Synopsis of the Books of the Bible

Joshua

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)

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Introduction

The great principles set forth in the Pentateuch as to the relations of God and man

We have gone through, by the goodness of God, the five books of Moses. They have set before us, on the one side, the great principles on which the relations of man with God, and of God with man, in their great elements, are founded, such as redemption, sacrifice, and the like; and on the other, the deliverance of a people set apart for Himself, and the different conditions in which they were placed, whether under grace in the form of promise, under law, or under God's government established over them by the special mediation of Moses.

We have had occasion in them to examine the history of this people in the wilderness; and the pattern presented, by the tabernacle, of things to be afterwards revealed; sacrifices and priesthood, means of relationship with God granted to sinners, wherein is indeed wanting the image of our perfect liberty to approach God, the veil not being then rent, but wherein the shadow of heavenly things is placed before our eyes with most interesting detail.

Finally, we have seen that God — having at the end of the journey, in the wilderness, pronounced the definitive justification of His people, and caused His blessing to rest upon them in spite of the efforts of their enemies — declares under what conditions the people should retain possession of the land, and enjoy His blessing in it; in the liberty and grace of God's free gift in immediate relationship with Himself; and what would be the consequences of disobedience; revealing, at the same tune, His purposes with respect to this people, purposes which He would accomplish for His own glory.* This brings us to the taking possession of the land of promise by the people under the guidance of Joshua. {* Their typical revelations in these books, which though interwoven with the history are their real subject, are invaluable to us; only the special privileges of Christians and of the assembly of God, in sovereign grace, are not communicated.}

The scope of the book of Joshua

As the Book of Numbers sets forth the spiritual journey through the wilderness in which the flesh was tested and tried, so this book is full of interest and instruction, as setting before us in type the conflicts of the inheritors of heaven with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, when we have entered into them, with a sure title, but having to take possession of them by the energy which overcomes the enemies who would keep us out, which is the other part of the christian life. Christians are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, as Israel was to enjoy temporal blessings in earthly places. It is easy to understand that, if we may rightly use (as I do not doubt) the name of Canaan as a figurative expression of the rest of the people of God, that which we have here to do with is not the rest itself, but the spiritual conflict which secures the enjoyment of the promises of God to true believers. The close of the Epistle to the Ephesians presents that which precisely answers, indeed alludes, to the position of Israel in this book. The saints in the assembly having been quickened and raised up with Jesus, have their conflict in the heavenly places, as it is to those who dwell there that the assembly is a testimony —

the testimony of the manifold wisdom of God.

Jordan and Caanan as types

It is worthy of notice, if Jordan represent death, and Canaan rest and glory, how short common christian views must come of some intended christian position; for the effect of the crossing of Jordan, and what characterised what followed, was war. The angel of Jehovah comes with a drawn sword as captain of Jehovah's host. It leads us to see that the Christian is to learn that he is dead and risen while here, and has his place in the heavenlies in Christ, and that it is in this position that his true conflicts take place.

Joshua a type of Christ leading His people

Joshua, then, represents Christ, not as coming down in person to take possession of the earth, but as leading His people through the power of the Holy Ghost, who acts and dwells in the midst of this people. Yet in Joshua, as in all other typical persons, those errors and sins are found which betray the weakness of the instrument, and the fragility of the vessel in which, for the time, God has condescended to put His glory.

Chapter 1

Joshua commissioned by Jehovah

Let us apply ourselves now to the study of this book. The first chapter shews us Joshua placed in service by Jehovah who commands him to go over Jordan into the land which He had given to the children of Israel.

Let us pause a moment over this immediate commission from Jehovah. Moses here holds the place, not of the living mediator, but of the written word. All that he commanded, being from God, was evidently the word of God for Israel. Joshua is the energy which brings them into possession of the promises.

The condition attached to the actual possession of the land

First of all, we have the principle on which possession is taken; not in the simple exercise of divine power, as that which will take place at the end, but in the energy of the Spirit and in connection with the responsibility of man. The boundaries of the promised land are given; but the knowledge of the boundaries assigned by God was not enough: God had defined them very accurately; but a condition was attached to their possession. "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that I have given unto you." They must go there, overcome the obstacles with the help and by the power of God, and take actual possession. Without that they could not possess it; and, in fact, this is what happened. They never took possession of all the land which God had given. Nevertheless, to faith the promise was sure: "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life." The power of the Spirit of God, of Christ by His Spirit (the true energy of the believer), is all-sufficient. For it is, in fact,

the power of Christ Himself, who has almighty power. At the same time, the promise of never being left nor forsaken (Deut. 31:6, 8) is maintained in all its force. This is what may be reckoned upon in the Lord's service — such a power of His presence that none shall be able to stand before His servant, a power which will never forsake him. With this full encouragement, he who walks by the Spirit is called upon to be strong and of a good courage.

The courage of faith necessary to take heed to God's Word

After this comes Jehovah's exhortation, in verse 7, "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses, my servant (the title always given him here), commanded thee." Spiritual strength and energy, the courage of faith, are necessary, in order that the heart may be bold enough to obey, may be free from the influences, the fears, and the motives which act upon the natural man, and tend to turn believers aside from the path of obedience, and that they may take heed unto the word of God.

The walk set before God's people in His word

There is nothing so unreasonable in the world as the walk set before us in the word — nothing which so exposes us to the hatred of its prince. If, then, God be not with us, there is nothing so foolish, so mad; if He be with us, nothing so wise. If we have not the strength of His presence, we dare not take heed to His word; and, in that case, we must beware of going out to war. But having the courage, which the almighty power of God inspires by His promise, we may lay hold of the good and precious word of our God: its severest precepts are only wisdom to detect the flesh, and instruction how to mortify it, so that it may neither blind nor shackle us.

The road to victory and repose

The most difficult path, that which leads to the sharpest conflict, is but the road to victory and repose, causing us to increase in the knowledge of God. It is the road in which we are in communion with God, with Him who is the source of all joy; it is the earnest and the foretaste of eternal and infinite happiness.

If only this word from God, Jehovah, is heard — "Turn not from it, to the right hand nor to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest" — what joy for him who, through grace, comes forward to do the work of God!

The two great principles of spiritual life and activity

The Lord then exhorts him to the diligent study of this book of the law: "For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." Here, then, are the two great principles of spiritual life and activity: 1st, the assured presence of the almighty power of God, so that nothing can stand before His servant; 2nd, the reception of His word, submission to His word, diligent study of His word, taking it as an absolute guide; and having courage to do so, because of the promise and exhortation of God.

Jesus' path and the revelation of it

In short, the Spirit and the word are all in all for spiritual life. Furnished with this power faith goes forward, strengthened by the encouraging word of our God. God has a way in the world where Satan cannot touch us. This is the path where Jesus walked. Satan is the prince of this world; but there is a divine path through it, but no other, and there God's power is. The word is the revelation of it. So the Lord bound the strong man. He acted by the power of the Spirit, and used the word. The Spirit and the word cannot be separated without falling into fanaticism on the one hand, or into rationalism on the other — without putting oneself outside the place of dependence upon God, and of His guidance. Mere reason would become the master of some; imagination, of others.

Satan's influence when reason is destitute of guidance

Moreover, there is nothing more imaginative than reason, when destitute of guidance! In result, the enemy of souls would take possession of both. We should have man under Satan's influence, in the place of God. Miserable exchange! for which the unbeliever is consoled by flattering himself that there is nothing beyond his reach, because he reduces everything to the limits of his own mind. Nothing appears to me more pitiful than this unbelief, which pretends that there is nothing in the moral and intellectual sphere beyond the thoughts of man, and which denies man's capacity to receive light from a more exalted mind — the only thing that raises man above himself, while at the same time rendering him morally excellent, by making him humble through the sense of superiority in another.

Blessed be God, that some are to be found who have profited by the grace which has communicated to man of His perfect wisdom! Even though the imperfect vessel which received it may have a little impaired its features and its perfection, they have nevertheless profited by it so as to take their true place. Happy place, before the presence of Him whom to know is infinite and everlasting joy!

Consciousness of the will of God and strength for action

There is yet an important practical rule to be recognised in these words, "Have not I commanded thee?" (chap. 1: 9). If we are not conscious that we are doing the will of God — if, before we begin to act, we have not assured ourselves of this in His presence, we shall have no courage in performing it. Perhaps indeed what we are doing is the will of God; but, not being conscious of this, we act with hesitation, without confidence, without joy; we are repulsed by the smallest opposition, whilst, when we are assured of doing His will, and that He has said, "Have not I commanded thee?" nothing, through grace, can alarm us.

Nevertheless I add one word, or rather I call the reader's attention to what God says; for although the command of God inspires us with a courage which we could not have had without it, yet no revelation is by itself strength for action. But God adds, "Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for Jehovah thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

Paul's weakness and strength

We have in the New Testament a striking exemplification of this principle: Paul was caught up to the third heaven, where he heard things which it is not lawful for man to utter. Was this his strength in conflict? Doubtless it inwardly gave his views a scope which reacted upon his whole work; but this was not his strength for the work. On the contrary, it tended to feed the false confidence of the flesh; at least the flesh would have used it for self-exaltation.

Such revelations rendered humiliation needful, and drew from God, not fresh favours (though all was favour), but, that which humbled the apostle, and rendered him weak and contemptible as to the flesh.* Being then weak, strength is given him in another way: not in the use or in the consciousness of revelations, that would have made him weak, by ministering to the exaltation of the flesh, but, in the grace and strength of Christ, which were made perfect in this infirmity. There lay his only strength; and he gloried in this infirmity, in which the power of Christ was perfected in him, which gave occasion for the manifestation of this power; and which, in proving that Paul was weak, proved that Christ Himself was in the work with Paul. We always need immediate strength from Christ, when acting on the part of Christ — strength which is made perfect in weakness, to do His work — abiding strength, for without Him we can do nothing. Let us remember this truth. {* Idle curiosity inquires what this thorn in the flesh could be. It matters little to us what it was. There might be a different thorn for each case in which God saw fit to send one. It would be always something suited to humble him who needed it. It is enough for our spiritual instruction to know by the word, that as to Paul it was an infirmity which tended to make him personally contemptible in his preaching (see Gal. 4:14; 2 Cor. 10:10). The object of God, in such a trial, as meeting the danger, is so evident to every spiritual mind, that it were useless to dwell upon it.}

"On this side of Jordan," and the Land

I add but one word on the end of the chapter. There are Christians (I cannot say approved of God) who take their place on thus side of Jordan — that is to say, on this side of the power of death and resurrection, applied to the soul by the Spirit of God. The place in which they settle is not Egypt; it is beyond the Red Sea, it is within the limits of Israel's possessions outside Egypt and this side the Euphrates, river of Babylon. But it is not Canaan. It is a land they have chosen for their cattle and their possessions; they establish their children and their wives there. It is not Joshua who conquered that land it is not the place of testimony to the power of the Spirit of God — that Canaan which is beyond Jordan.

However, although the children and their families might be placed there, yet the men of war must, whether they will or no, take part in the conflicts of the children of God, who seek no rest except where the power of God is found — that is to say, in Canaan, in the heavenly places, all enemies being driven out. And indeed when the sin of Israel, and their consequent weakness, exposed the people to the successful attacks of their enemies, of the enemies of God, this country was the first that fell into their hands. "Know ye that Ramoth Gilead is ours?" leads to no blessing to the people when sorrowful on account of its loss. For the time all was well; that is, as long as Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh remained under the authority of Joshua, and through him the power of God conducted the people. They too say to Joshua that which God had said, "Be strong and of a good courage."

The impossibility of reconciling "that which is spitirual" and what is carnal

How often among the children of God some principle or line of conduct is brought in, that is inferior in nature to the excellence of that work which is going on in the purpose of God; but which, as long as the power of God is working according to this purpose, does not disengage itself, so to say, from the work, so as to assume any prominence, and produce uneasiness and sorrow! But when this divine stream becomes shallow in consequence of man's unfaithfulness, then bitter fruits appear; spiritual declensions, weakness, heart-burnings, divisions, and direct subjection to the evil power, flowing from the impossibility of reconciling that which is spiritual with that which is carnal, and of maintaining a spiritual testimony while conforming to the ways of the world.

But this testimony belongs to the other side of Jordan. The two tribes and a half may follow this course if they will, but we cannot come out of Canaan to join them. Alas! these beautiful meadows, well suited to feed their flocks, have found but too many Lots, and tribes of Israel, to settle in them to their loss. The shoals that are met with in our christian voyage may perhaps be safely crossed at high tide; but at low tide skilful pilotage is needed to avoid them, and to float always in the full current of the grace of God in the channel it has made for itself. But there is a sure and stedfast pilot; and we are safe if we are content to follow Him. God has given us what we need for this. Perhaps we must be satisfied with a very little boat: the unerring pilot will be in it.

At the first Moses was not pleased with the proposal of the two tribes and a half. The thing was permitted certainly. But in general the first thoughts of faith are the best; they only contemplate the promises, the full effect of the promises and the thoughts of God. After thoughts are not in connection with that.

Chapter 2

Rahab: the grace of God setting up its way-marks

The second chapter contains the interesting history of Rahab.

How beautiful. it is to see the grace of God setting up its way — marks from the beginning, that the eye of faith may know where to rest, when God was obliged to narrow His dealings with respect to man, and to limit Himself in His relationship to man, until the precious blood of Christ gave that grace its full scope and liberty! Seed of the woman, seed of Abraham, seed of David — it narrows more and more. The promises even, as to the government of God, give place to the law, until a small remnant of Israel, proud in proportion to its poverty, becomes the vessel which contains the yet smaller remnant of faithful ones who were waiting for the redemption of Israel.

And what shallow thoughts, though true ones, were found in the hearts of these precious saints, in comparison with the hopes of an Abraham and the solemn declarations of an Enoch! The Lord, ever perfect, ever precious, might well say (one understands it, although the depths of His heart are infinitely beyond our reach), "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" But there have always been these signals for faith. If God acts, He goes beyond the

limits of the existing dispensation, and oversteps His established relationships with man.

God's goodness not limited to the existing dispensation

It is thus that the divine nature of Jesus, and the divine rights of His Person, manifested themselves. He was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This was the limit of His formal relationship with men. But if faith lays hold of the goodness of God, can this goodness deny itself, or limit itself to those who, for the time being, were the alone subjects of His dispensation? No, Christ could not say, God is not good, I am not good, to the degree you have imagined. How could God deny Himself? The Syrophenician woman obtains what she asks for. Precious prerogative of faith, which knows and owns God through everything; which honours Him as He is, and ever finds Him what He is!

Rahab's faith

Wherein was manifested that faith in Rahab which the apostle cites as a pattern? — admirable proof that the way in which God acts in grace is before and above law; that grace overleaps the boundary which law prescribes to man, even while maintaining its authority — an authority however which can only manifest itself in condemnation! What then was Rahab's faith? It was the faith which recognises that God is with His people, all weak and few as they may be and not yet possessed of their inheritance, wandering on the earth without a country, but beloved of God.

Rahab's identification of herself with God's people

If Abraham believed God when there was not a people, Rahab identified herself with this people when they had nothing but God. She well knew that the inheritance was theirs, and that, however strong their enemies might be, in spite of their walled cities and their chariots of iron, their heart was melted. This is always the case with the instruments of the enemy, whatever appearances may be, when the people of God are under the guidance of the Spirit of God in the path of obedience which God has marked out for them.

Thus, in the midst of heathens, this poor simple woman, a bad and despised member of an accursed race doomed to destruction, is saved, and her name is a testimony to the glory of God. Her house, recognised by the sure mark, the line of scarlet thread, becomes the refuge and the security of all who take shelter in it, trusting to the promise given.

Chapter 3

The passage of the Jordan and the Red Sea

And now the people are to enter the promised land; but how enter it? For Jordan, with its flood at the highest, lay as a barrier before the people of God, guarding the territory of those that oppose their hopes. Now Jordan represents death, but death looked at rather as the end of human life, and the token

of the enemy's power, than as the fruit and testimony of the just judgment of God. The passage of the Red Sea was also death; but the people were there as having part (in type) in the death and resurrection of Jesus accomplishing their redemption, and setting them free for ever from Egypt, their house of bondage — that is, from their place in flesh and thus from all the power of Satan* — as the blood on the door posts had from the judgment of God. It was complete redemption, the death and resurrection of Christ in its proper and intrinsic value. But in this aspect it is a complete and finished work, and brings us to God — not a history of what we may go through in actually arriving at this result (see Ex. 15:13, 17; 19:4). Hence, judgment even was executed. In Sinai, but not till then, law took the place of worship, historically. It was then that the people entered upon their pilgrimage in the wilderness.** {* It is important first to see Jesus alone in life and in death: there we have the thing itself in its perfection. It is equally important then to know that God sees us as having been there, that it expresses our place; that God sees us in Him, and that it is our place before God. But then there is also our taking that place, by the Spirit, in faith and in fact. The former was the Red Sea; as to death, it was Christ's death; Jordan, our entering into death with Him. The Red Sea was deliverance from Egypt; Jordan, entrance into Canaan subjectively; that is, a state suited to it in spirit, not possession of it, as Christ when risen — for us, by faith only of course as yet, as risen with Him. sitting in heavenly places is an entirely distinct thing, and on distinct ground; an absolute work of God. The Red Sea was the condemning of sin in the flesh, in Christ in death for sin; and so deliverance, when known by faith. But this is Jordan. Only Jordan goes further, for it brings us, as risen with Him, into the state which makes us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. The people followed the ark in going through Jordan, the ark remaining there in its power against death till all were passed. ** This supposes being really born again (see Rom. 8:29-30). The wilderness journey after Sinai supposes this christian position taken, but individual reality tested. To this all the "ifs" of the New Testament apply; that is, to the Christian on the road to the promised land, but with a certain promise of being kept to the end, if faith is there (1 Cor. 1:8-9; John 10:28). It is dependence, but on the fidelity of God There is no "if" as to redemption, nor as to our present place in Christ, when once we are sealed.}

Redemption, complete salvation, purchased by the precious blood of Jesus, introduces the Christian into this pilgrimage With God he only passes through the world as a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; still, this pilgrimage is but the life down here, although it is the life of the redeemed.* {* To this the Epistle to the Romans answers.}

Warfare in heavenly places and the wilderness journey

But, as we have seen, there is the heavenly life, the warfare in the heavenly places, which goes on at the same time with the wilderness journey. When I say at the same time, I do not mean at the same instant, but during the same period of our natural life on the earth. It is one thing to pass through this world faithfully, or unfaithfully, in our daily circumstances, under the influence of a better hope; it is another thing to be waging a spiritual warfare for the enjoyment of the promises and of heavenly privileges, and to conquer the power of Satan on God's behalf, as men already dead and risen, as being absolutely not of the world. Both these things are true of the christian life. Now, it is as dead and risen again in Christ that we are in spiritual conflict: to make war in Canaan we must have crossed the Jordan.* {* To this

Ephesians answers; only Ephesians has nothing to do with our death to sin. It is, as to this question, simply God's act, taking us when dead in sin and placing us in Christ on high. Colossians is partially both, life here in resurrection, but it does not set us in heavenly places, only in our affections there. By heavenly life I mean living in spirit in heavenly places. Actually Christ was divinely there; we as united to Him by the Holy Ghost.}

Death and resurrection with Christ represented in Jordan

The Jordan, then, is death and resurrection with Christ, looked at in their spiritual power, not as to their efficacy for the justification of a sinner, but as to the change of position and state in those who have part in them, in order to the realisation of life in connection with the heavenly places, into which Christ has entered.* A comparison between Philippians 3 and Colossians 2, 3, shews how death and resurrection are bound up with the true character of the circumcision of Christ. In Philippians 3 the return of Christ is introduced as completing the work by the resurrection of the body. We are not looked at as now risen with Him; but as practically running the race, with Christ and resurrection in view — a place which indeed characterises the epistle. It is not what faith assumes as to position, but the actual present race towards its possession. Hence it is objective, not being in Christ, or even with Him; but that I might win Christ and the resurrection from among the dead. Paul has given up everything for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and is looking for the power of His resurrection, and even justification is looked at as at the end of his course. {* This is not mere communication of life, as by the Son of God, but passing as a moral being out of one condition into another, out of Egypt into Canaan; for that is it, the wilderness being dropped as another thing The Red Sea and Jordan in this aspect coalesce.}

In both Philippians and Colossians the heavenly life is spoken of as a present thing; but there is entire separation, even down here, between the pilgrimage and this heavenly life itself, although the latter has a powerful influence on the character of our pilgrim life.

Ephesian and Colossian doctrine: the connection between life manifested and the objects it pursues

And this introduces a very important subject, which I cannot treat at large here, the connection between life as manifested here, and the objects it pursues. They that are after the Spirit have their minds on the things of the Spirit. The new life flows from what is divine and heavenly, from Christ, and this is specially John's part in teaching; hence it belongs to the risen state in glory, has its full development and place there. Our citizenship is there, and this makes us pilgrims; the heavenly life belongs to heaven; the second Man is "out of heaven." But in its full development there is no pilgrimage; we are at home in our Father's house, like Christ. But here it is developed in pilgrimage; has this character from its being heavenly. It has a growing development in a growing apprehension of what is heavenly (see 2 Cor. 3:3, 17, 18; 4:17-18; Eph. 4:15; 1 John 3:2-3, and many other passages). This necessarily, our object being on high, makes us strangers and pilgrims here, declaring, in the measure of our fidelity, that we seek a country, the country to which our life belongs; but it forms itself thereby for the display of Christ here, it is adapted to the scene through which we pass, has duties, obedience, service there.

The starting-point is sure, that we have died and are risen with Christ, in one aspect; and in another, we are sitting in Him in heavenly places. But this last is not our subject here, it is Ephesian doctrine; this is more Colossian. Christ Himself, though Himself that life and its manifestation down here in pilgrimage, yet, as a Man down here, had objects — for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross and despised the shame, and is set down. And this is deeply interesting; His life — God Himself (the last is more John's doctrine) — was what was to be expressed, expressed suited to the scene He passed through; but, being a true Man, He walked with objects before Him, which acted on the tenor of His path. The fact that He was this life, and that for His living it had not to die in His death, as we have, to an evil nature, makes it more difficult to realise in His case; but obedience, and He learned what it was, suffering, patience, all referred to His place here; compassion, grace as to His disciples, and all the traits of His life, though divine and such that He could say, "the Son of man who is in heaven," all were the development of the heavenly and divine life here.

Its influence was perfect and entire in His case; but His life in connection with men, although the ever-perfect expression of the effect of His life of heavenly communion and of His divine nature, was evidently distinct from it. The joy of the heavenly life entirely set aside all the motives of the lower life; and, leading to the sufferings of His earthly life in connection with man, produced a life of perfect patience before God. In Him all was sinless; but His joys were elsewhere, save in acting in grace in the midst of sorrow and sin — a divine joy. Thus also with the Christian; there is nothing in common between these two spheres of life. And, besides, nature has no part whatever in that above; in that below, there are things which belong to nature and to the world (not in the bad sense of the word "world," but considered as creation). Nothing of this enters into the life of Canaan.

The unique power of Christ in death and resurrection

Christ alone could pass through death, and exhaust its strength, when in it, as shedding the blood of the everlasting covenant; and He alone could rise again from death, in the reality of the power of the life that was in Him, "for in him was life." But it was proper divine power by which this was done. God raised Christ from the dead, testimony of His full acceptance of His work. Christ, being God, could say: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up": nor was it possible that He could be holden of death. But it is not by any force of spiritual life, as Man, that He raised Himself; though we know, as He laid it down of Himself, so He took it again, and this by commandment received of the Father — so that in this we cannot separate the deity and humanity — I speak of the act, not of His Person. He had power to take it again, but it was still obedience; we feel at every step, no one knows the Son but the Father. He has opened this way; He has converted death into a power that destroys the flesh which shackles us, and a deliverance from that in us which gives advantage to the enemy with whom we are to fight, being thenceforward brought into Canaan. Therefore the apostle says, "All things are yours, whether life, or death." Now, every true Christian is dead and risen in Christ; the knowing and realising it is another thing. But the word of God sets christian privilege before us according to its real power in Christ.

The unknown way opened by the ark

The ark of Jehovah passed over before the people, who were to leave the space of two thousand cubits between it and them, that they might know the way by which they must go; for they had not passed this way before. Who indeed had passed through death, to rise beyond its power, until Christ, the true Ark of the Covenant, had opened this way? Man, whether innocent or sinful, could do nothing here. This way was alike unknown to both, as was also the heavenly life that follows. This life, in its own sphere, and in the exercises here spoken of, is altogether beyond Jordan:. the scenes of spiritual conflict do not belong to man in his life below; though, as we have seen, the realisation of the heavenly things we are brought into act on the character of our faith down here; and our sorrows and trials down here, under God's grace, tend to clear our vision as regards the glory hoped for. See 2 Corinthians 5:2-5, and how the hope of verse 2 is returned to in verse 5. No wilderness experience, be it ever so faithful, has anything directly to do with this heavenly life although the grapes of Canaan may cheer the pilgrims by the way. But Christ has destroyed all the power of death for His people, so far as it is the power of the enemy, and the token of his dominion. It is now but the witness of the power of Jesus. It is indeed death; but, as we have said, it is the death of that which fetters us.

God's counsels to be accomplished

I will add some brief remarks. "Lord of all the earth" is the title Joshua repeats, as that which God had here taken: for it is in testimony to this great truth that God had planted Israel in Canaan. Hereafter He will establish in power, according to His counsels, that which had been put into the hands of Israel that they might keep it according to their responsibility. This last principle is the key to the whole history of the Bible, as to man, Israel, the law, and all it has to do with. All is first trusted to man, who ever fails, and then God accomplishes it in blessing and power.* {* And that in much fuller glory, according to His counsels before the world was, and in the Second Man.}

Thus this chapter supplies us with very clear indications of that which God has promised to accomplish in the last days, when He will indeed shew Himself to be "Lord of all the earth," in Israel brought back in grace by His mighty power. And we must attend to this testimony of the purpose of God in establishing Israel in their land. Harvest time will come, and the strength of the enemy will overflow its banks; but we, as Christians, are already on the other side. The strength of the enemy passed all bounds in the death of Jesus; and we do not say now, "Lord of all the earth"; but "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

God's encouragement: victory assured

Let us remark, also, how God encourages His people. They must combat. The sole of the foot must tread on every part of the promised land to possess it; and it must be in conflict that the power of the enemy and entire dependence upon God are realised. But, while fighting boldly for Him, He would have us know that victory is certain. The spies said to Joshua, "Truly Jehovah has delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us." That is what we know and prove by the testimony of the Holy Ghost, so different from that of the flesh as brought by the ten who came back with Caleb and Joshua.

Chapter 4

The twelve stones out of Jordan: remembrance of the death of Jesus on this side of Jordan

But if we are introduced into a life which is on the other side of death, by the power of the Spirit of God, as being dead and risen in Christ, there must be the remembrance of that death, by which we have been delivered from that which is on this side of it, of the ruin of man as he now is, and of the fallen creation to which he belongs. Twelve men, one out of each tribe, were to bring stones from the midst of Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm with the ark, while all Israel passed over on dry ground. The Holy Ghost brings with Him, so to speak, the touching memorial of the death of Jesus, by the mighty power of which He has turned all the effect of the enemy's strength into life, and deliverance from what could not enter into heavenly things, and has laid the basis for our having part in them. Death comes with us from the grave of Jesus: no longer now as death, it is become life unto us, and, subjectively for faith, the absence of that which cannot have part in what is heavenly. This memorial was to be set up at Gilgal. The meaning of this circumstance will be considered in the next chapter. We will only dwell here on the memorial itself. The twelve stones, for the twelve tribes, represented the tribes of God as a whole. This number is the symbol of perfection in human agency, in connection here, as elsewhere, with Christ, as in the case of the shewbread.

The Christian remembrance of the Lord's death

Here also the Spirit sets us — Christians — in a more advanced position. There were twelve loaves of the shewbread, and we form but one in our life of union by the Holy Ghost with Christ our Head, which is the life we speak of here. Now it is His death that is recalled to us in the memorial left us by the loving-kindness of our Lord, who condescends to value our remembrance of His love.

I only speak here of this memorial as the sign of that which should always be a reality. We eat His flesh, we drink His life given for us. Being one now in the power of our union with Christ risen and glorified, for here I speak of our whole place, dead to the world and to sin, it is from the bottom of the river into which He went down to make it the way of life-heavenly life — for us, that we bring back the precious memorial of His love, and of the place in which He fulfilled His work. It is a body whose life by blood is closed* which we eat, a poured out blood which we drink; and this is the reason why blood was entirely prohibited, to Israel after the flesh; for how can death be drunk by those who are mortal? But we drink it because, alive with Him, through the death of Christ we live, and it is in realising the death of that which is mortal that we live with Him. The remembrance of Jordan, of death when Christ was in it, is the remembrance of that power which secured our salvation in the last stronghold of him who had the power of death. It is the remembrance of that love which went down into death, in order that, as to us, it should lose all its power, except that of doing us good, and being a witness unto us of infinite and unchangeable love. {* The word "broken" is wrongly introduced in the common text. It was after He had given up His spirit to the Father, in full strength, that the blood was shed through the soldier's spear. He laid down His life of Himself.}

Chapter 5

Gilgal: practical realization of death

The power of resurrection-life takes all strength from Satan: "He who is begotten of God keeps himself, and that wicked one touches him not." In our earthly life, the flesh being in us, we are exposed to the power of the enemy, though Christ's grace is sufficient for us, His strength made perfect in weakness; but the creature has no strength against Satan, even though it should not be drawn away into actual sin. But if death is become our shelter, causing us to die unto all that would give Satan an advantage over us, what can he do? Can he tempt one who is dead, or overcome one who, having died, is alive again? But, if this be true, it is also necessary to realise it practically. "Ye are dead … therefore mortify" (Col. 3). This is what Gilgal means. Nay, we are always to bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our body (2 Cor. 4:10).* {* Colossians 3 is God's declaration of our position; Romans 6 exhortation to take it up in faith; 2 Corinthians 4 carrying it out in practice in the inner man (Col. 3:5-17).}

The matter in hand was not yet the taking of cities, the realisation of God's magnificent promises. Self must first of all be mortified. Before conquering Midian, Gideon must cast down the altar that was in his own house.

Circumcision, the application of the Spirit's power to the mortification of the flesh

Remark further, the wilderness is not the place where circumcision is carried out, even though we may have been faithful there. The wilderness is the character the world takes when we have been redeemed, and where the flesh which is in us is actually sifted. But death, and our entrance into heavenly places, judge the whole nature in which we live in this world. But then, consequent upon our death and resurrection with Christ, it is practically applied, and circumcision is the application of the Spirit's power to the mortification of the flesh in him who has fellowship with the death and resurrection of Jesus (compare 2 Cor. 4:10-12). Therefore Paul says (Phil. 3), "We are the circumcision." As to an outwardly moral life, Paul had that before. Had he now added true piety to his religion of forms, the true fear of God to his good works? It was far more than that. Christ had taken the place of all in him — first of all as to righteousness, which is the groundwork. But further, the apostle says, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead." Therefore it is in "pressing towards the mark" that he waits for the coming of Jesus to accomplish this resurrection as to his body.

The circumcision of Christ

In the Epistle to the Colossians, chapter 2, he speaks to us of the circumcision of Christ. Is. it only that he has ceased to sin (the certain effect indeed of this work of God)? No; for in describing this work he adds, "Being buried with him in baptism, wherein also we are risen with him, through faith of the

operation of God who has raised him from the dead." The consequences of this heavenly life are found in Colossians 3:1, which is in immediate connection with the verse just quoted. Here also the work is crowned by the manifestation of the saints with Jesus when He shall appear. Not the rapture; the heavenly part is omitted in Colossians, save that our life is hid there, and that what is there is an object of hope; we are made meet for it, which indeed is just what is done here.

Our Gilgal

Our Gilgal is in verse 5: "Mortify therefore." It is not "die to sin." Mortify is active power. It rests on the power of that which is already true to faith: "Ye are dead: mortify therefore." This being the standing, it is realised. "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead," said the apostle (Rom. 6), when speaking on the same subject.* This is the practical power of the type of the stones brought from Jordan. They are a symbol of our place, being the result of death with Christ who was dead.** But we are also raised up together with Him,*** as having died with Him. But there is another aspect of truth, we were dead in sins. He came down in grace where we were, on the way down, so to speak, atoning for our sins. God has quickened us together with Him, having forgiven us all trespasses.**** All that He did was for us; and now, associated with Him in life, united to Him by the Spirit, I am also sitting in, not yet with, Him in heavenly places.***** I appropriate to myself, or rather God ascribes to me, all that He has done, as though it had happened to myself: He is dead to sin, in Him I am dead to sin. Therefore I can "mortify": which I could not do as being still alive in the flesh. Where was the nature, the life, to do it in? I am risen with Him; I am also in Him sitting in heavenly places. But here it is not the Ephesian doctrine — which teaches the purpose and counsels of God, and, Christ being exalted to the right hand of God, shews the simple act of divine power which takes us when dead in sins and sets us in Him — it is the process, so to speak, through which we pass as having been alive (not dead) in sins, and passes us through death, in Christ, into a better life. The other is equally true, so I have spoken of it; but, it is the change, the essential but subjective change spoken of in Colossians as far as death and resurrection with Him go, which is our present subject in Joshua. {* We have three steps in this process: God's judgment, "Ye are dead"; the recognition of it by faith, "Reckon yourselves dead"; and the carrying it out in practice, "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." ** The Epistle to the Romans gives, in the desert, faith's estimate of the position which Christ's death has given to us, of death to sin and life to God in this world, as involved in our being saved by His death into which we were baptised, but our resurrection which takes us out of the desert, and is Colossians and Jordan. *** Thus far the Colossians. **** Thus far, also, the Colossians; but we are not viewed there as dead in sins, but as having lived in them, now dead and risen. ***** This is Ephesian teaching. And this is God's sovereign act of power which has taken us when dead in sins and put us into Christ.}

The mortification of our members accomplished through grace

Now, circumcision being the practical application of that of which we have been speaking — the death of Christ to sin, to all that is contrary to our risen position, "the body of the flesh" — we remember the death of Christ, and the mortification of our members on the earth is accomplished through grace, in the consciousness of grace. Otherwise it would only be the effort of a soul under the law, and in this case

there would be a bad conscience and no strength. This is what sincere monks attempted; but their efforts were not made in the power of grace, of Christ and His strength. If there was sincerity, there was also the deepest spiritual misery. In order to mortify there must be life; and if we have life, we have already died in Him who died for us.

The stones set up in Gilgal were taken out of the midst of Jordan, and Jordan was already crossed before Israel was circumcised. The memorial of grace and of death, as the witness to us of a love which wrought out our salvation, by taking up our sins in grace, and dying to sin once, stood in the place where death to sin was to be effected. In that He died, He died unto sin once; and we reckon ourselves dead to sin. Christ dying for sins, in perfect love, in unfailing efficacy, and His death to sin, give us peace through His blood as to both, but also enable us through grace to reckon ourselves dead to sin, and to mortify our members which are on earth.

In every circumstance, then, we must remember that we are dead, and say to ourselves, If through grace I am dead, what have I to do with sin, which supposes me to be alive? Christ is in this death in the beauty and in the power of His grace; it is deliverance itself, and introduction morally into the condition in which we are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. As to the glory, as running the race down here, the apostle says, "I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." But that is another subject.

The life of a risen man

Thus, in being dead, and only thus, will the reproach of Egypt be taken away. Every mark of the world is a reproach to him who is heavenly. It is only the heavenly man who has died with Christ that disentangles himself from all that is of Egypt. The life of the flesh always cleaves to Egypt; but the principle of worldliness is uprooted in him who is dead and risen with Christ and living a heavenly life. There is in the life of man, alive as such in this world (Col. 2:20), a necessary link with the world as God sees it, that is, corrupt and sinful; with a dead man there is no such link. The life of a risen man is not of this world; it has no connection with it. He who possesses this life may pass through the world, and do many things that others do. He eats, works, suffers; but, as to his life and his objects, he is not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world. Christ, risen and ascended up on high, is his life; he subdues his flesh, he mortifies it, for in point of fact he is down here, but he does not live in it. The camp was always at Gilgal. The people — the army of Jehovah — returned thither, after their victories and their conquests. If we do not do the same, we shall be feeble: the flesh will betray us. We shall fall before the enemy in the hour of conflict, even though it may be honestly entered into in the service of God. It is at Gilgal the monument of the stones from Jordan is set up; for if the consciousness of being dead with Jesus is necessary to enable us to mortify the flesh, it is through this mortification that we attain to the practical knowledge of what it is to be thus dead.

We do not realise the inward communion (I am not speaking now of justification), the sweet and divine enjoyment of the death of Jesus for us, if the flesh is unmortified. It is impossible. But if we return to Gilgal, to the blessed mortification of our own flesh, we find there all the sweetness (and it is infinite), all the powerful efficacy of this communion with the death of Jesus, with the love manifested in it.

"Always bearing about in the body," says the apostle, "the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifested in our body." Thus we do not remain in Jordan; but there remains in the heart all the preciousness of this glorious work, a work which the angels desire to look into, which is for us, and which Christ, in His love, appropriates to us. We find Him with us at Gilgal — a place of no outward show or victory to attract the eyes of men; but where He, who is the source of all victory, is found in the power and the communion which enable us to overcome.

The twelve stones set up in the midst of Jordan

But there were also twelve stones set up in the midst of Jordan; and indeed, if we apply the power of the death of Christ to mortify the flesh, the heart — exercised in, and fully enjoying heavenly things — loves to turn again to Jordan, to the place where Jesus went down in the power of life and obedience, and to gaze upon that Ark of the Covenant, which stood there, and stayed those impetuous waters till all the people had passed over. One loves, now that He is risen, while viewing the power of death in all its extent, to behold Jesus there, who went down into it, but who destroyed its power for us. In the overflowing of the nations, Christ will be the security and the salvation of Israel; but He has been our security and our salvation with respect to much more terrible enemies. The heart loves to stand on the banks of that river — already crossed — and to realise, while studying what Jesus was, the work and the wondrous love of Him who went down into it alone, until all was accomplished. But in one sense we were there. The twelve stones shew that the people had to do with this work, although the ark was there alone when the waters were to be restrained.

The Psalms and Jordan

In the Psalms we can especially there contemplate the Lord, now that we are in peace on the other side the stream. Oh, that the Christian — each one in the assembly — knew how to seat himself there, and there meditate on Jesus gone down into death alone, and death when it overflowed all its banks, bearing its sting and the power of divine judgment with it! In doctrine the Psalms set forth also the connection between the death of Jesus and the residue of Israel passing through the waters of tribulation in the last days.

In Canaan, at Gilgal

Behold, then, the people out of Egypt and in Canaan, according to the faithfulness of God's promise; but as yet nothing of Canaan possessed, nor any victory gained. It is a type for us of what is taught in the Colossians: made meet to be partakers, but the inheritance of the saints in light still in hope;* not only redeemed out of Egypt, but brought into Canaan, the reproach of Egypt being rolled away, and the people of God having taken their place at Gilgal — the true circumcision of heart of which we have spoken. {* Christ's state (only that He was actually raised) between His resurrection and ascension helps to understand it. He belonged evidently to heaven, not to this world, though He was not in heaven.}

Israel encamped at Gilgal.

The Passover kept in the Land, the memorial of accomplished salvation

The character of their communion with God is then pointed out, before their victories. They keep the passover in the plains of Jericho. Jehovah prepared a table before them in the presence of their enemies.

The blood was no longer sprinkled, as in Egypt, upon the lintel and the two side-posts, that they might be sheltered from the destroyer, and preserved from the last judgment which spread terror throughout every house where the blood was not seen.

We need this aspect of the blood of Christ, while judgment threatens in the territory of sin and Satan, although called of God to come out of it. God's justice and our consciences require it. But here the passover is no longer this; it is the memorial of accomplished salvation. Neither is it participation by grace in the power of the death and resurrection of Christ. It is the soul's communion; it is the sweet spiritual recollection of a work all His own, of His death as a lamb without blemish. We feed upon it, as His redeemed people, in the enjoyment of this position in the land of promise and of God — a land which belongs to us in consequence of this redemption, and of our being raised up with Christ. The death of Jesus can only be thus enjoyed on the other side of Jordan, as risen with Him. Then, in peace, in fellowship with Him, and with ineffable feelings of thankfulness, we return to the death of the Lamb; we contemplate it; we feed upon it. Our heavenly happiness and intelligence only increase our sense of its preciousness.

The old corn of the Land

On the morrow after the passover the people ate of the old corn of the land. Thus, raised up, and in title and nature suited to it, and taking our place thus in fitness and hope in the heavenly places, it is Christ known as heavenly who feeds the soul, and maintains it in vigour and in joy.* From thenceforward, also, the manna ceased. This is the more remarkable, because Christ, we know, is the true manna, but Christ down here, Christ after the flesh, and suited to man, and to his wants in the wilderness; nor will He ever be forgotten as such. I contemplate Jesus (God manifest in the flesh) with adoration. My soul feeds upon the mighty attractions of His grace in His humiliation; delights in the blessed testimony of His love who bore our sorrows and carried our sicknesses, and learns to be nothing and serve, in Him who took the lowest place. It is in this He ministers to the secret affections of the heart as we pass through this world; still in that condition He remained alone. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die; otherwise it abides alone. {* Let us remark, also, that christian simplicity and sincerity, the practical holiness of the christian life, the unleavened bread which was eaten on the morrow after the passover, is a heavenly thing. Nothing on this side Jordan can be this. It is of the growth of that land; therefore it is connected with Jesus, and peace through His death as a thing previous.}

But — while knowing what He has been — it is a Christ seated above, who came from above, who died and is raised again, and ascended up where He was before, whom I now know. His death, of the memorial of which we have spoken, is undoubtedly the basis of all. There is nothing more precious: but it is a heavenly Christ with whom we have now to do as the living One. For the rest, we remember Him in His humiliation and death; but this He gives us as its character. Even in the Lord's supper, analogous to the passover here celebrated it was "Do this in remembrance of me." And so in all His life, it was in

the wilderness, and suited to us for the wilderness also; it is, in our little measure, in heart or in fact, the fellowship of His sufferings.

Christ, the heavenly Man, our present portion

We contemplate, while seeking to imitate, the precious model which He has set before us, as a heavenly man upon the earth. But, beholding with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. He has for our sakes sanctified Himself, that we might be sanctified through the truth. We delight ourselves with the contemplation of all His grace here below; our affections are drawn out by a suffering Saviour. Nothing more precious than the Son of God winning the confidence of man's heart to God by His love in their midst when far from Him; but our present fellowship is with a Christ in heaven. And the Christ, whom we know on earth, is a heavenly Christ, and not an earthly Christ, as He will be to the Jews by-and-by. It was bread on earth no doubt, but bread come down from heaven; and this is a very important consideration. In passing through this wilderness (and we are passing through it), Christ, as the manna, is infinitely precious to us. His humiliation — His grace — comfort, also relieve, and sustain us. We feel that He has passed through the same trials, and our heart is sustained by the thought that the same Christ is with. us. This is the Christ we need for the wilderness — the bread which came down from heaven: but, as a heavenly people, it is Christ, as belonging to heaven and heavenly things, as associated with Him, the old corn of the land; for it is to Christ ascended up on high that we are united; it is there that He is our life. In a word, we feed on heavenly things, on Christ above, on Christ humbled and dying indeed as a sweet remembrance, but on Christ living as the present power of life and grace. We feed on the remembrance of Christ on the cross; this is the passover. But we keep the feast with a Christ who is the centre of heavenly things, and feed upon them all (Col. 3:1-2). It is the old corn of the land into which we have entered. For He belongs to heaven.

Thus, before giving battle, in front of the very walls of Jericho (representative of the enemy's power), God gives us to enjoy the fruit of this heavenly land as being all our own. We remember the death of Jesus, as redemption long since wrought out; and we feed on the old corn of the land, on heavenly things, as our own present portion. For, being risen with Christ by His grace, all is ours.

War, and the Captain of Jehovah's host

After this beautiful picture of the position and the privileges of God's people, who — according to God's own rights — may enjoy everything before engaging in a single battle, we find that war must follow. But there is one thing necessary for making war and obtaining blessings by conquest. Jehovah presented Himself as Captain of the host; it is He Himself who leads us. He is there with a drawn sword in His hand Faith owns no neutrality in heavenly things.* "And Joshua said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay, but as captain of the host of Jehovah am I come." {* I say, in heavenly things, because the heart is sensible of good qualities in the creature. The Lord loved the rich young man when He had heard his replies. But when a rejected and ascended Lord is to be followed, the will always sets itself either for or against. Faith knows this; it knows too the rights of God, and it maintains them.}

Almighty Power and Infinite Holiness

Remark here that the presence of Jehovah, as Captain of the host, as much demanded holiness and reverence, as when He came down to redeem His people (Exodus 3) in that divine holiness and majesty which were manifested according to their just requirements in the death of Jesus, who gave Himself that He might magnify and establish them for ever. Such as He was, who called Himself "I am," when He thus came down in righteousness and majesty; such also is He when standing in the midst of His people to bless and lead them in conflict.

The almighty power of God is with the church in its warfare. But His infinite holiness is there also, and He will not make good His power in their conflicts if His holiness is compromised by the defilement, the negligence, the heedless levity, of His people; or by their failure in those feelings and affections which become the presence of God, for it is God Himself who is there.

Chapter 6

The foundation principles of Israel's conquests shown in Jericho's fall

In Joshua 6 we find the principles on which the conquests of Israel are founded. The work is altogether God's. He may indeed exercise His people in conflict, but it is He who does all. "They went up every man straight before him." There is submission here in the use of means, readiness to follow a course which, in the eyes of the world, is absurd and without object; but which loudly proclaims the presence of the Lord in the midst of His people. There is entire dependence upon God, a perfect confidence in Him, which openly declares it has nothing else to do but to obey Him.

The promise is sure; they act in obedience. That is the principle Joshua — type of the energy and the mind of the Spirit in one who enjoys communion with the Lord — is certain of success; and in this assurance of faith he acts without hesitation. In effect, all the strength of the enemy falls to the ground without the use of any means that could account for it.

Another principle is, that there must be no fellowship whatever with that which constitutes the power of the enemy of God, with the world, and that which is its strength. All is accursed. It is so with us in this world. If the world of Sodom had enriched Abraham, he would have been dependent on that world; he would have owed it something; he would not have been at liberty from it to belong entirely to God. "And ye in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed." God may use these things by consecrating them to Himself, if He will. But if man, if the Christian, meddle with them, the Lord must judge him. cities walled up to heaven, the greatest obstacles are as nothing; how can they be with God? But holiness, complete separation from the world because power is of God — that is the condition of strength. Jericho, representing the enemy's power and means of defence (inasmuch as it was the first city standing as a barrier to arrest the progress of God's people), is put under a curse for ever; and sentence is passed against any one who should rebuild it (see 1 Kings 16:34). The abstract principles of the power of God and the enemy's strength are presented by this city and its fall, in what evidences them, and in contrast. But, if God is there, and the world is utterly

condemned, His grace calls out from this world a people saved by faith from its abominations, and Rahab, a poor unworthy sinner, is saved from its judgment, and has her place and part with the people of God.* {* It is noticeable that she, like Ruth, the stranger, is in the line of the Lord's royal genealogy (Matt. 1:5).}

Chapter 7

God neglected, consequent defeat at Ai

Joshua 7 lays open the principles of God's government, or His ways in the midst of His people who are in conflict. Victory leads to negligence. The work is thought easy. After a manifestation of God's power there is a kind of confidence which in reality is only self-confidence, for it neglects God. What proves this is that God is not consulted. Ai was but a small city. Two or three thousand men could easily take it. They went up and viewed the country, but God was forgotten. The consequence of this will be seen. If they had taken counsel of Jehovah, either He would have given no answer on account of the accursed thing, or He would have made its presence known. But they did not seek His counsel; they went forward, and they were defeated. The people of God surrounded by the enemy, have lost their strength, and flee before the least city in the land. What Will they do now? This is more than they know. Engaged in battle, and unable to conquer, what can they do there, where victory alone is their safety? "The hearts of the people melted and became as water." Joshua cries unto Jehovah, for in such a case even he who has the Spirit is taken by surprise, not having acted according to the Spirit. He must fall on his face before Jehovah, for their condition is not normal, not according to the Spirit who is the only guide and wisdom of His people. Joshua however recalls the power by which God had brought the people over Jordan, and contrasts it with their present condition, so evidently inconsistent with it. "Wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan, O Lord! what shall I say?"

Fear, and the reasonings of unbelief

This was a perturbed state of mind, the effect of a mixture of unbelief with the remembrance of the wonders which the power of God had wrought. Joshua loves the people, and he sets before God the glory of His name; yet with a timorous wish that they had remained on the other side of Jordan (and what to do there? for unbelief ever reasons badly), away from the conflict which led to such disasters — a wish that betrayed the unbelief which disturbed his heart.

"Israel has sinned"

Such is the state of a believer's soul in the conflict which the Holy Ghost brings him into, when the state of his soul does not inwardly correspond with the presence of the Holy Ghost who is our only strength for conflict. There is no escape. The position in which the saints find themselves is one which absolutely requires strength; yet the very nature of God prevents His bestowing it. We lament, we

recognise His power, we dread the enemy. We talk of God's glory: but we are thinking of our own fears and our own condition. Yet the thing was very simple. "Israel has sinned." Man, even when spiritual, looks at results (because he is in close contact with them), even while owning the power of God, and the connection between Him and His people. But God looks at the cause, and also at what He is Himself. It is true that He is love, but He cannot sacrifice the very principles of His being, nor deny Himself in those relationships which are founded upon what He is. His glory is indeed connected through grace with the well-being of His people. But He will vindicate His glory, and even bless His people in the end, without compromising these principles. Faith must count on the sure result of His faithfulness, but bring the heart (submitting to God's ways) into accordance with those principles.

It would not be maintaining His glory in the midst of His people if He tolerated amongst them anything contrary to His essential character, and made use of His power to maintain them in a condition which would deny His nature. The relationship would be broken, and God Himself compromised — a thing absolutely impossible. They had sin amongst them, and the strength of God is no longer with them; for God cannot identify Himself with sin.

Achan's sin discovered

And let us remember that there was sin also in the neglect which went forward without seeking counsel from God. Joshua's cry did not at once bring deliverance, but, first of all, discovery of the sin, with respect to which God is very precise and exact. When the government of His people is in question, He searches into everything, and takes cognisance of the smallest details (see ver. 11).

Further, God not only said, "therefore Israel could not stand," but "Thou canst not stand." Their weakness would continue. Sorrowful change! Before it was "No man shall be able to stand before thee." Now they could not stand themselves. Where there is not holiness, God allows the weakness of His people to be practically seen; for there is no strength but in Him, and He will not go out with them where holiness is wanting, nor thus sanction and encourage sin. Only, let us remark here, that God does not always withdraw His blessing at once from those who are unfaithful. He frequently chastens them on one hand, and blesses them on the other. He deals patiently, He instructs them, in His grace; He does not bless them on the side where the evil is, but He acts with admirable tenderness and perfect knowledge, taking the trouble, so to say, of following the soul in detail according to its condition and for its good; for He is full of grace. How often He thus waits for the repentance of His people! Alas! how often He waits for it in vain. But we have here the great principle on which He acts (as in the case of Jericho, that of His power exercised on behalf of His people), proving that all is of God.

Corporate sin and its Remedy

Another important principle is here set before us. The people of God are viewed corporately, as to the effects of sin amongst them. God is in their midst. sin is committed there. He is there. But since there is only one God there, and the people are one, if God is displeased and cannot act, the whole people suffer in consequence, for they have no other strength but God. The only remedy is to put away the accursed thing.

We find the same thing at Corinth, modified according to the principles of grace. The wicked person must be put away. If not, they are all identified with the sin until they have put it away, and have thus "approved themselves to be clear." In doing so, they take God's part against the sin, and the relationship between God and the body reassumes its normal state. Nevertheless all this cannot fail to produce certain painful effects. If the accursed thing is there, although God may have been glorified in the manifestation of the perfection of His ways — of His jealousy of sin, and perfect knowledge of all that happens (for Achan's confession justifies God, and the people have not a word to say), still, though the sin is no longer concealed, discipline must be carried out. The confession of Achan (whose sin had been brought to light, through the obedience of the people, or of Joshua, to the Lord's directions) does but ratify, in the eyes of all, the just judgment.

The object of Christian discipline

But it is well to remember here that christian discipline has always the recovery of the soul for its object. Even if the offender should be delivered unto Satan, it is for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord — a most forcible reason for exercising this discipline, according to the measure of our spiritual power; for we cannot go beyond that. At the least we might always humble ourselves before God, in order that the evil may be removed. To be indifferent to the presence of evil in the church is to be guilty of high treason against God; it is taking advantage of His love to deny his holiness, despising and dishonouring Him before all. God acts in love in the church; but He acts with holiness and for the maintenance of holiness: otherwise it would not be the love of God which acted; it would not be seeking the prosperity of souls.

The Valley of Achor, "a door of hope" in grace

It is interesting to see that this valley of Achor, the witness and the memorial of the first sin committed by Israel after they had entered the land, is given them "for a door of hope" (Hosea 2:15), when the sovereign grace of God is in action. It is always thus. Fear sin, but do not fear the bitterness of its discovery, nor that of its chastisement: for at this point God resumes the course of blessing. Blessed be His gracious name for it! Alas! Shinar (Babylon) and money soon begin to affect the ways of the people of God. They find these things amongst their enemies, and the carnal heart covets them. Observe also that, if there is faithfulness and obedience, God never fails to manifest and take away that which hinders the blessing of His people. Let us follow the history of the people's restoration to God's favour.

Chapter 8

Israel's return to their strength in God

Joshua 8 exhibits the return of Israel to their strength in God.

If all the people were compromised by Achan's sin, it was needful that they should be sensibly restored to confidence, that they should be established, and consequently that they should go through whatever

was necessary to their restoration. They must experience many things. Much experience of this kind would be avoided by walking in the simplicity and integrity of faith. Jacob had more of it than Abraham, and it was when unfaithful that Abraham went through the most (that is, of such experience as is really felt to exercise the heart). But God makes use of this to teach us what we are, and what He is: two things which — if we know them not — render experience necessary.

Ai taken: pride and self-confidence sharply rebuked

Success is now certain: but all the people must go up against this small city which, judging by human strength, might have been taken by two or three thousand men. Pride and false confidence are sharply rebuked by this. How much trouble must Joshua now take! Lay an ambush, feign to flee: all this to take a small city, and not much glory after all. It costs more pains to return into the path of blessing than it would have done to avoid the evil. But the simplicity of faith and its natural vigour can be regained no other way.

The Lord's work by His Spirit

Meanwhile, the power of God is with them, and everything succeeds; although the manifestation of this power is not such as it was at Jericho. At length by God's command Joshua stretches out the spear that was in his hand toward the city. It does not appear that the ambush saw it, or that it was a concerted signal.* But as soon as it was stretched out, the ambush arose, entered the city, and set fire to it. It is thus that the Lord, working by His Spirit at the opportune moment produces activity in those even who may not know why. At a given time they are impelled onwards, and think they act from motives of their own, while it is the Lord who directs all their steps in harmony with what He is doing elsewhere: and thus He brings about the success of the whole affair. {* It the more appears that this was not a concerted signal, but that the action had the meaning which I have here assigned to it, because Joshua drew not his hand back till they had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai; and this does not agree with the idea of a mere signal.}

It is highly interesting to see the Lord thus the hidden spring of all action, giving impulse to the activity of His children, who in detail are ignorant of what it is that puts them in motion although, on the whole, the mind of God is revealed to them, even as Israel had the general orders of Joshua. When Christ stretches out the spear, all is activity to bring about the counsels of His wisdom and lead to the predetermined results of His mighty grace. May we only have faith to believe it!

Joshua takes formal possession of Canaan as Jehovah's land

We have still two other important facts to consider in this chapter. Jehovah had already shewn in the taking of Jericho that it was His might alone that gave victory, or rather that made everything fall before Israel, the prince of this world having no power against Him; and that, the gold and silver being Jehovah's, the people were not to seek the treasures of the conquered world, nor to enrich themselves with its spoils. In general, however, when Israel had exterminated their enemies, they took possession of everything, as of the promised land.

Now that these two great principles are established, (namely that the power of God is with His people, and that He will have holiness and consecration to Himself maintained in the camp,) Joshua takes formal possession of the whole country, as belonging to Jehovah.

This is not celebrating the memorial of their salvation by the blood of the Lamb; nor is it feeding on the old corn of the heavenly land in the place of rest; where the grace and perfection of Christ and the redemption He has wrought out are peacefully remembered. The people treat the land itself as belonging of right to Jehovah, according to the strength of the spiritual might which is in activity to assert His rights, and which recognises them, although the conquest of the land is only just begun. Before Jericho (in type) they had fellowship with the cross, and with things above, without striking a blow.

As Jehovah's land it must not be defiled

Here, the conditions of the warfare being laid down, they publicly declare beforehand that it is Jehovah's land. Though Satan is still in possession of the contested land, by right it is Jehovah's. There were two actions by which Joshua verified this. He commanded the dead body of the king of Ai to be taken down from the tree as soon as the sun was down. This was the ordinance in Deuteronomy 21:22-23, "His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day (for he that is hanged is accursed of God); that thy land be not defiled, which Jehovah thy God giveth thee for an inheritance." Israel's victory was complete. The curse hung over their enemies, who were also God's enemies. They were made a curse, and declared to be so. Now, according to Joshua's faith, the land was so entirely Israel's, as the gift of God, that it ought not to be defiled; he had, therefore, the dead body taken down that it should not be so in fact.

The altar built on Mt. Ebal: Jehovah recognised as Israel's God

The other action was Joshua's building an altar on Mount Ebal. Having taken possession of Canaan as a consecrated land, they recognise Jehovah as the God of Israel by worshipping Him in the land. The altar was there as a witness, and as a bond between the people and Jehovah who had given them the land. The erection of this altar has been already spoken of, when considering the Book of Deuteronomy; I will not recur to it. I leave it to the reader to judge whether Joshua would have done better to set up this altar as soon as they had crossed the Jordan. Be that as it may, we do not always turn at once to God, when we enjoy that which His power has wrought. Our not doing so only proves our folly, whether it be in things connected with our joy or our safety. It was the Lord's mind here to give us the testimony of divine strength and human weakness before this public assumption of the land in His name; the practical realisation of being beyond Jordan in power and of Gilgal, brought home to them by its contrast. It is taken possession of in connection with Israel's responsibility under the law.

Joshua now reads, before all the people, not only the curses attached to the violation of the law, but all that made known the ways of God in His government of the people.

Chapter 9

The wiles of the Gibeonites

But, if such a position as this proclaims the rights of God and manifests the confidence of the people, it soon leads to conflict. The enemy will not consent to the invasion and the taking possession of all the territory he has usurped. But the wiles of the enemy are more to be feared than his strength; indeed it is only these that are to be feared: for in his strength he meets the Lord: in his wiles he deceives, or seeks to deceive, the sons of men. If we resist the devil, he flees; but to stand against his wiles, we. need the whole armour of God. Christ met his wiles with Scripture, in the path of simple obedience, and, when he manifested himself, the Lord said, "Get thee hence, Satan."

Why the Israelites were deceived

The inhabitants of Gibeon pretended to have come from far. The princes of Israel use their own wisdom instead of asking counsel of Jehovah. This time it is confidence, not in the strength, but in the wisdom of man. The princes of the congregation, accustomed to reflect and to guide, are more likely to fall into this snare. Bad as they are in their unbelief, the people, eager for the result, are often nearer the mind of God to whom the result is sure. The princes had some misgivings, so that they are inexcusable. Apparently there was much advantage in gaining allies in a place where they had so many enemies. The Gibeonites flattered them too, as the servants of Jehovah. Everything was calculated to set their minds at rest.

Satan can talk religiously as well as another; but he deceives only when we take the management into our own hands, instead of consulting the Lord. Communion with Him was needed to discern that these were people of the country, enemies who dared not to be enemies; but to make peace with such is to deprive oneself of a victory, and of one's right to make good the judgment and the glory of God, in the unmingled possession of the land of blessing. Allies can only set aside that single-eyed dependence upon God, and that purity of moral relationship which exist between God and His people, when it is His power alone that sustains them. For allies were not Israel. Israel spares the enemy; and the name of Jehovah, which had been brought in, obliges His people to retain a perpetual snare in their midst.

The sorrowful fruits of false peace

Four centuries later, in the days of Saul, this produced its sorrowful fruits. To a spiritual mind the presence of the Gibeonites would always be an evil. Besides, what had Israel to do with allies? Was not Jehovah sufficient? May He give us always to trust in Him, to seek counsel of Him, to own none but Him, and to be always subject to Him! This will ensure victory over every enemy, and the land will be all our own.

Chapter 10

Conflict and victory

Moreover, this peace with the Gibeonites only brought fresh attacks upon Israel. But now all is plain. Jehovah says to Joshua, "Fear them not, for I have delivered them into thy hand." This is all that conflict means for one who walks in the Spirit before God. There must be conflict, but conflict is only victory. It is the Lord who has delivered the enemy into our hands; none can stand before us.

Return to Gilgal

All things are ours. The sun stands still, and the moon stays its course, witnessing to the power of God and to the interest He takes in blessing His people. We may be sure that, whithersoever the Spirit will go, there the wheels will go (Ezek. 1:20). Joshua defeated all his enemies, because Jehovah, the God of Israel, fought for Israel. This time they were faithful, they made no peace. What had Canaanites to do in Jehovah's land? Has Satan any right to the land of promise? This is the light in which Joshua always beholds the land of Canaan (Joshua 10:27). But, after the victory, Israel returned to the camp of Gilgal. We have already explained what Gilgal means. But the return thither of the conquerors of the Canaanitish kings contains the instructive lesson that, whatever our victories and our conquests may be, we must always return to the place that becomes us before God in the annihilation of self; to the application of the knowledge we have of God (the resurrection of Christ having set us in the heavenly places), to the judging and the mortifying of the flesh — to spiritual circumcision, which is the death of the flesh by the power of resurrection. There is a time to act and a time to be still, waiting upon God that we may be fit for action. Activity, the power that attends us, success, everything, tends to draw us away from God, or at least to divide the attention of our fickle hearts.

But the camp is the starting-point for victory, and the return from triumph for true strength is always to Gilgal. It is not there that the enemy attacks us if we are faithful. The attack will be on our side, whatever the manoeuvres of our adversaries may be.

God making everything work together for good

Let us observe also that, in spite of the people's and Joshua's failures, everything turned out well in the end. There were faults, and these faults received their chastisement, as in the case of Gibeon and of Ai. But, the walk of the people being faithful in the main, God made everything work together for good. Thus the peace with Gibeon led to victory over the kings who attacked that people. There was cause for humiliation and for chastisement in the details of their history; but, as a whole, the hand of God appears in it most manifestly.

It is seldom that every step of our way is taken in faith and dependence upon God. We do well to humble ourselves on account of this. But when the object is the Lord's object, He goes before us, and orders all things for the triumph of His people in this holy war, which is His own war. Only failures may bring their fruits for a long while.

Chapter 11

Hazor, the seat of power, totally destroyed

Israel's victories bring fresh war upon them; but the confederation of their enemies only serves to deliver them all together into their hands. If God will not have peace, it is because He will have victory. A new principle is now set before us. God will in nowise allow the world's seat of power to become that of His people; for His people depend exclusively on Him. The natural consequence of taking Hazor would have been to make it the seat of government, and a centre of influence in the government of God, so that this city should be that for God which it had before been for the world; "for Hazor beforetime was the head of all those kingdoms." But it was just the contrary. Hazor is totally destroyed. God will not leave a vestige of former power; He will make all things new. The centre and the source of power must be His, entirely and exclusively His: a very important lesson for His children, if they would preserve their spiritual integrity.

Conquest and rest

In a certain sense the conquest of the land seemed complete; that is to say, there was no outward strength left, either to stand before them or to form a kingdom. But Israel had still many enemies in this land, enemies who did not, indeed, molest them while they continued faithful, but who taught the people many things that afterwards helped on their ruin. They had divided the conquered land; they had rest from war. When all is finished, we may reckon up our victories, but not before; till then we ought rather to be occupied in gaining more.

God's dealings as to Ai and the Gibeonites

We may remark here that, in the result of God's dealings, the fault committed previously to the attack upon Ai seems blotted out, and had even contributed to the development of His purposes. At the time it had kept them back, and was punished. But God applied Himself to Israel's moral restoration to the confidence of faith, and the grand object of His dealings was in nowise hindered. This is no excuse; but it is a sweet and strong consolation which leads so much the more into worship. The fault committed in the matter of the Gibeonites appears to me more serious. It did not delay their progress; but, being the act of Joshua and the princes, it set them for ever in a false position with respect to those whom they spared.

Joshua 11 closes the first division of the book, that is to say, the history of Joshua's victories (typically that of the Lord's power by the Spirit, giving His people possession of the promises).

Chapters 12 to 24

The extent of the country and portion of each to be known

Joshua 12 is only a summary of their conquests. The Holy Ghost not only gives us the victory over our enemies, but makes us understand and know the whole extent of the country, and defines the particular

portion of each; giving us details of everything it contains; of God's perfect arrangements for the appropriation of the whole, and the distribution of each part of His people, so as to produce a well-ordered whole, and perfect in all its parts, according to the wisdom of God. But here we have to realise the distinction maintained in the New Testament between the gifts of God, and the enjoyment of the gifts given. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." "He has made us sit together in heavenly places by the same power which placed Christ there, when He raised Him from the dead and set Him above every name that is named. Alas! how many earthly things still remain unsubdued among Christians. But the Holy Ghost takes cognizance of this condition, in view of, and in connection with, that which rightfully belongs to them: it is this which enables us to understand the second division of this book.

The whole land parcelled out and given by Jehovah Himself

Although there was still a considerable part of the land to be possessed, Joshua parcels out the whole amongst the tribes of Israel, according to the command of Jehovah, who declares that He will Himself drive out its inhabitants before them. But the people poorly responded to this promise. The cities of the Philistines were indeed taken, but their inhabitants were not exterminated; they were spared, and soon regained power. Here we may remark that, wherever there is faithfulness, there is rest. The effect of Joshua's work was, that "the land had rest from war"; so also with that of Caleb (Joshua 14:15). When the cities of the Levites were allotted them, we find the same thing again (Joshua 21:43-44). It is not so in detail. The whole extent of country is given to Israel, and each tribe has his share; the portion, therefore, which fell to each tribe was given them in full right by Jehovah Himself. Their borders were marked out; for the Spirit of God takes notice of everything in distributing the spiritual inheritance, and gives to each according to the mind of God. There is nothing uncertain in God's arrangements. But we find that not one tribe drove out all the enemies of God from His inheritance, not one realised the possession of all that God had given him.

Judah and Joseph take possession of their lots

Judah and Joseph take possession of their lots. We know that they always remained chief amongst Israel, fulfilling thus the counsels of God as to royalty for Judah, and the birthright which fell by grace to Joseph (Joshua 15-17; see 1 Chron. 5:2). The tabernacle of God was also set up in peace (Joshua 18); but, once at rest, the tribes are very slow in taking possession of their portion — too frequently the history of God's people. Having found peace, they neglect His promises. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the Spirit of God did not fail to point out to the people in detail all that belonged to them.

The cities of refuge the provision for restoration of the enjoyment of the inheritance

The cities of refuge are appointed (Joshua 20); that is, the land being Jehovah's, provision is made that it may not be defiled, and for the return of every man to his inheritance, after he had fled from it for a time, because of killing some person unawares. We have already seen the force of this. Only we may

remark here, that not only have we seen spiritual title to all at once before Jericho — the rights of Jehovah maintained in the case of the king of Ai and mount Ebal, as the ground of present possession — but provision for restoration to enjoyment of the inheritance in detail when temporarily lost, which, in figure, applies to the people in the last days.

The two tribes and a half

The establishment of the two tribes and a half on the other side Jordan gave rise to difficulties and suspicions. Nevertheless these tribes were faithful at heart. Their position had done them harm, their self-seeking having somewhat marred the energy of their faith: still, faithfulness to Jehovah was found in them.

Joshua's warning

Finally, Joshua sets the people, in the way of warning, under a curse, or under a blessing, according to their obedience or disobedience; and then recapitulates their history, telling them that their fathers had been idolaters, and that the people around them were so still.

Peaceable possession of all under promise of obedience

But the people, not having yet lost the sense of the power of God who had blessed them, declare that they will serve Jehovah alone. They are thus placed under responsibility, and undertake to obey, as the condition of their possessing the land and enjoying the fruit of God's promise. They are left there, it is true, in peaceable possession of it all, but under the condition of obedience after having already allowed those, who should have been utterly destroyed, to remain in the land; and when, from the outset, they had not at all realised that which God had given them. What a picture of the assembly ever since the days of the apostles!

The heavenly things which are ours

There is yet one remark to be made. When Christ shall return in glory, we shall inherit all things, Satan being bound. The assembly ought to realise now, by the Holy Ghost, the power of this glory. But there are things, properly called heavenly, which are ours, as being our dwelling-place, our standing, our calling; there are others which are subjected to us, and which are a sphere for the exercise of the power that we possess. Thus the limits of Israel's abode were less extensive than those of the territory to which they had a right. Jordan was the boundary of their abode, the Euphrates that of their possession. The heavenly things are ours; but the manifestation of the power of Christ over creation, and the deliverance of this creation, is granted to us. It will be delivered when Christ Himself shall exercise the power.

Thus the "powers of the world to come"* were deliverances from the yoke of the enemy. These were not things proper to us; nevertheless they were ours. {* So called, I doubt not, because they were samples of that power which will entirely subdue the enemy when Christ shall appear.}