produce a corresponding moral effect in us; that, in the contemplation of Him, our consciences should be laid hold of in a lasting way. "It is a memorial to the children of Israel for ever." It is also this for us, accompanied by an inward effect. The believer, risen with Christ, has the indelible marks of His death imprinted on him, and, if such is my place in Christ, can I live any longer in the things which I have abandoned, which Christ has left in the depths of Jordan? "In that he died, he died to sin once, but in that he lives, he lives to God." Up to this, it is the memorial, and then comes the moral effect: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 6:10-11)

The twelve stones at Gilgal, then, are not merely our death and resurrection with Christ (the Jordan typified that), but the memorial of this death and resurrection as seen in a risen and glorified Christ. This monument reminds us of what we have henceforth to be. In the Jordan God declares us to be dead, and

it is the portion of all the people; every Christian is dead and risen with Christ; in Gilgal we have the moral realisation of this. All had crossed the Jordan, but many amongst them perhaps cared but little to inquire the meaning of the monument in Gilgal, those stones which seemed to say in living accents to the people: "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

The Twelve Stones in the Midst of Jordan.

If the twelve stones in Gilgal spoke to Israel's conscience, there was another monument set up in the midst of Jordan which spoke seriously to their hearts. Who could see the stones which the overflowing waters had covered? They could only be known to faith. They were not typical of a resurrection-life which had passed through death and bore its impress and character; they were essentially the sign of death. The stones in Gilgal are the monument of our introduction by Christ into our privileges, and into which we only enter after having passed through death with Him; but when I think of the stones in Jordan, my heart is in communion with Him in death.

I return to sit, so to speak, on the banks of the river of death, and I say: That is my place; it is there that I was; it is there that He has been for me; He has delivered me from my old man; He has left it with all that belonged to it in the depths of Jordan; I am buried beneath its waters in the Person of Christ. What led Thee, blessed Saviour, to take this place? Thou alone couldst claim exemption from it, and having laid down Thy life, Thou alone hadst the power to take it again. But it was Thy love to us which led Thee down to death; no other motive, save the glory of God which I had dishonoured, could have led Thee there. Thou hast not only fought the fight alone, and victoriously stayed the waters of Jordan "until everything was finished that the Lord commanded" (v. 10), but those waters themselves passed over Thee. I see in this monument what death was for Thy holy soul; I recognise the memorial of the exquisite bitterness of the cup which Thou didst drink.

The twelve stones "are there to this day." (v. 9) The monument remains, the cross remains, eternal witness of a love I have there learnt to know, testimony too of the only place where God could put all that belonged to my old man.

In connection with these things, notice also what we find in verse 18: "And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come up out of the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up to the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned to their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before." The sentence is executed, the old man condemned, the judgment is passed, death is conquered, but death remains. What was formerly an obstacle to entrance, an obstacle removed by the ark which opened the pathway for us, separates us when we are once across, not only from Egypt and the desert of Sinai, but from ourselves. If it were otherwise, we could have no lasting enjoyment in the land of Canaan.

The two and a half tribes (vers. 12, 13) truly crossed the Jordan with their brethren, armed for war and prepared to fight, but there were two things of which they remained in ignorance: the value of the land of Canaan, and the value of death. The river did not arrest them when they turned to rejoin their wives, their little ones, and their cattle, who were awaiting them on the opposite shore. The country "on this side" had its attractions for them, whilst the people, who were peacefully in the enjoyment

of Canaan, saw with joy that the Jordan was a barrier to separate them from all that which formerly was of any value to them.

"On that day the Lord magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life." (v. 14) It is thus with Christ. He is highly exalted as Saviour by the glory of the Father before our eyes, in virtue of His finished work, and, as the result of this work, the saints are introduced with Him into the present enjoyment and future possession of the glory. This will be to His everlasting glory and honour.

But the Lord will also have other crowns. The day will come for Him, which Solomon enjoyed in type, and of which it is said: "Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him. And all the princes and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David, submitted themselves to Solomon the king. And the Lord magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel" (1 Chr. 29:23-25). He will reign; His people Israel will be subject to

Him, and even those whom He deigned to call His brethren will bow the knee before Him, happily and joyfully acknowledging openly in His presence that He is Lord, even as they have owned Him on earth in the days of His absence and rejection.

We find another future glory of Christ in 2 Chronicles 32:23. In the time of Hezekiah, after the deliverance of Israel by the judgment of the nations in the person of the Assyrian, it is said: "And many brought gifts to the Lord to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was recognised in the sight of all nations from thenceforth." The nations will be subject to Him.

Finally, it is said in Philippians 2:9-10: "Wherefore God also has highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Heaven, earth, and hell will bow before Him who humbled Himself even to the death of the cross.

Chapter 5.

Circumcision.

In Joshua 1 we have traced the moral principles requisite for taking possession of Canaan; in Joshua 2 we have seen that, when it is a question of heavenly places, God can go outside the limits of Israel, and bring in on the principle of faith; in Joshua 3 and Joshua 4 we find the secret of entrance; and in Joshua 5 something further is unfolded to us, namely, how the victory is obtained. Consequently, this chapter opens (v. 1) with a mention of the enemies. All the kings of the Canaanites and the Amorites defile, so to speak, under our eyes, but the power given them by Satan has already been broken at Jordan, in death, in the person of their Prince. In spite of that, they are too strong for the poor children of Israel, but God is going to enable them to obtain the victory over their enemies. And how? By depriving them of all the weapons and resources which they would have found in themselves. Flesh cannot enlist in the warfare; God judges it and sets it aside; and this is the meaning of circumcision. Circumcision is "the putting off of the body of the flesh" in Christ. It is an accomplished fact for every be-

liever, just as much as the Jordan is for each of us, whether or not we realise its import.

The teaching of Colossians 2:9-15 on this point is very clear and beautiful. "In him," says the apostle, "dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." All is in Christ, nothing is lacking in Him. But in verse 10, it is we who have all in Him; nothing lacks for us: "Ye are complete in Him." We cannot, then, seek to add anything to ourselves apart from Him. Now we come to circumcision. "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." Not only, says the apostle, is there nothing to add, but there is nothing to cut off from those who are in Him. The body of the flesh is judged, you are deprived of it; it is a thing done, it is the circumcision of Christ. In verse 12, we find that this end of the old man, which takes place for us in the death of Christ, becomes personal for the Christian: "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised him from the dead." This passage embraces the thing in its extent, and corresponds with the two truths represented by the Jordan, namely, death and resurrection with Christ. Here

then we have the establishment of two great truths: we are complete before God in Christ, and perfectly delivered from all that we are in ourselves.*

* In verses 13-15, we return to the Passover and the Red Sea; we are delivered from all which can be pleaded or raised against us.

The Epistle to the Philippians (Phil. 3:3) establishes the contrast between the circumcision made with hands, and the true circumcision, that of Christ. "We are the circumcision," says the apostle, "who worship God in the Spirit." Fleshly circumcision under the law had never done that. One must have done with the flesh to be able to worship in the Spirit. Then he adds, "And who rejoice in Christ Jesus." Even religious flesh never glories in anything but itself.*

* We find a proof of this in Colossians 2:21-23. The doctrines, commandments, and teachings of men may indeed have a show of wisdom ... inasmuch as they do not spare the body, but they are for the satisfaction of the flesh.

Finally, the apostle concludes by saying: "And who have no confidence in the flesh." This is true circumcision. It is the setting aside by judgment in the cross of Christ of what the word of God calls "the flesh," so that henceforth we cannot have any

confidence whatever in it, and this is a most important truth to get hold of. When it is a question of warfare, as it was for the children of Israel, we must bear on us the stigma of the death of the flesh. Notice, too, there is no thought here of trying to have done with ourselves, or of stripping ourselves. The "putting off" was accomplished at the cross; sin in the flesh was condemned there; it is a fact which faith grasps, and which becomes a practical reality as the conscience owns and accepts this judgment. The burning coal had to touch the lips of Isaiah, and even though the judicial fire from off the altar had exhausted every atom of its power upon the victim, and the anguish being over, nothing remained but the purifying power, still the prophet had to be brought into contact with it, thus typifying the experience our consciences pass through, of divine judgment.

Gilgal.

And the Lord said to Joshua: "This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you." At the Red Sea they had been delivered from the slavery of Satan and of sin; here, for the first time, they were freed by judgment from the slavery of the flesh. But the Spirit of God adds: "Wherefore the name of the

place is called Gilgal to this day." Here we have a second great truth. As has been already observed, circumcision, judgment, the cutting off of the flesh, has been accomplished in Christ, but has also to be considered under an essentially practical aspect, and not purely as doctrine.

Gilgal was the place of circumcision, and if this place was to be the point of departure for the army of Jehovah before a single victory had been achieved, it was also to be the assembling place after victory (Joshua 10:15), and again the point of departure for fresh conquests. The judgment of the flesh was immovable. The people were to appropriate it to themselves continually, otherwise the flesh would work to regain what it had lost, and a first victory would never be followed by a second. We shall come upon Gilgal in the course of this book on more than one occasion; for the present let it suffice us to remember that if circumcision signifies the cutting off of "the body of the flesh," Gilgal is "the mortification of our members which are upon the earth." Colossians 3:5-8 teaches us this in contrast with Colossians 2:11.

Beloved, this is a daily reality, and every victory opens out fresh horizons for us in the land of promise. Without conflict

there is no means of laying hold of any of our blessings, but without Gilgal there can be no victory. Which do we value most? Canaan with its warfare, or our members upon the earth? Do we prefer the passing gratification of the lusts of the flesh to the painful task of returning to Gilgal? If so, we shall have to be taught by humiliation and chastisement how to recover the path, if, at least, we have not irrevocably lost the secret of strength in bitterness and tears and the irremediable ruin of defeat.

Canaan's Food.

The cutting off of the flesh by the judgment executed at the cross, and the practical realisation of this judgment are the first conditions indispensable for warfare. Of what use were Saul's helmet, coat of mail, or sword, to David in fighting against the Philistine? He had to "put them off him." (1 Sam. 17:39)

But there is another resource. Before going forth to fight, Israel must be seated at the table of God. To be able to withstand the toils of warfare, Israel must be nourished; that is the secret of positive strength. And what is the nourishment? Christ. He is the source of strength, and there will be no victory for the

people if they have not been previously fed. What a blessed thing to enter into the conflict with hearts fed by Christ. We may certainly expect to be defeated if we advance to meet the enemy with hearts void of Christ. In the reverse case, as we shall see in the following chapter, there is nothing alarming about the combat, and may God give us each to prove this. Let us not wait until the morrow, for we may be called to fight this very evening. Let us feed on Christ to-day, to-morrow, every moment, that we may be ready at the first signal to arise and march on to victory.

Yes, beloved, it is a Person; it is Christ who is our food; not truths, nor privileges, but Himself; and He is here presented to us as food under three different aspects: the Passover, the Old Corn of the land, and the Manna.

This Passover in Canaan is the same feast that the people had celebrated in Egypt, and yet how much they differed one from the other. There, it was a people conscious of their guilt, hastening to flee, sheltered amidst the darkness and the judgment by the blood of the paschal lamb. Here, it is a people safely landed in Canaan, delivered from the last traces of the reproach of Egypt, a risen people, who have been through death, but who

return in perfect peace to the starting-point, the foundation of all their blessings, to sit around the memorials of a Christ slain for them on the cross. The Passover in Canaan corresponds with what the Lord's Supper is for the Christian. And notice, it is a permanent food; it will not cease in the glory; only it will no longer be the remembrance of the Lord's death celebrated during His absence, neither shall we need something tangible to remind us of it, for our eyes will see in the midst of the throne, the Lamb Himself, as it had been slain, He the visible centre of the new creation founded on the cross, the basis and pivot of eternal blessing, the object upon whom myriads of myriads gaze with adoring and universal worship.

But there is more than this in our heavenly repast. "And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes and parched corn in the self-same day." (v. 11) God gave them a food which had been unknown to them in Egypt, the old corn of the land of Canaan, a heavenly, glorified Christ, but Christ as a Man who had been through this sin-stained world in a spotless humanity, the unleavened bread, and who in this same humanity had passed through the fire of

judgment like the parched corn, and who, having entered the glory in resurrection, sits as Man at the right hand of God.

Moreover He is there for us, not only as our Advocate with the Father, but as introducing us in His Person as Man into the glory. The place is prepared for man in the third heavens; he is brought in Christ into the full enjoyment of heavenly blessing. I behold this Man and say: There is my place; I am in Him, a man in Christ, possessing already the same life as He, life eternal, the life of a Man risen from among the dead; I am united to Him, seated in Him in the heavenly places, enjoying this infinite blessing by the Holy Spirit who leads me into it. Blessed Saviour! for me Thou camest down, for me Thou didst hang on the cross; Thou art gone into the glory, and Thou hast brought me into it already in Thine own Person, previous to being with Thee and like Thee for ever.

What wondrous joy and what power there is in occupation with such a Christ! "We all with unveiled face 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." (2 Cor. 3:18) In this passage we see the result of being nourished with the old corn of the land. The soul, formed by a heavenly Christ,

is able to reproduce the traits of this blessed object. Such is our portion.

Such also was that of Stephen, the faithful martyr. In him, a man on the earth, full of the Holy Spirit, as fruit of the perfect work of Christ, we see a believer in his normal character, answering perfectly to the end for which God had placed him in this world, in the midst of circumstances that were the most calculated to make him lose that character. The Spirit in him unhindered (his heart having no object on the earth, and the Holy Ghost not having to contend within him to bring him to the level of a heavenly Christ) links him with an object in heaven so as to form him here into its image. The traits of the glorified Man in heaven become in him those of a perfect man on the earth: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Here it is an example of what it is "to be changed into the same image from glory to glory." It is not anything mystical, nor a vague product of human imagination; it is in our daily life, our ways, our words, by love, intercession, patience, and dependence, that we may, through grace, show forth the likeness of a glorified Christ on whom we gaze. Is it so with us Christians in these days? Are our hearts so fed by Him that the world can see

it in our lives? Can those around us catch the rays of the glory of Christ on our countenances, as with Stephen or Moses? It would not be for us to know it, for in this case we should have lost sight of the heavenly object, and turned our eyes upon ourselves. Moses alone in the camp of Israel wist not that his countenance shone.

"And the manna ceased on the morrow." (v. 12) Israel ate it no more; manna was wilderness food; for us a Christ come down from heaven into the midst of our circumstances to encourage us in the difficulties of the way. In contrast with Israel, we Christians are privileged to have Christ as our food in every aspect at the same time, though perhaps not at the same moment. But the manna is not a permanent food. Indispensable and most blessed as it is that the remembrance of it should remain before God always, in the golden pot, and for us in "the hidden manna," still as food it is transitory and suited to the journey which comes to an end. Now the Old Corn of the land will, like the Passover, be our lasting and eternal food; not in order that we should be, as on earth, transformed gradually into His likeness, for then "we shall be fashioned like to His glorious body."

(Phil. 3:21) "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:2)

The Captain of the Lord's Host.

Conflict is about to begin, and the Captain of the host has not yet appeared. He reveals Himself at the last moment, but precisely at the needed one, "when Joshua was by Jericho." (v. 13) Faith can count on Him for the time of need. Gilgal and the heavenly repast are, as we have seen, the preparations for warfare; the power, the plan, the order, the time of battle, all that and much more is the responsibility of the Captain of the host. Such a way of fighting will be incomprehensible to one who has not been at Gilgal. He would set to work with his own contrivances, would engage the enemy too soon or too late, would rush forward without the Captain of the host, make a false movement, fall, and be conquered, leaving nothing but a catalogue of defeats.

Notice with what marvellous grace this representative of Jehovah adapts Himself to the circumstances of His people, this Angel of Jehovah of whom the Old Testament so often speaks — Jehovah Himself under this mysterious character, for it is

said of Him (Ex. 23:21) "My name is in him." As others have observed, He presents Himself with Israel as a Deliverer at the Red Sea, as the Companion of their journeyings in the desert, as Lord of Hosts in Canaan, and later on when the kingdom is established, He dwells in peace amongst them.

Blessed condescension! What assurance it gives to our souls. Here we see Him sword in hand, and it is this sword which will deal the blows. Israel needs no other.

Three times in the course of the people's history, the Angel of Jehovah intervenes with the drawn sword in his hand. The first time it is to preserve them from threatened dangers, when Balaam, on his way to curse Israel, encounters the messenger who obstructs his road (Num. 22:23), the second time, in our chapter, it is to fight with them and obtain the victory for them; the third time, alas! it is to judge the people who had sinned in the person of their king. (1 Chron. 21:16)

Beloved, we also have to do with the Angel in these three ways. How many times, without our even being aware of it, He meets the enemy who seeks to accuse or curse us; how often He, in grace, associates us in the combat against the powers of

darkness in the heavenly places; how often, too, He reveals Himself to us as He did to David, with His drawn sword turned against the city of God; that is to say, as the One who, for His own, is a consuming fire, who chastens and humbles them, but in order afterwards to replace His sword in its sheath, and in the end restore them.

Even that is consoling, in spite of all; but it is a terrible thing for a man to be met, like Balaam, by the angel with the drawn sword, because, for a reward, he was selling the gift he had received from God to the devil, the accuser of the brethren. Such a path is that of a reprobate who does not know God, but how many Christians, alas! in these days of ruin, associate themselves in some manner with the way of Balaam; how many in company with the enemy of the people of God, though clad in the prophet's dress, place themselves in the hands of the world to do the enemy's work.

"And Joshua went to him and said to him: Art thou for us or for our adversaries?" It is impossible to be neutral in the fight, and we ought all, like Joshua, to understand this. "And the Captain of the Lord's host said to Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua

did so." He who reveals Himself to Joshua as Lord of hosts claims also His character of holiness. It is impossible for those who are called to fight under a divine leader to remain associated, individually or corporately, with evil or defilement in the walk. It was partly on account of having disregarded this principle that the people were defeated before Ai. To keep unjudged evil in the heart exposes us to the judgment of God and renders us defenceless in the hands of the enemy; it is the same thing with evil in the assembly. If God is holy in redemption, as He showed Himself to be to Moses in the bush (Ex. 3:5) — and where did He make a more brilliant display of His holiness? — let us remember that He is not less holy in the combat, and that we can only engage in it after having loosened the shoes off our feet.

Chapter 6.

Jericho.

The people arrive at length in presence of the terrible obstacle raised to prevent their taking possession of Canaan. There is nothing the enemy hates more than seeing us in the enjoyment of our privileges, and taking a heavenly position. He is well

aware that a heavenly people can escape from his hands and steal his goods; therefore his chief endeavour is to set some obstacle in the way of our onward progress.

This occurs in the history of every Christian, not necessarily at the moment of conversion, but sooner or later when it is a question of entering the path of conflict for the realisation of our heavenly calling.

The first impediment put in our way by Satan is an apparently impregnable fortress, which it is impossible to enter or to quit: "None went out and none came in." (v. 1) Surely this is enough to terrify us, and to make us turn back; and this is precisely the aim of the adversary, in which, alas, he too often succeeds. Every Christian has to face at some time or other his stronghold of Jericho. I need not enumerate here the difficulties of each soul, they are diverse, but may be resumed in one word, an obstacle. If I set my face heavenwards, what will happen? I shall lose my position; I shall be cut short in my career; my friends will forsake me; my parents will never suffer it; I should have to give up all I love, and separate myself from the Christians amongst whom I received such blessing.

Such is often the aspect which the high walls of Jericho assume before the affrighted soul. Ah! how many Christians lose courage before the fight, and turn back.

But the soul, prepared by God, does not retreat in view of difficulties. It knows it is in possession of a means of overcoming them, and makes use of it. It is a very simple, but unique, way, for there is no other: it is faith. "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after that they were compassed about seven days." (Heb. 11:30) Faith is simple confidence in Another, in the Lord, and at the same time complete absence of self-confidence, for these two things are inseparable. The obstacle yields to faith. What does it matter if the walls reach up to heaven? What are they for faith? Faith counts on the power of God, and this, dear friends, is the first great characteristic of faith. "In order," says the apostle, "that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Cor. 2:5) A power absolutely divine is necessary in the fight, and can alone overthrow the obstacle, and it is solely on this power that faith rests.

We may notice, too, when faith has been appealed to, how jealous this power is of the existence of anything which could wear the appearance of human wisdom. The Captain of the Lord's

host, who talks with Joshua, does not give them the choice of arms or means of warfare. They are not to make any plan or arrangement; they are not to concert as to the means for gaining the victory; God Himself has ordered everything, and faith submits to the order established by God, uses the means which He points out, and does not invent others. We must have societies, committees, conferences, money, etc., etc., is often said. Man must have them, but faith needs nothing of the kind. God has His own means.

But, it may be said, why not simplify the path? Why all these complications? Why go round the city every day, and seven times the seventh day? Why this procession with the ark and trumpets? Faith does not ask why? It does not reason as to the means God chooses to employ; it accepts them, enters into them, and obtains the victory instead of being beaten by the enemy. It was thus at the Passover and at the Red Sea. Do you say: Then faith is without intelligence? Not at all; it first submits and then understands. Faith will tell you the reason of the seven days, the ark, the procession, the trumpets, and the shouts of joy, but it will only tell you after submission to them, otherwise it would be intelligence and not faith.

But this is not all. Faith marches forward in dependence on God, who says: "I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour." Then it is put to the test. There must be patience; the people had to march thus during six days, and then patience must have her perfect work: "The seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times."

There are yet other blessed characteristics of this precious faith which we may do well to notice. It associates us with Christ, gives us part and communion with Him. God marshals His people round the ark in the conflict. It was no longer, as at Jordan, the ark preceding the people, but here the armed men go before the ark with the priests, and the reward comes after.

But the aim and result of association with Christ is never to exalt or attach importance to man; it exalts Christ and makes much of Him. The ark itself formed the body of the army, properly speaking, the indispensable centre, the main force; and the whole attitude of the people around it, manifestly proclaimed it. Without the ark there could be neither warfare nor victory.

Faith always renders testimony to Christ: "The seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns passed on before the

Lord, and blew with the trumpets." It was a perfect testimony to the power of the ark in presence of the enemy.

Faith is zealous to exalt and render testimony to Christ, zealous for that service which is also conflict. "Joshua rose early in the morning." (v. 12) "They rose early about the dawning of the day." (v. 15) See how zeal in one provokes and encourages it in others; but we shall come to this again. In short we see that it is God alone who obtains the victory, though at the same time associating us with Christ in it. Of what use would weapons of warfare have been against Jericho? None whatever, God does it all. He desires that the power and victory should come entirely from Him, and be without any mixture of human importance.

Generally when it is a question of fighting, Christians are ready to admit that the power is of God, but they do not consent to the absolute exclusion of self, and the consequence is that they are not rewarded by a complete victory as at Jericho, where God claimed this honour for Himself; not that He refused human instrumentality, but it must be He who makes use of it, so that man may not be exalted in his own eyes. We do well to note God's way of action. He chooses instruments without strength or value in themselves, or else, if they are worth some-

thing in the eyes of men, He begins by smashing them as He did with Saul of Tarsus; then He says: "He is a chosen vessel to me." Now I can use you.

We have already noticed that the manner of action of Christians during conflict is too often exactly the opposite to that of God. They put their means and resources in the foreground. "We have formed an excellent plan; we are well organised; we have a superior staff of evangelists, and we send forth our emissaries into the four quarters of the globe." Dear friends, I am not inventing; every day one hears and reads such things; you and I have perhaps expressed ourselves in these terms before now. If we look at man's work we shall always see this deplorable mistake.

Had Israel said: Very well, let the power be God's, but let us combine to find the means wherewith to overthrow the walls of Jericho; what would have happened on the seventh day? Not a single stone of the wall would have fallen!

But here the power of the enemy gives way, and the people destroy the accursed city. More than this, their faith and activity in testimony and victory set other souls at liberty, as will al-

ways be the result when we engage in the Lord's battles. Rahab, still a prisoner, is delivered, and brought into the midst of God's people, where she can henceforth enjoy the same privileges as the victors.

One more detail I would call your attention to. Faith makes no compromise with the world, receives and takes nothing from it. God forbids the people to touch the spoil of Jericho; it is accursed. Jehovah can claim these things and glorify Himself by them; they belong to Him, but not to the children of Israel, who can only touch them to put them into "the treasury of the house of the Lord."

Such is the fight of faith. May God give us to go over these things in our hearts, so as not to be vanquished in our contest with the enemy.

Chapter 7.

Ai and the Accursed Thing.

We have just been considering the brilliant picture of a divine victory obtained by faith over Satan. After such a conquest, we say, Israel will surely proceed from one victory to another; but

not so. Joshua 7 opens with the registry of a defeat. A little town, an insignificant obstacle in comparison with Jericho, and "few people" are enough to put to flight three thousand men of Israel, and to cause the hearts of the people to melt and become as water.

There are secrets of defeat as there are secrets of victory, and the believer's chief danger lies in victory. After having gained it in real dependence upon God, the soul, if occupied with the results, willingly attributes something to itself, and the next defeat dates from that moment.

Notice the case of Joshua: "Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai." (v. 2) He repeats what he had done in Joshua 2:1 with regard to the land and Jericho. Then it was the path of God, but now the very same act becomes a human and fleshly expedient. The spies had returned from reconnoitring Jericho, saying: "Truly the Lord has delivered into our hands all the land." What need then to send further emissaries? It was in some measure a lack of dependence on God, a confidence in human means.

More than this, Joshua sent them "from Jericho," which is not the true point of departure, he forgets Gilgal, where they learnt what the flesh is, or perhaps he does not yet know that it is the place to which they must return. Joshua had found in the victory an opportunity for trusting in the flesh. He who, until now, had been a type of Christ by His Spirit acting in the believer, so as to bring him into possession of his privileges, descends to the level of an ordinary man. The typical Joshua disappears, to make room for Joshua as a man.

Is it not often so with us? Every believer in his measure is a representative of Christ, an epistle intended to make Him known, which, directly we forget Gilgal, disappears to give place to the old man which we have neglected to judge.

But the people, alas! follow the example of their leader. The men sent by Joshua having returned, said to him: "Let not all the people go up: but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither, for they are but few." (v. 3) They have the most implicit confidence in themselves; they will "smite Ai." What is it for us and our men of war? Have we not shown our capability at Jericho? Dangerous confidence! But there is not only this lack of de-

pendence on God, and self-confidence, the fruit of unjudged flesh; there is more; coveted things, hidden from every eye, are buried in the earth in the midst of a tent; the accursed thing is there.

God had cursed the town of Jericho; all that belonged to it was under the curse; no one dared keep any of it lest he should make himself and the camp of Israel accursed. (Joshua 6:18) One man only had disobeyed, and, hearkening to his lusts, had stolen of the accursed thing. Which of us is free in heart from this?

This man had followed his natural inclinations, he had begun where we all begin, where the first man began. "I saw." (v. 21) "When the woman saw" is said in Genesis 3:6. He had eyes which knew how to discern the goodly things amongst the spoil. His eyes were the avenue to his heart, but there was no sentinel to watch, no "qui vive" to resound in case of an attack. It is through the eyes that the accursed thing takes possession of the heart, and provokes it to lust: "I coveted them." "Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin": "I took them." The goodly Babylonish garment which could adorn the pride of life, the silver and gold which could satisfy every lust, became

the prey of Achan; nay, rather, these things make him their prey! Fatal and Satanic chain which links the world to man's natural heart, in order to make him the sport of the prince of this world.

Notice now how the sin of one man has to do with all Israel. (v. 1) "But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing ... and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel." The people might have said: Does that concern us? How could we have known about a hidden thing, and not having known it, how are we responsible? To all that we reply, that God always has the unity of His people before His eyes. He considers individuals as members of one whole, and responsible the one for the other. The suffering and sin of one is the suffering and sin of all, and if it is thus with Israel, how much more so with us, the church of God, one body united by the Holy Spirit to the Head which is in heaven.

If, however, their souls had been in a good state, God would have manifested the hidden evil in their midst. The power of an ungrieved Spirit in the assembly brings to light all that dishonours Christ amongst His own. The reason it was not so with Israel, was that there was something unjudged in the people and

their leader. The hidden evil of Achan is the means of bringing out the hidden evil in the heart of the people. When the assembly is in a good state, although always answerable for the sin of one of its members, it is made aware of it by the Holy Spirit, and finds itself in a position to put away the evil from its midst, and, as the case may be, to put out the wicked person.* It was thus in the early days of the church, in the case of the cutting off of Ananias and Sapphira; the power of the Spirit of God discovered and judged the evil immediately. But here in Israel, hearts had to be brought by self-judgment to bear the sin of one as the sin of all before God.

- * See Deut. 13:6; 19:19; 21:18, 21; 24:7; 1 Cor. 5:13. It is well to observe that the cases where a man may be designated as a wicked person are not all specified in the word of God. No mention is made of a murderer, etc. The judgment being left to the spirituality of the assembly.

Is it thus with us in these days of ruin? Do we feel the evil in the church? Do we recognise our responsibility as to all the corruption which has been introduced? Or are we self-confident enough, in the presence of the rubbish, to think that we could do better than others, and that the ruin of the church is not our doing? If our hearts are not habitually thus before God,

we are sectarian; and, more than this, we may have to be reminded by a terrible defeat of the humility which becomes those who ought to have remained at Gilgal. See how differently from our miserable hearts God judges. He says: "Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them; for they have even taken of the accursed thing; and have also stolen and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff." (v. 11)

In verses 5 and 6 we find the chastisement of the people. Three thousand men of Israel flee before Ai; and the hearts of the people melt and become like water because thirty-six of them are smitten. They are prostrate; strength and energy fail them; fear takes possession of their souls, for their courage has been carnal. So proud of their previous victory, they fall now to the level of the Amorites whose "hearts melted" when they heard of the crossing of Jordan. This was a sad but necessary experience, for they had forgotten Gilgal; and Satan undertakes to teach them through the bitterness of a defeat, what amount of strength they possess, and how much confidence can be placed in the flesh. Ah! if they had been with God they would have been preserved from a defeat, as we see very remarkably in the

Apostle Paul's experience. He had been triumphantly caught up to the third heavens, into paradise, and there he had heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter, but when he came down again to the earth, a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, was given to buffet him. The flesh was in him, and would have exalted itself, but God anticipates it and hinders his beloved servant from being puffed up.

The danger was great, for had he listened to the flesh, how many flattering things he would have said to himself in consequence of this wonderful vision, thus compromising, not only his peace, but even his apostleship and his course. But God takes care of His servant, giving him the necessary corrective, in order that the course of his victories may be uninterrupted. Paul learns by "the thorn" which is his Gilgal, that the flesh, even the best, is worth nothing. God says to him: Never mind the infirmity — the thorn in the flesh; stay at Gilgal, it is precisely what you need, for in this way the power will be entirely mine and will obtain the victory; and as for thee, my grace is sufficient! It was a place of suffering and humiliation for Paul, but of wondrous blessing! He was with God, in communion with the Lord, and the messenger of Satan is but the means of

keeping him at Gilgal, and not of bringing him back there by a defeat.

And Joshua the man of God? Alas! he rends his clothes and falls to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord. (v. 6) Where was the ark in the war with Ai, before which the walls of Jericho had fallen? Joshua's godly soul acknowledges its worth, but he does not know what to do, and, ignoring the accursed thing, he gives vent to regrets, not regrets as to what he has done, not as to what the people have done, but, alas! as to what God had done when He brought them over Jordan! "Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!" said he. How plainly these words show what man's heart is! This blessed place is the only one that Joshua would fain have avoided.

The tone of his request betrays weakness. First it is Israel, the name of Israel which occupies his thoughts; then it is the Canaanites, the world. "Israel turns their backs before their enemies!" "The Canaanites ... shall hear of it." They shall "cut off our name from the earth." Then quite at the end: "What wilt thou do to thy great name?" (vv. 8, 9) The example given us in the history of God's faithful servant Moses is very different.

(Ex. 32:11, 13) He had been on the mount of God, and there God reveals to him the evil which had gone on in the camp; the sin of the people does not remain hidden from the eyes of Moses. Aware of it before coming down from the mount, does he think of Israel's shame? No, he is occupied with what is suited to the Lord's name. He recognises the claims of offended holiness. As for the nations his only concern is, as to whether God would be glorified in the eyes of the Egyptians by the defeat of His people. As for Israel, he appeals to the grace of God, to the only thing which glorifies Jehovah's name in the presence of guilty Israel. Moses had no need, like Joshua, to recover lost communion; he can intercede for the people, and he is heard.

Joshua, on the contrary, is found precisely in the attitude in which he ought not to be. "Get thee up," said the Lord to him, "wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" (v. 10) To humble himself for his lack of power was not the only thing to be done: it was time to act. We find the opposite to this in Judges 20, where Israel ought to have humbled themselves first and then acted. Miserable flesh! What disorder does it not introduce into the things of God! Always outside the current of His thoughts,

if not in open hostility to Him. May we join with the apostle in saying: "We, who have no confidence in the flesh." Joshua had to act; the accursed thing had to be put away from amongst them.

The children of Israel had soon forgotten the presence of the Lord, which alone could open their eyes to the evil in their midst. Joshua himself had been in some measure taken in this snare of Satan, and involved in the people's weakness. If he had realised in his soul the attitude he assumed in Joshua 5, in loosening the shoe from off his foot, he would have understood the necessity of holiness for the people, if God's holy presence was to be with them. But Joshua falls to the earth upon his face and almost reproaches God for His grace, forgetful of His holiness: "Wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan?" He was not, for the moment at least, in the current of God's thoughts, and God makes him feel it. His thoughts were out of tune. When the accursed thing enters into the testimony of God, what we have to do is to sanctify ourselves, and to put away the evil from our midst. It is not a question here of power, but of holiness and of obedience. God said to Joshua: "Up, sanctify the people." To sanctify oneself is to separate oneself

from all evil to God. It is impossible without holiness to have God with us.

This is one of the most important truths for the present day. What should characterise us now, as in Philadelphia, is communion with "the holy and the true." I am speaking merely of an ordinary case of excommunication, and not of a case of discipline complicated, it may be, by the incapacity of the assembly to judge evil. I would not for a moment omit the true humiliation which should always accompany action in a case of discipline.

It was necessary that Israel should both individually and as a nation pass in review under the searching eye of Jehovah Himself (vers. 14, 15); their conscience was thus awakened and self was judged; each one took his place in presence of the judgment. It was the same when the wicked person at Corinth was put away. "Godly sorrow" had worked in the Corinthians a "repentance to salvation not to be repented of." Sorrow had produced humiliation, accompanied by activity and zeal in purifying the assembly of God from evil. Thus true humiliation and action went together. "For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you,

yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!" (2 Cor. 7:11)

To return to the question of holiness. In Joshua 5 we have individual holiness, and in Joshua 7 corporate. In order that Israel should not be defiled and partakers of the accursed thing, they must put away what had entered into the midst of the congregation. Rarely do we find intelligence amongst the children of God with regard to these two aspects of practical holiness. Christians more often seek the first, that is individual holiness, and esteem the second of no importance.

Let us take an illustration to show that individual holiness is never fully entered into apart from corporate holiness. Supposing I have a son who is blameless as to his character, and whose virtues are everywhere spoken of. He is respected in the town, and on all sides I hear the remark, "What a good son you have!" Now, this son of mine, though he does not himself drink, spends every evening at the public-house, in the company of drunkards, instead of remaining in his father's house and taking his place at the family board. Can I call him a good son?

From 2 Corinthians 6:16 to 7:1 we learn the close connection between these two aspects of holiness. God begins with corporate holiness "Ye are the temple of the living God." (v. 16) The temple of God is holy." (1 Cor. 3:17) It is positional holiness. "What agreement has the temple of God with idols?" "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate." (Ver 17) This is practical corporate holiness. Then he adds: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. 7:1) This is individual holiness, and it is inseparable from corporate holiness and the promises attaching thereto.

But the corporate side is not understood by the generality of God's people who go through the world, alas! without troubling themselves about their fellow Christians, and to whom such a thing as corporate responsibility is unknown.

One often hears it said: "Oh! I do not concern myself about others; I am alone with God; I take the Lord's supper individually," etc. This is not how God views us. Let me repeat it: He sees us altogether as forming one body, united by the Holy Spirit to His glorified Son. The sin and the suffering of one

member is the sin and suffering of the whole body. One more word in passing, on the sentence referred to above, which one so often hears from the lips of Christians: "I take the Lord's supper for myself." What does Scripture say? "For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Cor. 10:17) Who are the "many" with whom you profess to be one body? You take the supper individually to excuse your alliance with the world at the Lord's table, and you do not see that you profess to be one body with the murderers of our Saviour, for it is the world that crucified Him.

Let us notice another point in the chapter. God said, "Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow." (v. 13) We are called to sanctify ourselves before and not at the moment of action. Whence comes our frequent incapacity to judge evil and to act for God? Because we have not sanctified ourselves beforehand. Why is it that so often at the worship meetings our hearts are cold and our lips silent in praise? Because we have not been obedient to the word: "Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow." It is the same in 1 Corinthians 5. The apostle possessed the power, but not the Corinthians. They were simply to obey in purging out

the old leaven to be a new lump; they had to put away the wicked person from their midst.

Achan had partaken of what was under the curse of God, and he had to be put away. It was done in the valley of Achor.

But, wonderful to say, we read in Hosea 2:15 this comforting word respecting Israel: "I will give her the valley of Achor for a door of hope." Yes, beloved friends, it is always thus; blessing is given to us on the very threshold of judgment. It is at the place of judgment that the soul at the time of its conversion finds the door of hope; it is there that it meets Christ. And later on, the believer finds the time of discipline to be the birth place of hope and joy. It will be in this valley where God pronounced their judgment, that the people of Israel will, by-and-by, be blessed of God. It was there that Joshua was recovered in soul for a walk henceforth with God, while leading the people to victory.

Chapter 8.

The Way of Recovery.

The wicked person had been put away from the congregation of Israel, but by the presence of evil in their midst, God had brought them to the discovery of their own self-confidence. Such cases often present themselves when an assembly is satisfied with its state, and begins to boast of it, and of its blessing and growth. Israel did this, placing their reliance not in God but in their late victory, and thus preparing a way for defeat. They had to be judged, and then to purify themselves from the evil. But restoration of soul does not consist only in self-judgment and practical sanctification. Communion with God, which sin has interrupted, must be restored.

Here I would make a remark which is perhaps of importance. In Joshua 6 God manifests His power in connection with Israel in the victory over the enemy at Jericho. This same power is shown too in the Christian's life. It may be that one has been in the enjoyment of divine power and the victories thereby obtained, without perhaps having really known either God or oneself.

And yet there was no excuse for Joshua's want of apprehension. The Captain of the Lord's host had revealed Himself to him with the drawn sword in His hand, as the Holy One armed with power for the conflict. Then, in company with the people, Joshua had witnessed the exercise of this power before Jericho; but his conscience had to be brought in contact with divine holiness, and he had as yet no sense of what it necessitated from the people as to the character of their walk. The anger of the Lord (Joshua 7:1) had to be made known to Israel and their leader, before they could learn that God in His holiness could not tolerate the accursed thing. The knowledge of God in power is not all. To possess a true and complete knowledge of Him much more has to be learnt.

With regard to Gilgal and the learning of ourselves, it might seem that when once this point in the soul's history is reached, self ought to be done with, but in reality this is only practically realised in the measure that one keeps at Gilgal. How little did the people know themselves after the victory of Jericho! Though God had taken a thousand pains to prove to them that all was of Him in the victory, what self-sufficiency, what for-

getfulness they show in attempting to face the enemy without Him!

Flight and trouble are the result, and when they resume the offensive, their path becomes difficult, laborious, and full of complications, thus exposing to their view their own weakness, which had been already made apparent to the enemy in their defeat. They have to retrace their steps, forced afresh to the discovery of themselves, but it will now be a lesson learnt through grace with Christ and not with Satan.

Notice in Joshua 8 how complicated everything becomes, through not having followed the simple path of faith. The soul, humbled, finds itself once more with God, and His presence with it, but the consequences of a carnal walk remain; and although God can ultimately use these for their blessing, the path has no longer the simplicity of the early days of faith. It is a very simple path, for, to the believer who follows God's guidance in human dependence on His word, victory is assured. It was thus at Jericho, and the same power which had brought down the walls of the accursed city is with Israel at Ai; it has not changed, although the army must manoeuvre and separate

into two corps, five thousand men lying in ambush, whilst the rest entice the defenders of Ai out of their stronghold.

In Joshua 7 the spies had said in their report: "Let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai, for they are but few." And now about thirty thousand chosen mighty men of valour are required. What a humiliation, and how it lowered Israel in their own estimation! They had to go up by night, and whilst some hid, others feigned flight before the enemy. What room for boasting after this?

But you may say: You have shown us that at Jericho it was not a question of human means, and now here are all sorts of contrivances for conquering the enemy. I reply: If you are content to use means which bring your incapacity into prominence, leaving on man the impress of his total weakness, and humiliating him so that his only resource is to flee before the foe, all well and good. But it is not in your power to do this. In truth at Ai they are no more human means than at Jericho. The difference is, that there God ordered the arrangements so that Israel might learn his power, whilst at Ai His object was to teach them their own weakness.

But in the one case and the other, let me repeat, the power of God had not changed, Israel gained the victory at Ai by means of it; Joshua was there, Joshua with the spear in his hand. At Jehovah's command Joshua stretched out the spear that he had in his hand toward the city. (v. 18) "For Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai" (v. 26). It remained stretched out all through the conflict.

One often hears it repeated: "What does it matter if there are divisions? Have we not all the same end in view? Are we not all fighting for the same Lord, although it may be under different standards?" Is this then the teaching to be gathered from these chapters? No, they maintain one great prevailing truth. The people were one; one in their victory, one in their failure, one in their defeat, one in the judgment of the evil, one in their restoration. We see around us the poor children of God scattered and divided, and they are content to say: "What does it matter?" Brethren, for what purpose did Christ die? Was it not "to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." (John 11:52) Does God scatter them after He

has gathered them? No, it is the wolf who scatters the sheep. (John 10:12) And can we say: "What does it matter?"

Diversity is not division; for it displays itself in unity. The ambush take Ai and set it on fire, whilst the twenty-five thousand men flee before their enemies, until advised by the smoke of the city to turn back upon them. Just as they begin to fight, the ambush issuing out of the city join in the battle (v. 22), and then all the Israelites return to Ai and smite it with the edge of the sword. (v. 24) Thus there is diversity in the action and service, but it is an action in common. The body is one; the several parts are joined together, and Joshua with his spear is the bond of union. If the unity is lost sight of, defeat is the result.

In 1 Corinthians 12, we find diversity and unity closely brought together in the church. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit," "and there are diversities of operations; but it is the same God which works all in all." (vv. 4, 6) "For as the body is one and has many members" (this is diversity in unity), "and all the members of that one body being many are one body" (this is unity in diversity), "so also is the Christ." We are united in one body, the Christ, and yet every child of God has his appointed work which no one can accomplish for him. Each

one is entrusted with a different service; I cannot do yours, nor you mine.

Israel is now restored to communion with God. Throughout this scene the activity of the people is blessedly characterised by the presence of Joshua. When they were going to war, we read: "Joshua arose, and all the people." (v. 3) On the eve of battle: "Joshua lodged that night amongst the people." (v. 9) When the march was about to begin: "Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley." (v. 13) When it was a question of enticing the enemy: "Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten." (v. 15) When they had put to flight the enemy: "Joshua and all Israel ... slew the men of Ai." (v. 21) And finally when the victory was decided in their favour: "Joshua drew not his hand back ... until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai." (v. 26)

The Recovery of Gibeah.

The effect of the defeat at Ai was that the Israelites learnt to know their own hearts better, and at the same time the character of the God who went before them. Before noting the practical results of what God had taught them through discipline, I

should like to point out a resemblance between Joshua 7, 8, and Judges 20, 21.

It is an accepted fact that the book of Judges after Judges 17 does not follow any chronological order (Judges 20:28), but gives us a picture of what took place before God raised up the judges, of the history of Israel immediately after the death of Joshua. There had been utter and rapid decline; idolatry and moral corruption reigned everywhere. At the beginning and end of these chapters we find the statement: "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes." No such thing as dependence on God and His word, man's conscience being the measure of good and evil. Each one walked according to his own sense of right and wrong, making conscience the measure of his conduct.

Is not this a picture of Christendom and of what happened after the departure of the apostles? Was decline less complete and sudden? Leaving aside the corrupt principles of popery, which does enlightened Protestant Christendom bring forward as the rule of conduct, the word of God or conscience? Does it teach subjection to the Scriptures, or is its watchword liberty of con-

science? If conscience is taken as a guide, absolute confusion is the result, each one hastening to follow his own opinion.

But a horrible sin had taken place at Gibeah; and that not as in Joshua 7, the accursed thing, hidden failure, but as a sin committed openly before God and man. The unhappy Levite himself publishes his shame, every tribe in Israel being apprised of it (Judges 19:29). And the people, what of them? Well, God uses the sin of Gibeah, as He did the sin of Achan, to lay bare their moral condition, to humble them and to awaken within them the consciousness of what is due to God. Only here the moral state of the tribes is more serious; they have sunk much lower than at Ai. Indignant at the wrong done to themselves, the thought of the wrong done to God is entirely overlooked. They speak of the folly wrought by Gibeah in Israel, of the wickedness done amongst those of the tribe of Benjamin, but not a word of the dishonour brought upon the Lord's name. How evident the declension, and how different are the words of Phinehas to the two and a half tribes: (Joshua 22:16) "What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel?"

To this first symptom of decline, we may add a second; namely, that they had abandoned what might be called their first love. The Lord was no longer before their eyes; their affection for Him, and consequently for those born of Him, had diminished. They forgot that Benjamin was their brother. "Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin?" (v. 18) and these last on their side "would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel." (v. 13)

A third symptom of decline is that they lose sight of the unity of the people. No doubt, to all appearance, the eleven tribes presented a unity nearly as perfect as when Israel purified themselves from Achan and were restored at Ai. Nevertheless it was no longer God's unity. It was in vain that the people "were gathered together as one man" (v. 1), or that they "arose as one man" (v. 8), or that they were knit together as one man" (v. 11), against Gibeah: God could not recognise the unity of Israel whilst Benjamin was lacking. Beloved, these links in the chain of declension are riveted one to the other; forgetfulness of the presence of God, surrender of the first love, contempt for the real unity in spite of a show of the same.

And was not Benjamin guilty? Yes, exceedingly so. One sees that his mind was made up from the outset not to judge evil. Warned equally with the other tribes (Judges s19:29) of a crime patent to all, knowing that the children of Israel were about to judge the evil, in fact warned, albeit in a carnal spirit, that he would have to purify himself, he yet turns a deaf ear to the call of duty. By establishing the principle of independence, he disowns the unity of Israel, and far from purifying himself from the crime of Gibeah, he links himself with it, at the same time resorting to a useless and miserable attempt at making a distinction. (v. 15) Benjamin had to be judged, but the state of the people as a whole was too bad to admit of a divine judgment on their part, and they must be sifted before being able in truth to purify themselves from the sin of Gibeah.

If Israel had had a right sense of things, they would have first humbled themselves before the Lord, taken counsel of Him, and then acted; instead of which they begin by consulting one another, miserable result of forgetfulness of God's presence; they take measures, and decide very scripturally "to put away the evil from Israel," quite forgetting that they are themselves infected by the evil, that Benjamin is in fact part of them. After

having made all their arrangements and numbered their warriors, "they arose and went up to the house of God and asked counsel of God." (v. 18) This is also the spirit of declension, and it is to be found everywhere in Christendom, and often amongst the children of God; in fact it is a widely established principle. We propose some plan to ourselves, and at the moment of its execution, often after all is arranged, we ask the blessing of God.

The result of this total oversight of divine principles, was that in the first day twenty-two thousand Israelites were destroyed down to the ground. Then they went up and wept before the Lord; their hearts are now full of sorrow instead of carnal indignation, and they call Benjamin their brother. Their love and sense of responsibility one to another is revived. After this they again set their battle in array and lose eighteen thousand men in a second defeat. God in His goodness sought to produce a perfect result. Sorrow in itself was not everything, neither the proclamation of the bonds which united them; what was needed was a full and complete judgment of self; repentance before God. To enjoy once more the presence of the Lord and His communion, they must retrace their steps in the pathway of de-

clension. Thus it is said: "Then all the children of Israel and all the people went up, and came to the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the Lord, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord." (v. 26)

What comes next bears a striking analogy to the scene at Ai. They were obliged to set liers in wait (v. 29), to flee before Benjamin (v. 32); and after all their previous losses to have thirty men wounded to death, and to make a great flame like smoke rise up out of the city, to serve as a signal. Thoroughly judged and restored to communion with God, Israel can now discharge the painful duty of judging Benjamin for his profanity; but ah! what weeping and tears follow on the victory. (Judges 21:2) How different from the scene at Jericho, where "the people shouted with a great shout, and the wall fell down flat." (Joshua 6:20) Here it was a question of their own brethren, of a tribe all but cut off in judgment. But God in grace restores the gleanings of Benjamin, notwithstanding the many complications brought about by the carnal haste of Israel in their first decisions.

There is however one part of the congregation of Israel which the restored people treat with more severity than Benjamin himself. There came none to the camp from Jabesh-Gilead to the assembly. (Judges 21:8) It was bare-faced indifference, and neutrality with regard to the evil of which they took no account; far worse than the spirit of fleshly indignation in which Benjamin had revolted, despising a decision of the assembly, and which had led him to take arms against his brethren, while associating himself with evil. Jabesh had to be utterly destroyed.

Results of Discipline.

But to return to Joshua and the people. Israel had learnt in the pathway of humiliation not to trust in themselves, and this expression at once bears fruit. Henceforth if controlled by the word of God, and trusting in its perfect guidance, they would escape further falls. In verses 27-35, we see Joshua and the people obeying the Lord's commandment (vers. 27, 31, 33, 35), and depending on what is written in the book of the law. (vv. 31, 34) The effect of being humbled is that Joshua and the people are reminded in heart of the statutes laid down in Deuteronomy 27.

More than this: the hanging of the king of Ai shows that Joshua is informed as to the details of his conduct by the word of God. "As soon as the sun went down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcase down from the tree." (c.f. Deut. 21:22-23) To all human appearance this would be a detail of no importance, but a heart fed by the word of God could not overlook it. To neglect it, would have been to lose sight of the holiness of God, and Joshua would then have failed in the very point which brought down chastisement on the people. "His body shall not remain all night upon the tree ... for he that is hanged is accursed of God; that thy land be not defiled which the Lord thy God gives thee for an inheritance." (Deut. 21:23) And again: "Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell; for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel." (Num. 35:34) In a word, a holy God could not dwell in the midst of defilement; this was the blessed lesson which Joshua received from the Lord of hosts before Jericho, which he learnt amidst tears in the valley of Achor, and which, with a conscience exercised in the school of God, he blessedly realised in the day of victory.

We learn another lesson in the judgment of the king of Ai. The bringing together in Deuteronomy 21:18-23 of the two events contained in Joshua 7 and Joshua 8, the cutting off of the wicked person and the judgment of the enemy, is not without significance. This is practically always the case. The assembly must purge out the evil from its midst before it can silence and bring to nought the evil outside. You will find, where evil is tolerated in the assembly, a total absence of that decision and firmness which deals with the enemy as such, without coming to terms, and puts him at the outset in the only place assigned to him of God, according to the scripture: "He that is hanged is accursed of God."

There is one more striking coincidence in the verses we are considering. The gibbet of the king of Ai was the place of the judgment and curse of Israel's enemy. But here the people are obliged to stand themselves on Mount Ebal, where the curse of God is pronounced upon them. This terrible conclusion of the law which Israel could not escape, God had brought to nought by the cross of Christ.* Christ bore on the cross the curse which was pronounced at Ebal on man as a responsible being, to redeem us from it. Israel could see in type on the gibbet at

Ai, what we see in the cross of Christ, Satan, our chief enemy, defeated and annihilated; but we see also, as has been already remarked, all the curse under which we lay at Ebal, for ever gone in the actual judgment of Him who took this place for us. In Galatians 3:10, 13, we find the same blessed connection between Ebal and the cross. "For it is written" (Deut. 27:26), "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." The curses at Ebal close with these words, but the apostle adds: "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree." This is the hanging of the king of Ai.

* It should be noted that the altar here was built upon Mount Ebal, not on Mount Gerizim, and served, so to speak, as a counterpoise in grace to the curse.

A further result of discipline was that Israel, now humbled, were in a state to worship. "Then Joshua built an altar to the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal ... and they offered thereon burnt-offerings to the Lord, and sacrificed peace-offerings." With us likewise, there can be no communion without self-judgment, and no worship without communion. The altar in Mount Ebal was the provision in grace for the curse of the law

on transgressors. In the altar we have propitiation, which is the basis of all true worship; only here it is in presence of a people threatened by the curse if they do not obey. The cross which has put an end to the curse for us, is the starting-point or centre of our worship, and sheds upon us the full light of divine grace.

But grace itself never weakens our responsibility as God's children. There are conditions under which the land is taken possession of. A duplicate of the law was to be written upon great stones set up and plastered with plaster. (Deut. 27:2-3; Joshua 8:32) This same law was read aloud "before all the congregation of Israel." (v. 35) Let us never forget that Jesus Christ is at the same time our Saviour and our Lord, the One who has pardoned us, and the One who has every claim over us. The knowledge of His grace fills our mouths with praise in worship; the sense of our responsibility leads us to persevere in holiness and truth, to fight the good fight, to take possession of the promised land.

Chapter 9.

The Snare of Gibeon.

As we advance in the study of our chapters, the enemy presents himself under new aspects. Satan knows how to make war; he knows how to place his batteries, to attack openly, and to overwhelm by numbers; but he also knows how to employ subterfuge, to deceive by craft, and to ensnare. Jericho, as an obstacle, gave way before faith; but Satan is not discouraged, he gets at Israel by means of their lusts, and the accursed thing enters into the camp; he occupies the soul with past victories, and self-confidence takes possession of the heart. Israel, forgetful of the whole armour of God, is caught in the enemy's nets. But Satan's victory is the school of God for the righteous. They cease trusting in themselves, and entering into the claims of God's holiness, they seek their safeguard in the word of God, owning, at length, their responsibility, of which they seemed previously scarcely aware.

In Joshua 9 we find more particularly "the wiles of the devil," and it is expressly against these that we are cautioned in the word. In order to stand firm, we must "put on the whole armour of God; be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

We see the power of God under various aspects in the Epistle to the Ephesians, and in the first chapters of Joshua. In Ephesians 1:19, His power toward us corresponds typically with the crossing of Jordan. In Ephesians 3:16, 20, His power in us corresponds with the divinely-spread table in Joshua 5; and in Ephesians 6:10, His power with us, and the armour, in its various parts, corresponds with the conflict with the power of evil, such as we see in the succeeding chapters of Joshua.

We have already seen what vessels God takes up, through which to glorify Himself in this conflict; creatures so weak, that their only resource is to depend on Him. As I have often said, God makes use of two classes of instruments to accomplish His work: first, those who have no value in themselves. "God has chosen the foolish, weak, base things of the world, and things which are despised, and things which are not." (1 Cor. 1:27-28) Could stronger language be used to convey the nothingness of the vessels God deigns to use? But He also takes up instruments which are of great value in the eyes of men and to themselves. Saul of Tarsus was a man looked up to — learned, religious, energetic, conscientious; to all appearance he lacked in nothing of that which God could turn to ac-

count, Yet God lays hold of him, strikes him to the ground, on the way to Damascus, and, so to speak, breaks the vessel to pieces. Then He says, Now I can use him.

The consciousness of our nothingness as instruments keeps us in constant dependence on the hand which makes use of us, and this is the pathway of power. It was thus at Jericho, but the people had yet to learn that without dependence they became the prey of Satan. In closing the description of the armour, the apostle adds, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching "hereunto with all perseverance." (Eph. 6:18) Prayer is the expression of dependence; continual, persevering prayer is the expression of habitual dependence. Now the Israelites' chief fault, in Joshua 9, was, "that they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord." (v. 14) We saw, at the close of the preceding chapter, that the word of God had recovered its importance for them; but here they forget to go to God, so as to have communion with Him as to His mind for them.

Notice how Satan succeeds in making them lose the sense of dependence. He intimidates them by something calculated to strike terror into their hearts; the hatred of the world, a confed-

eration of kings assembled for war (vv. 1, 2). He begins by engaging their attention with this formidable power prepared to crush them, and then, without losing a moment, he offers them his resource: the inhabitants of Gibeon come to the camp at Gilgal. Israel was not prepared for this, they had not on the whole armour of God. The leaders of the people failed in detecting what seems to have occurred to the minds of the simple — for a moment, at least; and it is often so; humility and a single eye go together, and are accompanied by true and divine intelligence. "Make ye a league with us," said the Gibeonites. What a good opportunity for Israel! "The enemy is before you," whispered Satan; "this would be a splendid way of overcoming him."

These men came, with all sorts of good intentions, seeking an alliance with the people of God, and openly acknowledging their moral and spiritual supremacy. "We are thy servants," they said to Joshua (v. 8), words well calculated to influence him in their favour. Finally, they proclaim the power and fame of Israel's God, and what He had done in Egypt and the wilderness, though, it is true, they do not say a word about Canaan;

Satan would betray himself by chancing to speak of heavenly places and their conflicts.

The character of the Gibeonites, and their religious convictions, are very strongly marked, but they are Canaanites in disguise, the world under an external form of piety — the religious world. Up to this Israel had been kept from seeking human aid, but it was hard to resist those who professed to have the same object, and the same aspirations. Is it not a legitimate thing to form an alliance? We own Jehovah, as you do, and, in case of need, we could co-operate with you as your servants.

Ah! how little the children of Israel suspected at this moment that the Gibeonites were those very Canaanites whom they were commanded to drive out from the land of promise. They are caught in the enemy's net, having neglected to take counsel of the Lord, and, as a sign of fellowship, they take of the victuals of these men. The treaty is concluded; the world is introduced into the midst of the congregation of Israel. What a diabolical artifice! Satan suggests to the people the introduction of the world into the camp, as a method of conquering the enemy, thus offering himself as a means of overcoming himself.

He knew well that the moment he had succeeded in bringing in this element, the way would be paved for everything else.

Do not these things remind us of the church's history? The hearts of the Lord's people had begun to be corrupted as early as the days of the apostles, by the outward attractions of a religion suited to the earth and the world, which was creeping in everywhere, and which obscured the heavenly position, its interests and hopes, beguiling souls into an alliance with the world which had crucified Christ. Satan gained his end. He set up his throne in the midst of the church, and the apostle was obliged at length to say, "among you, where Satan dwells." (Rev. 2:13) Henceforth, alas! it is no longer a question merely of conflict with enemies outside, but of standing against the power of evil in the church.

But the grace of God is with Israel, and although this chapter gives us the entrance of evil into the congregation, we do not find its development. God delivers us from certain consequences of our sin, and allows others to remain. The people of God had to undergo the mournful experience of keeping the Gibeonites in their midst, as a lasting witness to their failure. Having begun by murmuring against the princes, the children

of Israel are brought eventually to a truer sense of their duty. There was but one thing to do, namely, to bear with the Gibeonites in their midst, whilst keeping them in the place of the curse. "Now, therefore, ye are cursed," said Joshua to them. (v. 23) Israel could only view them as an accursed race. The judgment of the king of Ai was pronounced, not executed, upon them, and in the meantime their safety lay in the name of Jehovah. Israel could not touch them; they must bear their humiliation, and avoid henceforth having any fellowship with those whom they left under the weight of the divine curse.

We, too, in the church have to undergo the consequences of our unfaithfulness, and to be humbled on account of the evil which has crept into the house of God. But, whilst truly alive to this our shame, we shall yet, if faithful, be able to distinguish between what is of God, and what merely bears His name outwardly. The word discerns and reveals to us the mixture, and faith leaves the religious world under the curse, at the same time acting in grace towards it.

In 2 Samuel 21 we find another chapter of the history of the Gibeonites; and here we clearly see that God's purpose was in nowise to remove them from the place which they had usurped

in the congregation of Israel. Saul, animated by ardent zeal for the congregation, but in nowise for God, being completely ignorant of His mind, had exterminated them. Years pass, and suddenly we find a famine breaking out in Israel. David seeks the face of the Lord, and inquires into the cause of this calamity; and the Lord answers: "It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites." The flesh, which has brought in the evil, is eager, above everything, to get rid of it. The way of God is quite otherwise: His children must feel the evil, and it is thus that their communion with Him shows itself in an evil day. In Ezekiel 9:4, the Lord tells the angel to set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst of Jerusalem. Those who felt the evil were expressly sheltered from the destructor.

Beloved brethren, principles such as these should guide us in these closing days. It is not for us to take the sword, and cut off the evil, but to groan and sigh, saying, "The evil is mine." We cannot purify the place; it only remains for us to humble ourselves, and, at the same time, purge ourselves from vessels to dishonour. This is what a worldly Christian never learns; he

is not humbled by the presence of the world in the church; he defends it, and deems it an impossibility to distinguish between the Gibeonites and the children of Israel. Far from pronouncing them accursed, or robbing them of any part of the blessed liberty of the children of God, or declaring them strangers to His people (cf. Deut. 29:11), he would be tempted rather to become their servant, and to cut wood for the house of their god.

The seven sons of Saul were hung, and became accursed, on account of this bloody deed of slaying the Gibeonites, which was a pretence at purifying the congregation. How many similar cases the history of the church affords. The extermination of heretics, real or supposed, was no other than the crime of Saul, and will be reckoned to its perpetrators.

May God give us a spirit of constant dependence upon Him, that so we may be enabled to resist the snares of the devil. This chapter gives us only one of his wiles, but, if alive to the danger, we shall discover that his design in every artifice is to turn away our gaze from heavenly things, and so to lower our Christianity, that it should be nothing more than what the world can share in with us.

Chapter 10.

The Victory of Gibeon.

Before entering upon this new subject, I should like to make one or two incidental remarks.

The more I ponder these chapters of Joshua, the more I am struck with the part Satan plays in them. He combines circumstances to attain his end, and in this way he gets hold of people unknown to themselves; his suggestions are mistaken for those of their own free will, and, alas, he too often attains his end by making use even of the children of God who have been foolish enough to listen to him. Amidst all this show of activity, he hides himself, and nothing unusual causes his presence even to be suspected; in short, he is so little to be seen, that his very existence is denied by the world. What part has he in such a natural course of events, as the ambition, the disputes or the contests of two nations?

And, after all, who is right in this struggle? Whose is the good cause? Which is the aggressor? Where is a spirit of cruelty and extermination to be seen? and who lays snares? Let us weigh the facts fairly and decide.

I listen, and consider, and I decide for the Canaanites against Israel, for Satan against God. The enemy has succeeded by the facts themselves in hiding God from me. The word, on the contrary, reveals God to me, makes Him known to me in His fullness in Christ, bringing, in His Person, perfect goodness, truth, light, righteousness, and holiness. Thus Satan is exposed; his schemes and artifices are seen in broad daylight; and the soul, knowing God, has no longer any difficulty in judging between good and evil in this world; all things are made manifest by the light.

But Satan does not consider himself beaten. To deceive souls, he attacks the very ones who are standing for God and bearing witness for Him; and having succeeded in corrupting them, he says: Are these people any better than others? They may talk about separation and humility, but look at Achan and the Gibeonites; see their self-confidence and their spiritual pride. These arguments gain entrance into souls, and the enemy succeeds in inducing them to reject God.

In connection with this I would further remark, that Satan has two grand methods of corrupting God's children. The first of these is the accursed thing, the world allowed in the heart. But

this being judged, and the soul humbled, Satan will not be defeated. His second method is the league with Gibeon, the world allowed in the walk.

Throughout our Christian course we have to watch against these two snares, and again and again the twofold question arises in our hearts: Is the Lord enough for me, or shall I allow the attractions which the world offers me? Is it possible for us to be Christians, nothing but Christians in our walk; to be completely separate from the world, even the religious world, to be on no terms with it, and to avoid every association with it? Satan has perfectly succeeded, and succeeds every day, by means of these two snares, in enticing God's redeemed people. The first fall in the church was by means of the accursed thing, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, quickly followed by alliance with the world. If we take only the principles of this alliance, they showed themselves in the lifetime of the apostle, and are denounced by him in the first Epistle to the Corinthians. They would like to have gained the wise, in order that Christianity might triumph. Their motives were of the world and carnal, similar to those of Gibeon in the midst of the congregation.

Well, Israel have owned their failure with regard to Gibeon, have confessed it by their acts, and must bear the lasting shame of it, approved of God in so doing, as we have seen. But Satan has not exhausted his artifices. We see a new confederation of kings assembled together, and this time arrayed not against Israel, but against Gibeon. The men of Gibeon send to Joshua to Gilgal saying: "Slack not thy hand from thy servants." What is Israel to do? Danger is there, whatever course he pursues. Not to go up, and to allow the Gibeonites to be cut to pieces by others, would deliver them from the consequences of their failure, but where would be the needed humiliation? Would it be upright towards God or man? To go up, on the other hand, would look like a definite allowance of association with the world. Such dilemmas are common with Satan. How many times he placed them in the pathway of the perfect Man! The only way to get out of the difficulty is by simple dependence on God, realised in the school of Gilgal. The lesson of the snare of Gibeon is learnt, and Satan is foiled.

Still, as we have already seen in the course of these chapters, Israel's safety does not consist in the mere fact of being at Gilgal. The Gibeonites found Joshua and the men of Israel at

the camp at Gilgal (Joshua 9:6) when they went up to lay the snare, the result of which we have seen. That which so often is lacking, is the practical application of the cross of Christ to all the details of life in the flesh. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." It is not enough to be at Gilgal (Joshua 10:6), but there must be also the going up from Gilgal (verse 7), and the return to Gilgal (v. 15). Circumcision and Gilgal are inseparable; the first is not sufficient of itself to keep us from falling; and Gilgal without circumcision would be monasticism, for the natural man can find satisfaction in it. (Col. 2:20-23)

But, as we have said, this judgment of self produces dependence, which is manifested in blessed intercourse with God, such as had not been previously tasted by the soul to the same extent. Jehovah speaks to Joshua (v. 8), Joshua speaks to Jehovah (v. 12), and Jehovah answers him. (v. 14) Encouragement, power and victory are the precious fruits of that dependence which keeps our souls habitually having to do with Him. Now the Lord was no longer obliged to take part against them as at Ai, but He could fight for them. (vv. 11-14) We see them too gaining the most signal victory recorded in the word of

God. "There was no day like that before it, or after it" (v. 14), a day which lasted twenty-four hours, thus allowing the children of Israel to gather in the very last fruit of their victory. The God of earth and heaven, the God of all creation can thus publicly declare that Israel is the object of His special favour; yes, these very people who were beaten before Ai, deceived by Gibeon, and whose ways might well have exhausted the long-suffering of God, but who are now a chastened people with broken and contrite hearts which "God will not despise." (Ps. 51:17) And this very God hearkens to the voice of a man. (v. 14)

Beloved, we are all in the same condition. However feeble we may be, we can go to God by the Spirit of Christ, and present to Him the highest requests. Nothing was too great for Joshua to ask; he knew Jehovah's heart, and he knew the place His people occupied in it; he could ask that the heavens, the sun, and the moon might be at the service of His beloved people!

From this time nothing arrests Israel's victorious progress (v. 19); they must smite the enemies till none remain. The five kings are taken, and hung on five trees; Joshua sees his way to this more clearly, from a previous page in his history learnt in the presence of God. Joshua has got into the way which suits

God's holiness (vv. 26, 27). Encouraged himself by the word of God (v. 8), he can encourage the people (v. 25); Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Gezer, Eglon, Hebron, Debir, are their victorious stages; they take possession of their inheritance, and then "they return to the camp to Gilgal." (v. 43)

Chapter 11.

The Conquest of Hazor.

Now that we are come to the description of the decisive battle by which the whole of Palestine is laid open to Israel, it is well to be reminded that the taking possession of Canaan is the main subject of the book of Joshua, and that the land of promise answers for us to the heavenly places.

But amongst the things therein contained, we have a special possession, which is Christ. We are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." God desires that we should appropriate the riches of Him in whom we are, and that our hearts should enter into these things in such a manner as to make them our own. I do not speak of seizing them with the intelligence, which may be done in a certain sense, but not per-

manently, for whatever is not laid hold of by faith, slips through our fingers like water. We need to have our affections set on these things, if they are to be really our own, and, above all, we want an object for these affections, for, apart from Christ, the heavenly things themselves would not fill our hearts. That is why it says: "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God."

Such is the main subject of the book of Joshua, but there is another connected with it. Whenever God presents to our souls heavenly things, Satan seeks in every way to hinder us from enjoying them. Hence the conflict open or hidden which we have to sustain, and which ends in a fatal defeat directly Satan succeeds in turning our eyes away from Christ, to the world, "the things on the earth," or ourselves. In Joshua 1-11, you find all these species of attractions. But when the heart is open and upright before God, He teaches us by means of these experiences to mistrust ourselves increasingly, and to trust in Him, bringing us ultimately to take down here the wonderful place (and it is the only great one) of a Christian walking in humility through this world with his heart and affections in heaven.

In Joshua 11 we see a last confederation linked with that of Joshua 9 (that of Joshua 10 having been destroyed). Here is a formidable army: "much people even as the sand that is upon the sea-shore in multitude" (v. 4); Satan seeks now to overwhelm Israel by numbers. It is the open and avowed enmity of the world against the people of God. It is no longer a question of artifices, but of an open assault; and this is what we must encounter, whenever, in a spirit of humble dependence and obedience to the word, we have baffled Satan in his wiles. It is then that he arouses the world against us.

Men combine to fight against God when their enmity against Him has reached its climax. They usually co-operate for the purpose of improving and reforming the world; hence all the political and philanthropic, and religious societies, which think to civilize, instruct and reform their fellow creatures. How little men, and alas! even Christians, are aware, that all this apparently praiseworthy activity, is but covert opposition to God, His word, and His purposes of grace. God is not seeking to improve man; this would be to belie His word which declares man to be irretrievably lost; moreover, if this foundation truth, humbling though it be, be not accepted, there is need neither of

salvation, nor of redemption through the blood of Christ. In short the very best human associations are, in reality, but the disguised opposition of the natural man to God.

In this chapter we have open opposition to God, but to God in the person of His saints. In the last days, when man's enmity is matured, the faithful remnant of Israel will be the world's point of attack, stirred up by Satan against the testimony of God. This present confederation has a chief, a rallying point, the great town of Hazor which was the head of all those kingdoms; and an innumerable army, "horses and chariots very many." The entire world with all its forces is leagued against Israel.

These things in principle repeat themselves in our day. It says: "Whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." (1 John 5:4) Also it says: (1 John 2:14), "Ye are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one;" that is to say, the prince of this world. We may observe in these two passages that the weapons of our warfare are, faith and the word. As with Christ in the desert, it was by the word that those "young men" had overcome Satan, and here we have the same truth.

From the close of Joshua 8 the word of God had taken its rightful place in the heart and thoughts of Joshua, and the people. It maintains the place in Joshua 10:27-40; in Joshua 11 it forms their conduct habitually in everything; "Joshua did to them as the Lord bade him." (v. 9) "He utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the Lord commanded." (v. 12) And again we read: "As the Lord commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses." (v. 15) And in verse 20, "That he might destroy them as the Lord commanded Moses."

And here it is worthy of notice, that Joshua is not satisfied with obeying one special commandment as in verse 9, and as he had done many times previously, nor does he rest content with committing to others the responsibility of accomplishing all that Moses had commanded (Joshua 8:35), but this man of God, arrived at the end of his eventful career, had "left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses." The word in its entirety, in so far as it had been communicated to him, was the object of his careful attention, and governed his walk and ways. What a power this gives! In Joshua 8, Joshua's heart and

thoughts are formed by the word; here, as the sword of the Spirit, it nerves his arm, and Satan is powerless before him.

Notice how the word of God teaches one to judge every natural source of strength. They are but objects of judgment to the discerning eye of him who is faithful, and of no use to him. In obedience to the word of God "he houghed their horses, and burnt their chariots with fire." (v. 9) Then "he burnt Hazor with fire." (vv. 11, 13) The world's capital cannot be turned into a centre for Israel. This applies equally to Hazor, Rome, or Babylon; and although Babylon be not yet burnt with fire, let it be so as to our spirits, All the principles of the world, its governing power, that which constitutes its centre of attraction, ought to be a judged thing for us, in which we have no more part or lot than Israel had in Hazor.

The other towns are allowed to exist, and Israel takes the spoil of them; thus, in accordance with the word of God, affirming their right to take full and complete possession of the land of Canaan. It was indeed a great victory and a total overthrow. "Every man they smote with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them, neither left they any to breathe." (v. 14) The sword had fulfilled its work of destruction, as the Lord had

commanded. Looked at spiritually, faithfulness will lead the believer to deal unsparingly with all that is of man: it can have no part in the land of promise.

Ah! how blessed and worthy of God it would have been had this state of things lasted, but it did not, as we shall soon see.

The Anakim.

Satan is defeated, his last army destroyed, and his cities taken; what remains? Israel find in their pathway the very people who, at the beginning, had struck terror into their hearts, and caused them to fall, the Anakim, who had hindered them from going boldly up to possess the land. In order to disparage Canaan, the spies had said to the people: "And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." (Num. 13:33) But what impression could the children of Anak make on the mind of one who is led by the word of God? Victory is his. "Joshua came and cut off the Anakim," and their towns, "cities great and fenced up to heaven." (Deut. 9:1) "Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities." (v. 21)

Joshua had received the word; he could count on God's promise: "The Lord thy God is he which goes over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face." (Deut. 9:3) Ah! how small and petty our former fears and terrors appear, when we go on with God. What is a "man of six cubits and a span," with a "coat of mail of 5,000 shekels of brass," in the presence of "the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth," "the Lord of all the earth," before whom all things will be subdued, and who will subdue all things before his own? "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." (Rom. 16:20)

Chapter 12.

Enumeration of the Vanquished Kings.

With Joshua 12 we enter upon the second part of the book. The first part (Joshua 1-11) speaks of Joshua, the victorious one (type of Christ in the power of the Spirit amongst His own), obtaining possession for Israel of promised blessings. During the course of their victories, the Lord's host (and Joshua himself, if we look at him not as a type, but as a man subject to infirmity), have experienced much of their own weakness, which

cannot fail to be the case from the moment that we are prominent as instruments of divine power. But the main point presented in the book of Joshua, is divine grace giving the victory to Israel for their establishment in Canaan, and not their responsibility when once there.

This side of Israel's history begins rather in the book of Judges; what a contrast, too, the two books present. Freshness and vigour in that of Joshua, the power of the Spirit of Christ acting freely in vessels, feeble in themselves, but filled with this power. We turn to Judges only to witness how sudden and complete was the declension, when a generation arose which knew not Joshua, and were left to their own responsibility to keep what God had entrusted to them.

Church history opens the same page to us. Read the First Epistle to the Thessalonians; then pass on to the addresses to the seven churches, and see the difference between the work of power established of God in perfection at the beginning, shedding around it the fragrance of its divine origin, and the work entrusted to man, and become as such the subject of divine judgment.

Joshua 11 closes with these words: "And the land rested from war." (v. 23) It is always thus; peace follows victory. God not only gives us the victory, but causes us to enjoy its fruits. The path of conflict, trodden in faithfulness under the guidance of the Spirit, ends in the peaceful enjoyment of our heavenly blessings; and this is what is presented to us in type in the chapters we are about to peruse. That which was true for the people as a whole (see also Joshua 21:44), is realised in the same way by the individual believer; and so it says after Caleb's victory: "And the land had rest from war." (Joshua 14:15)

Beloved, are you disheartened by the struggle in which you are engaged? Are you ever tempted to throw down your arms, and to say: It is too much for me? Or have you realised that the conflict is but leading you on to that blessed moment when God will say: "And the land had rest from war"?

The second part of the book (Joshua 12-24) treats of the division of the land. Possession follows victory.

But after what manner will the people enter upon the enjoyment of their inheritance? Here again, as during their warfare,

we shall trace the same exhibition of weakness on their part, side by side with the grace of God which granted the enjoyment of His gifts.

Joshua 12 is the recapitulation of Israel's victories. Thirty-three kings, of whom two were on the other side of Jordan, have fallen before the Captain of the Lord's host. God reckons to His people the victories which He had given them. The Lord attributes to faith, all that grace has wrought in us, and that faith has laid hold of.

One more point I would notice. The Lord does not enumerate our victories until warfare is over, Until the goal is reached, the believer should not be occupied with his progress. The apostle says: "forgetting the things that are behind," The race is not the moment for pausing; the apostle had to reach forward to the things that are before, and every backward glance was not only lost time, but a positively evil thing, inasmuch as it divided the thoughts, affections, and aim of his heart, and hindered him in doing "one thing." (Phil. 3:13-14)

Ah! when the goal is reached, it will be time enough to enumerate our victories, and God will not leave the charge of this

to us; He will reckon them Himself. Meanwhile, then, let us run that we may win Christ; let us fight that we may receive the prize. The end of the struggle is near, and others have already gone before us. May we be enabled to say with them: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

Chapter 13.

Division of the Land.

I will take up this chapter with Joshua 15-19, reserving Joshua 14. for a special study by itself.

The enemies are all conquered, but not all driven out. Enemies, there will always be, until the coming of the Lord. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (1 Cor. 15:26) But Israel has to dispossess them; as long as they possess anything, the enjoyment of the people of God is not complete; and more than this, they are allowing in their midst what might continually cause them to fail. If the enemy is not destroyed, he will not be slow to lift the head and corrupt the people, if he cannot overcome them.

Such in fact was the snare when the Israelites were peacefully established in the land of their possession. It says of the two and a half tribes: "Nevertheless the children of Israel expelled not the Geshurites, nor the Maachathites; but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell among the Israelites to this day." (Joshua 13:13) And of Judah it says: "As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day." (Joshua 15:63) And of Ephraim: "And they drave not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites to this day, and serve under tribute." (Joshua 16:10) Finally of Manasseh: "Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land." (Joshua 17:12; compare also Judges 1:17-36)

There may have been, as we see in these passages, more or less faithfulness displayed, in reducing the Canaanites to submission, but not one tribe was up to the height of his calling.

What was the result? Under this influence it was not long before all the worldly principles, against which Israel had been contending, entered into their midst. We see in the prophets that

lusts, confidence in their own strength, turning to the nations for help, formed part of their very existence. More than this, the idolatry of the Canaanites spread like gangrene amongst them, and they ended by defiling themselves with all the gods of the Gentiles. Corruption, lying, unrighteousness, contempt of God, violence, open rebellion, everything in a word in which consisted "the iniquity of the Amorites," and for which the judgment of God overtook them, became the sad portion of the Lord's people. At last, terrible to say, Israel himself takes the place of, and becomes, so to speak, this very army of the Canaanites led by Satan against the Lord. They reject and crucify Christ, the Son of God!

Jehovah is long-suffering towards them; He makes urgent appeals to them, sends partial judgments followed by momentary deliverances and fresh appeals. "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it?" But at length final judgment overtakes them. They are carried away beyond Babylon, and scattered amongst the nations. But here we have another, and a marvellous thing. If man responsible has reached the end of his history which closes in judgment, God has not come to the end of His resources. "The gifts and calling of God

are without repentance." To be able to bless them, God must bring them to Himself in quite a new condition. He will cause them to share in the blessing of the new birth, according as it is written: "I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them an heart of flesh." (Ezek. 11:19) He will act on their consciences to bring them back; He will write His laws in their hearts; He will give them the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins, and of the blessed relationship to Himself into which He will bring them. All their lost blessings will then be recovered in a far more blessed way. This is the scene so touchingly depicted in Hosea 14, Israel after being restored to Jehovah, seeking of Him the blessings of the new covenant in his cry: "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips." (v. 2) There we see the remnant relinquishing all worldly support, all confidence in an arm of flesh, all false gods, and in their desolation becoming acquainted with the mercy of God on which all their blessing depends. "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless finds mercy."

Notice too, in these chapters what minute care the Spirit of God takes to define the place and limits of every tribe, so that each may see and realise exactly their lot in the inheritance. It is the same now for us individually. God has given to us each our definite place and duties in the body of Christ. Every member of Christ is responsible to have the consciousness of it, and to act consistently with it, so that the energy of life, which flows down from the Head to the members, may find them to be vessels prepared for His work, and contributing to it all together, moved by a common spring of action. (Eph. 4:16)

The Portion of Levi.

Let us now consider the portion of the tribe of Levi. (Joshua 13:14, 33) By the commandment of the Lord, neither Aaron (Num. 18:20), nor the priests, nor any of the tribe of Levi could have any inheritance in Israel. Their inheritance was on the one hand, "the Lord God of Israel," and on the other "the sacrifices of the Lord God of Israel made by fire." It is the same for us, His heavenly people. We have no portion on earth, but our privilege is to stand before God and to serve Him, and more than this to possess Him, to have communion with Him in the heavenly places, with the Father, and with the Son, who is with

Him. But our portion in the Son is also "the sacrifices of the Lord made by fire"; that is to say, Christ according to all the perfection of His work and His Person before God; Christ, the perfect Man, the cake of fine flour anointed with oil, and covered with frankincense; Christ as a victim, the burnt offering, the sacrifice for sin, all that in which God finds His eternal delight. We have communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Christ Himself our example, the Levite without spot, the perfect Servant, passed through the same blessed experiences in His pathway here. If He looks towards the earth, He says: "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup"; if He looks upward He adds: "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." (Ps. 16:5-6)

Beloved, we may indeed say that our present portion is at the same time our future one; and the priests of the tribe of Levi will also realise this blessing when Israel will peacefully enjoy the millennial glory under Messiah's reign. In speaking of this wondrous moment, the prophet Ezekiel says: "And it shall be to them for an inheritance; I am their inheritance; and ye shall give them no possession in Israel: I am their possession" (Ezek.

44:28-30); and he goes on to show that the offerings of the Lord will be their portion in this day of glory.

And now let us turn to Revelation 4 and 5. Does not the heavenly scene there speak to us of the same things? Unbroken communion with God and with the Lamb will be the portion of our inheritance, and that for ever.

Chapter 14.

Caleb's Purpose of Heart.

I desire to dwell a little on this chapter, on account of its practical importance. Caleb is a type of the perseverance of faith, His name is mentioned for the first time in Numbers 13:6, when, from the desert of Paran, Moses sends a man of each tribe to search the land. Amongst these twelve we find Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, and Oshea, the son of Nun, whom Moses called Jehoshua. (vv. 8, 16)

From this moment the name of Caleb is found so closely linked with that of Joshua (see Num. 14:30, 38; Num. 26:65; Num. 34:17-19; Deut. 1:36, 38; Joshua 14:13) that one might almost say they are inseparable. Together they search the land, to-

gether they cross the desert, together they enter Canaan. United as they are no doubt in their special character as men of faith, the word points out to us another blessed reason for their association. Joshua pre-figures Christ, the Saviour Jesus, bringing His people into the rest of the promised land; and Caleb walks in company with him. The great name of Joshua overshadows, so to speak, that of Caleb, and imprints upon it its character. These two men have but one thought, they have the same faith, confidence, and courage, the same starting-point, the same path, the same purpose of heart, the same goal. Is it so with us, dear readers? Are we so associated with Christ that our name cannot be uttered without His, and that our very existence owes its value to the fact that, by grace, we have been made companions of the Lord Jesus?

In Numbers 13 the twelve men sent by Moses, having reached Hebron, thence proceed to Eshcol to carry back from that spot the magnificent fruits which are to prove the beauty of the country. But it was not, as one might have thought, Eshcol which arrested the gaze and captivated the heart of Caleb, his faith reached on to something better. Hebron, whereon his feet had trodden, is given to him. (Joshua 14:9) From that moment

its name was graven on his heart during forty-five years, until the day when he should appear before Joshua to claim "this mountain whereof the Lord spake" as his everlasting possession.

This spot nevertheless was not lacking in celebrity — to the flesh, in truth, it could not but inspire terror — the formidable Anakims dwelt there, those giants whose name alone made the heart of the people to melt. But what a powerful reminder the place of the sepulchre of the fathers was for Caleb's soul! Rich in memories, it was to become the reward of this man of God. There, when Lot preferred the cities of the plain, Abraham, the father of the people, chose his abode (Gen. 13:18); there he built an altar to Jehovah and received the promise of God (Gen. 18:1); but, more than all, Hebron is pre-eminently the place of death, and to Abraham first. It was there that Sarah died (Gen. 23:2), there that she was buried, and Abraham too (Gen. 25:10); also Isaac (Gen. 35:27-29); and then Jacob and the patriarchs. Yes; Hebron is indeed the place of the sepulchre, the scene of death, the end of man. What is there in it to attract? Nothing for the natural man, everything for faith. There is one supreme spot where the believer learns the end of himself: it is

the cross of Christ. Again it is from Hebron that Joseph sets forth in search of his brethren. (Gen. 37:14) Later (Joshua 21) it becomes a city of refuge and the property of the Levites. Yet more, it is the starting-point of David's kingdom (2 Sam. 2:1-4), for it is in virtue of His death that Jesus has been raised and crowned with glory, and that He will wear on His head the diadem of royalty. Finally, it is there that all the tribes of Israel acknowledge their king and come to do him homage. (2 Sam. 5:1)

Is it not a wondrous spot? What a succession of blessings it records! The place of death, the place of refuge, the starting-point of Israel's blessings, of the promises, and of the kingdom and glory, the rallying-point when the glory is there, and with all that the lasting object for the heart and affections of a poor pilgrim who found there his characteristic starting-point and his goal, the place of his eternal rest. Ah! how Caleb prized this spot, to the outward eye so unattractive. He desired it for his everlasting inheritance; and, beloved, it will be our eternal part to fathom what is contained in the meaning of this place. Faith in Caleb laid hold, from the very outset, on what Abrahamic faith had there discovered: himself done with — self set aside

— old things passed away; and here we see a man setting out in dependence on God, with no confidence in himself, and continuing in this blessed path until the end, the full enjoyment of the promises, is reached in the place where man has come to his end.

We have been considering two characteristic features in Caleb: the first is that his name is inseparable from that of Joshua; the second is that a special object has so won his affections and gained possession of his heart, that the memory of it remains with him all along his desert pathway. I would further add, that our affections are always in activity when occupied with Christ on the cross giving Himself for us; whilst a glorified Christ imparts energy to reach Him.

But there is a third characteristic of this man of faith. Caleb realises his hope. He enters Canaan first, not as a dweller, but as a visitor; but it is there, and not in the desert, that his course begins. He returns to the desert with an indelible impress on his heart of the reality and beauty of the things which he has seen, and which during forty-five years form the object of his hope. It is the same with the Psalmist (Ps. 43:1-2) — a man walking after the example of Caleb — he has seen God in the sanctuary,

and starting thence, he comes down to the earth filled with the glorious reality of those divine things which will be for the sustenance of his heart to the end of the journey.

A fourth point links itself with this. To the soul fed with the marrow and fatness of the sanctuary, the desert loses not only its attraction, but assumes its true character of dearth and drought: heaven becomes the measure of earth; things that are seen lose their apparent value, and become emptiness and a barren waste.

But to return, dear friends, to that which is so prominent in Caleb's character, his purpose of heart. Without the four previously-mentioned points: attachment to Christ, the knowledge of the infinite value of His work, a realised hope, a heart detached from earth, there can be no perseverance in the path of faith. In Caleb's life it is linked with three positions which are inseparable the one from the other.

We see him first taking knowledge of the good land that God would give to His people, and the divine comment on his history at this point is that he "wholly followed the Lord." (Num. 14:24; Deut. 1:36; Joshua 14:8-9) But the forty years of desert

life have yet to be trodden, and he courageously does it right on to the end, because he carries in his heart the remembrance of the riches and the treasure of Canaan. To him the difficulties of the desert are nothing; he heeds not the burning sands, the scorching sun, weariness, or thirst. He dreams not for a moment of seeking anything in the scene around him. His courage is sustained by a hope; and the believer's hope is not merely Canaan, that is to say, heaven, in a general way, but it is Christ.

There was a man of renown, of whom God could not speak in these terms, Solomon failed just where Caleb persevered. The desert had become something to this great king; and a moment came when, having allowed his heart to be allured in it, he turned his back on God. It is said of him (1 Kings 11:6), "He went not fully after the Lord." The world had attractions for him, and, however small they were at the beginning, it was not long before he succumbed to them, and his kingdom was lost. It was otherwise with Caleb, for through his perseverance in following the Lord he gained his inheritance.

But there was a third aspect of Caleb's perseverance: we must see him taking possession of Canaan. Five years have run their course, during which the fight has continued, and then by his

sword he gains possession of his own particular portion, the mountain of which Jehovah had spoken. He enters at large into his inheritance, in spite of the formidable power of the enemy, and the terror which the sons of Anak inspired. But, like us, Caleb meets in "him who had the power of death" a vanquished enemy, who has no power to intimidate us.

Death is ours. Caleb, as I said, takes full possession of his inheritance. His perseverance is crowned with success. He is the only one in Israel who seems to have driven out all his enemies. What a lesson for us, beloved! Let us remember that Caleb's taking possession speaks to us of a present fact, and not only of future enjoyment. Have we persevered in the conflict so as to enjoy now our privileges? May God give us, like him, purpose of heart in these three things: the hope, the path, and the fight.

I would notice two more accompanying characteristics of perseverance, one of which is found at the close of our chapter. Caleb says in verse 11: "As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in." Caleb was fourscore and five years old, but neither his great

age, nor the weary desert journey had diminished in the smallest degree his strength. And why? Because he had no confidence in himself. Hebron's lesson had remained graven in his heart. He says in verse 12: "If so be the Lord will be with me." Do you think from this that he mistrusted the Lord? No; he mistrusted himself — he realised that if there were any obstacle to the Lord's being with him, it must proceed from himself. We realise strength in proportion as we mistrust self, and these two things surely go together. It is thus that we go from strength to strength.

Isaiah 40:28-31 beautifully expresses the same truth: "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail." This is the end of man's best strength, but "the everlasting God, the Lord ... faints not, neither is weary." Our confidence is in Him, and more: "He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increases strength." He communicates His strength to the feeble; it is made perfect in weakness. Then he adds: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Such was the case with Caleb. He walked in the con-

sciousness that his strength was in and with God. May it be the same with us; and not only so, but may we live in the enjoyment of heavenly things, take part in the scene of conflict, and run patiently and with unwearied feet the race which leads to the glory.

I have yet to touch upon the second accessory characteristic of perseverance — it produces perseverance or purpose of heart in others. Caleb was in this way particularly blessed in his family circle, following him, as they did, in his path of faith. In Joshua 15:16 (see also Judges 1:12-13) it says: "And Caleb said, He that smites Kirjath-sepher, and takes it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife." The nephew steps worthily in the footprints of the uncle. The object of such priceless value in his eye is Caleb's daughter, and, bent on possessing her, he enters the conflict. And we, are we set upon having Christ at all cost? In Judges 3 Othniel becomes the first judge in Israel. An overcomer for himself, he is raised up to deliver others, and in this new character perseveres to the close.

Achsah, Caleb's daughter, is a fresh example of perseverance. Caleb had given her to Othniel, and she moves her husband to ask yet more. She would have a field and besides, springs of water. So she craves a blessing on the field of her possession, and, to obtain it, lights off her ass to proffer her request, an example of perseverance in prayer and supplications. The springs of water are richly bestowed upon her, types of spiritual blessings; and this also, dear reader, is of daily instruction for us. When we take the word of God in our hands, do we earnestly ask God for springs to water it? To many Christians this living Word is like a parched meridian land in which their souls find no sustenance. If such be your case, have you, like Achsah, taken the suppliant's place, asking from God that spiritual aid which can alone cause it to be fruitful for your soul? Would He not give you an answer such as Caleb gave to Achsah?

Before leaving this subject, I would like to touch on yet one or two important points. It is said of Caleb that "he wholly followed the Lord his God." He had persevered in following Christ, known to him as the Jehovah of the Old Testament. And what is it to follow Christ? One often forms a very vague idea of what it is. It is to walk after a Person whom we acknowledge

as the Guide that we need. The one who has confidence in himself does not want a guide. Moreover, following the Lord implies not merely confidence in Him, but humble dependence on Him. Again, if I follow some one, my eyes are fixed on him, so as to imitate him. Now imitating the Lord is seeking to reproduce Him, to be like Him; and in whatever position God sets me, His object is that I should reproduce Christ in that position: Christ, as a brother has said, in His daily intercourse, His service, His testimony, and His sufferings. This is what Caleb did. He wholly (I do not say perfectly) followed the Lord his God.

But, you may ask, to what does perseverance apply? I will cite some of the passages which in the New Testament fully answer this question.

Acts 1:14: "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." Here it was to prayer that perseverance applied, and moreover this perseverance was collective. They did not confine themselves to bowing the knee each one for himself and his own needs before the Lord, but they prayed with one accord for the things that concerned them in common.

Acts 2:42. Here again we find collective perseverance, but applied to four things: first, "the apostles' doctrine and fellowship." The early Christians did not limit themselves to following the apostles' doctrine; but the lives of these ambassadors of the Lord became their models. Next, "breaking of bread and prayers;" the memorial of Christ, and the intercourse of the soul with God, expressed in dependence on Him.

1 Timothy 5:5. Here we have individual perseverance "in supplications and prayers." Why is it the part of the widow to continue in them "night and day"? Because alone, and deprived of every resource, she can only turn to God, and in this manner learn dependence.

1 Timothy 4:16. Here (read carefully what precedes the passage cited) we find perseverance in everything relating to godliness.

2 Timothy 3:10. Timothy had wholly followed the apostle in all those traits that had marked his life. The apostle himself (2 Tim. 4:7) had persevered to the end in "the fight," "the course," and "the faith."

These few examples will suffice to shew that perseverance applies to every detail of christian life. May we know more of it,

and so act that when our earthly race is run, we may, like Caleb, receive from God Himself these words of approval: "He wholly followed the Lord his God."

Chapters 20 & 21.

The Cities of Refuge.

In connection with these two chapters let us look at Hebrews 6:18, 20, a passage which evidently alludes to the cities of refuge, such as we find them in Exodus 21:13 ; Numbers 35; Deuteronomy 21 and Joshua 20, 21.

The types of the Old Testament in their application to the Christian often form contrasts rather than similarities. So it is with the cities of refuge, as we shall see. To apply them solely to the cross of Christ would be to seize their meaning very poorly and imperfectly, for the immediate application of the type, as no doubt most of us know, is rather historical and prophetic. The involuntary murderer prefigures Israel, murderers of Christ "through ignorance." It was of them that the Lord Jesus said on the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." They had not known the day of their

visitation. So with Paul: "I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." (1 Tim. 1:13) But in another sense both the leaders of the Jews and the people were murderers wilfully, yea, deliberately and knowingly rejecters of God and of His Christ. "This is the heir," said they, "come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." (Matt. 21:38) "We will not have this man to reign over us." (Luke 19:14) Moreover, it is said that the voluntary murderer must be put to death, and with several other prophecies relating to the Jews, this judgment has been partially fulfilled in the fall of Jerusalem. "The king ... was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city." (Matt. 22:7) But this judgment of the wilful murderer, unduly hidden in the city of refuge (Deut. 19:11-12), is in reality yet to come. The Jews, since the rejection of the Messiah, are kept, as at the present time, under the providential care of God, out of their inheritance, and, as another has said, "so to speak under the eye of God's servants, who, like the Levites, having no inheritance, serve as their refuge, understanding their position, and recognising them as being under the protection of God." But the voluntary murderers will be brought forth to fall into the hands of

the avenger. Allied with Antichrist, they will become the miserable objects of divine judgment.

As for those who killed unawares, they may recover their lot and inheritance at the time of the change in the priestly office (Joshua 20:6; Num. 35:28), that is to say, when the priesthood of Christ after the order of Aaron shall have come to an end, and He will have become a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. It would be interesting to follow out in detail this well-known signification of the cities of refuge, but I pass on to the contrast which the type affords when compared with the christian position taken up in Hebrews 6.

The Israelite, a slayer by ignorance, type of the nation at the present moment, flies to the city of refuge with the very uncertain hope of escaping the avenger of blood, and of entering one day into possession of his inheritance from which he is kept out until the death of the high priest, typically the end of the Aaronic priesthood of Christ. Even if he gained the city of refuge, his safety and his reinstatement depended on all sorts of circumstances by which his position was rendered precarious in the extreme. First, on the avenger of blood, for did the manslayer but leave the border of the town for one moment, the

avenger of blood on watch had a right to slay him (Num. 35:26-28); secondly, on the elders of the city (Joshua 20:4); thirdly, on the judgment of the congregation (Joshua 20:6), for the death of the manslayer might take place before his.

We may well be struck with the unreliability of the best resources which the law could offer to those who were the least guilty in Israel.

But let us turn now to the blessed resources of grace in Hebrews 6:18-20. The Christian brought out of Judaism fled also from the judgment which was ready to fall upon the people, but with no uncertain hope; he fled with the purpose of laying hold of the hope set before him. Moreover the Christian's hope is that of possibly some time entering into the enjoyment of an earthly inheritance, but it is a hope that we lay hold of, that we have, it is the present position of our souls. Moreover, it is no more vague than it is uncertain; it is personified, so to speak. It is a heavenly Christ, the great subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews, a Christ in contrast with the best things that earth could offer, Christ, a Man in glory, the fulfilment of all the counsels and promises of God. This hope (Christ) we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast; it is made

fast to an immovable rock. There is no uncertainty; having laid hold of it, we can no longer be "tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine." And more, we are thereby introduced now into the very presence of God, into the sanctuary itself. It enters into that within the veil, where we find Jesus who has gone in as our Forerunner. Already we are there in peace, whilst waiting to receive the promised inheritance, so soon to be possessed. For this, there is no need as with the poor manslayer, that the Aaronic priesthood of Christ should come to an end, linked as we are eternally to Him who is "a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec," and who is so by virtue of the work which has obtained for us an eternal salvation.

Chapter 22.

The Altar of Ed.

We find here again the two and a half tribes of whom we spoke at the close of Joshua 1. They had gone on armed before their brethren, to fight the enemies of the Lord in the land of promise. Now they receive permission from Joshua to return to their inheritance on the other side of Jordan. They had been faithful to the commands of Moses and Joshua, had kept the command-

ment of the Lord, and had not forsaken their brethren. Obedience to express commands, and brotherly love had characterised them during all the time that they had been separated from the land of their possession. There was apparently nothing to find fault with in them, but as we saw in Joshua 1, their hearts (I do not say their thoughts) were not set on heavenly things. Their cattle were their starting-point; hence what could be more natural than to seek pastures wherein to feed them? Immediately, at the commencement of their history, a danger arises out of their ambiguous position, and Moses points it out to them (Num. 32); their refusal to establish themselves beyond Jordan might exert its influence upon the rest of the people, and discourage them, so as to bring down the anger of the Lord upon Israel as before, at the mountain of the Amorites. By grace they were preserved from this snare, but the snare still existed. There was a still greater danger; their principles acted on those next to them, who were more exposed to them than the rest of the tribes. Jair, the son of Manasseh, and Nobah, call their towns and their villages after their own names, a thoroughly worldly principle, dating from the commencement of Cain's world (Num. 32:41-42. Cf. Gen. 4:17). Thus we see them in danger by their walk of causing the fall of men of faith,

or of bringing them down to their own level, rather than raising them to the level of what is heavenly; added to this, we find them bringing in what is positively of the world into their own families, and this we may say characterises their position.

Joshua's exhortation (Joshua 22:5) again points clearly to the danger of a lowered Christianity. The real backbone of all the conduct of the Christian was lacking. Obedience to known commands, and brotherly love, are not sufficient to keep us for any length of time. Conduct, obedience, devotedness and service, should flow from love, and unless it be in exercise our activity soon comes to an end. A child can make a hoop bowl with the first stroke of its stick, but it soon stops unless the impetus be renewed.

But this is not all. When, instead of living by faith, the Christian allows in any measure the principles of the world to govern his conduct, his position necessarily becomes a very complicated one, whereas nothing is more simple than the path of faith. Compare Abraham and Lot; how simple and even, the life of the first; how full of inextricable complications, that of the second. What a succession too of adventures the tormented existence of Jacob presents to us, in contrast with the simple

life with God of Isaac his father. In like manner the two and a half tribes found themselves obliged to build sheepfolds for their cattle, and fenced cities for the protection of their families, to abandon their wives and children during many a long year, depriving them too of the blessing of witnessing the marvels displayed by Jehovah in favour of His people. And now, when the warrant goes forth for them to return to their homes, a fresh complication presents itself. The Jordan separates them from the rest of the tribes, and they are uneasy, fearing lest the link of communion between them and their brethren should not be firm enough to resist the force of the river. Their position exposes them to a division, and they see with disquietude that a moment may come when they will be treated as strangers by their brethren. The danger of their situation obliges them, so to speak, to set up a testimony by which they publicly proclaim that they serve Jehovah, just as on a previous occasion (Joshua 1:16-18) their doubtful position had compelled them to make a loud profession. So they build a great altar to see to in the borders of Jordan within the limits of their territory. Their own wisdom leads them to set up this testimony. I might venture to call it a confession of faith, a thing in itself perhaps perfectly correct, as was the altar of Ed, and against which for the mo-

ment nothing could be said, but which had the appearance, nevertheless, of another gathering-point. This altar, intended as it was in their minds to unite the separated parts of Israel, might be created in opposition to that of the tabernacle of Shiloh. Their confession of faith might become a new centre, and thus by discrediting it, replace the only true centre of unity, Christ. This act, the result of a good intention, savoured of man. Their contrivance for maintaining the unity, gave them the appearance of denying it, and hence arose a new complication. They expose themselves to being misunderstood, to raising the other tribes against them, and to being exterminated.

Dear readers, this is but the history of Christendom from the first, only it has sunk much lower than the two and a half tribes. It has collected for itself a vast number of confessions of faith more or less correct, but which are not Christ; and then awaking to the fact, that the unity is well nigh disappearing, these confessions are made more and more elastic, until in place of the sought for unity, open infidelity itself is introduced into the midst of the profession of Christianity.

But behind this altar of Ed, which a spirit of worldliness had necessitated, might lie a still graver source of evil. The very

fact of its erection might open the door to independence. This was what the children of Israel dreaded, and we see them taking it exceedingly to heart. Independence is on the verge of creeping in, their oneness is threatened, and Phinehas, a pattern of zeal for Christ, is chosen to go with the princes and take note of what is transpiring by Jordan and deal with the two and a half tribes.

He brings before them three cases, closely connected, in which all Israel are responsible.

The first (v. 20) after the crossing of Jordan, is the sin of Achan. He lusted after the things of the world, took of that which God had cursed, introduced it into the midst of the congregation of Israel, totally ignoring the holiness of God — and what was the result? Divine judgment fell on all the people. Achan's sin was the lust of the world, the introduction of the accursed thing into the congregation. In the iniquity of Peor (v. 17) we find a still worse thing, although, alas! in spiritual matters the hearts of the Lord's people are so little concerned at it. It was characterised by corrupt alliance with the religious world, that is to say, the idolatrous world of those days, and the introduction of this worldly religion into the very midst of the

congregation of Israel, again to the utter disregard of divine holiness.

Dear reader, is it otherwise with the church? Are not Achan and Peor the two principles of its existence to-day? Moreover, the Satanic artifice at Peor is still more terrible than the accursed thing at Achan. For Balaam, seeing that his efforts to separate Jehovah from His people failed, set another scheme on foot, and attempted, this time successfully, to alienate the people and separate them from Jehovah. When it was a question of God's affection for His people, Balaam was forced to declare that Jehovah had not seen perverseness in Israel, when the faithfulness of the latter was tested, Satan succeeds only too well in separating them from God; and thus "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel."

The believer's second snare lies then in the thought, that the worship of God can be associated with the religion of the world. It was on this occasion that the zeal of Phinehas first showed itself; he took to heart the dishonour done to Jehovah, and purified the congregation from this defilement.

And now, in the matter of the altar of Ed, this same zeal incited him to stand in the breach. The "senses exercised by reason of use to discern both good and evil, cause him to discern the danger. He feels that this second principle, independence, would be the ruin of the testimony; that the setting up of another altar is nothing less than the sin of rebellion against Jehovah and against the congregation of Israel. (v. 19) The holy zeal of Phinehas meets the danger, which in principle indeed existed, but the intentions of heart were right, and the evil was stayed.

In Christianity, however, the remedy has not been so successful. Evil has made steady progress, and what do we see to-day? Independence, the very principle of sin, the natural tendency of our hearts, publicly placarded as a virtue, nay, a duty. Forgetful of the fact that there is but one altar, one table, new ones are established every day on this principle, in rebellion against the Lord, as Phinehas said (v. 16), and in blind contempt, not merely of the unity of the people of God, but of the only centre of unity, the Lord Jesus Himself.

May God keep us, dear readers, from these three principles which bring down His judgment on His house: worldliness, al-

liance with the religious world, and independence, the most subtle and dangerous of all, because being the principle of sin it lies at the root of all else.

Let us remember the character of Christ as brought out in the epistle to Philadelphia. He is the "Holy and the true," and this church is commended for the maintenance of this holy name, and for dependence on the word. Let us cherish nothing, individually or collectively, in our hearts, our thoughts, our conduct or our walk, which is not in harmony with these characters of Christ; and may we be found walking in holiness and dependence, without which there no communion with Him.

Chapter 23.

Final Instructions to Joshua.

Israel are now in possession of their inheritance; Joshua, old and stricken with age, is ready to go the way of all the earth. When the outward props of divine order in the assembly are taken from us, and those who are to the front in the fight are no more, everything is apparently gone; but in reality to faith there is no lack. "The Lord your God," said Joshua, "he it is that

fighters for you." (vv. 3, 10) Leaders may depart; and it is a blessed thing to consider the end of their conversation, but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Yes, nothing is lacking where there is faith; and where it is wanting everything decays, as happened with Israel and the church.

Henceforth, if the people were to maintain themselves at the height of their privileges, they must realise in their own souls, and in their entire lives, that power of the Spirit which led them on to victory in the person of Joshua. "Be strong and of a good courage," He had said to Joshua in Joshua 1:6, "for to this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them." There lay the power for victory, and now Joshua says to the people: "Be ye therefore very courageous." (v. 6) This is realisation in the soul.

Now how will this spiritual strength show itself in the people? In obedience to the written word, "to keep" — and this is inseparable from practice — "and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses." To obey thus, the people had not only the power of God's Spirit with them, but they had before their eyes, a man Joshua, on whom the same things had been enjoined, who had followed to the end in the pathway of obedience, and

who could say with Paul: "I have kept the faith." But we, dear readers, have before us the true Joshua, the perfect model, the author and finisher of faith.

Notice too, how Joshua, like Paul, has a full sense of the changes which his departure would bring about. It would be the introduction of a new order of things. Decline would surely set in, as they both knew, but like a thread through a labyrinth, an infallible guide, they commend the word of God: "I commend you to God and to the word of his grace." (Acts 20:32)

Ah! it is the word which is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance, but above all to sanctify us. It was from neglect of it that Israel sunk by degrees to the level of the idolatrous nations and their abominations. See in verse 7 how imperceptible, and at the same time slippery, is the downward path; first they come amongst these nations, forgetful of separation from the world; then they make mention of the name of their gods; we become familiarised with the ruling principles of the world; then we cause to swear by them; it seems natural that others should acknowledge them; then we serve them, and finally bow down ourselves to them; a downward path truly!

But there are other means of retaining their blessings besides obedience to the word, and to these Joshua directs their attention. The second is "cleaving to the Lord" (v. 8); the heart and affections must be set on the Person of Christ. Do you often think, beloved, of that verse in Psalm 43? "My soul follows hard after thee, thy right hand upholds me." Do we not feel — there is a heart which has given itself wholly to the Lord, and is able to tell Him so? for these are not experiences which one would display before the world. It is a soul captivated by the beauty of its object, entirely surrendered to Christ, and discovering a power in Him to lift it above every difficulty, and preserve it from all danger. "Thy right hand upholds me." It is the same in our chapter (vv. 9, 10); in cleaving to Him, the people experience the strength of Jehovah. Oh! may we in our troublous days realise more of this close cleaving of soul to Christ; may we have hearts that seek and desire nought save Himself, which do not make a show before the world of their feelings or of their consecration to God, which do not say, "I am rich and have need of nothing," but which say to Christ in the silence of His own presence, and in accents which His ear alone can hear: "I love Thee because Thou hast first loved me," and also on account of Thy matchless beauty; oh, inimitable Pattern, some

traits of whom, however feeble, I would fain reproduce! "My soul follows hard after Thee."

Thirdly we find vigilance. "Take good heed therefore to yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God." (v. 11) We have to be watchful over our hearts, so as not to tolerate the oft-times subtle entrance of lusts which weaken our affections for the Lord, and by means of which He is replaced by objects unworthy of being compared to Him, and which oblige Him to judge us. (vv. 16-22) "Flee also youthful lusts," says the apostle. "Be ye sober, and watch."

Joshua 24.

Grace in Contrast to Law.

In this chapter, God, by the mouth of His servant, recapitulates all His ways of grace towards Israel, from the call of Abraham until the full possession of Canaan. Had the people been wise, touched by the untiring mercy of God, and mistrustful of themselves, they would have asked Jehovah that His grace, and that alone, might continue to keep and to lead them. But in their

folly they cling to the principles of the law, and trusting to themselves, they say: "We will serve the Lord."

The fact that God closes this history by the manifestation of His grace, has also its importance for us. Brought into the enjoyment of heavenly places, it is of His grace that God speaks to us, and by it establishes our hearts. But in order really to enter into this we must have our own state fully revealed to us. Such are God's ways, for it was not till Israel reached Canaan that the idolatry of their fathers, the utter ruin of the root from which they sprang, and their terrible distance from God, were made known to them. So it is with us. We only realise the total ruin of the first man when we know full deliverance. Few Christians enter into this, because so few are in the enjoyment of the blessings of Canaan, their glorious position in Christ. The prodigal son had learnt many things when he set out to return to his father: his sin, his state of misery, were by no means unknown to him; but on his introduction into the father's house, he hears for the first time these words: "This my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." In the same way, it is after our introduction into spiritual blessings that the

Epistle to the Ephesians says to us: "You who were dead in trespasses and in sins."

The early part of our chapter, as I have said, is entirely taken up with God's ways in grace towards His earthly people. In Abraham (v. 3) we find election, calling, faith, and the promises which are centered in Isaac. In Jacob and Esau (v. 4) we have the free choice of grace. In Egypt (v. 5) Israel learn forgiveness; at the Red Sea (v. 6) deliverance. In the desert (v. 7) it is grace again which sustains them and brings them across the Jordan (v. 11) to introduce them into Canaan. (v. 13)

Are there enemies — they do but set in stronger relief the almighty grace of God acting in favour of His people. The Egyptian who had kept them in bondage is judged, overtaken by destruction in the Red Sea in the act of opposing their deliverance. The Amorite who dwelt outside the limits of the Jordan, and sought to hinder their passage, is conquered. Balak, the subtle enemy, who by means of Balaam, seeks to induce God to turn away His face from His people, is brought to confusion, and forced to hear blessings pouring forth from the life of him whom he had called to curse. Finally, all the nations flee before Israel, pursued by hornets, without the aid of sword or bow.

Surely grace such as this might have drawn the nation after Jehovah. And we, have not we been made the recipients of a grace still richer? "God made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the children of Israel." Did He reveal His counsels to them? No, that was reserved for us. God has let us share in His most hidden purposes, His eternal counsels with regard to Christ, He has made us His confidants. What grace!

But Israel did not lose confidence in themselves. "We will serve him," said they. And yet their own history lay before them for their instruction. "Put away," said Joshua, "the gods which your fathers served the other side of the flood and in Egypt" (v. 14); these gods were still in their midst. Then as to Canaan, he adds: "If ye forsake the Lord and serve strange gods" (v. 20); they did not put away these gods, and their history is a record of idolatry from cover to cover. God gives them up, and their ruin becomes complete. Grace was their only resource, and they would not have it, and a great stone, image of the law, remains morally set up, in testimony and judgment against them, until Israel become once more an object of grace.

God indeed does not conclude with judgment. His ways in retribution will pass away; each tale of responsibility will come

to an end, but one thing abides ever — grace; grace by which we are foreknown, called, justified and glorified.

H. L. Rossier.

