

GOD'S OVERTAKING MERCY

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“And he [the angel of the Lord] said, Hagar, Sarai’s maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.”
Genesis 16:8

“And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?”
Genesis 16:13

HAGAR had lived for many years in Abraham’s family. This was no small advantage. While all the rest of the world was in heathendom, the light shone brightly in Abraham’s tent. Not only was Abraham himself a worshipper of the Most High God, but he commanded his household after him. We may rest assured that there were family gatherings for devotion—that the patriarch took occasion, both by precept and example, to teach the knowledge of the true God to all who were in his service. His was the central spot of light in the world, and all around him was the thick gloom of heathenism.

Yet I do not find that Hager, during the years she lived with Abraham, even when she saw his faith in going forth from his kindred and his country, and dwelling in tents in the promised land—I do not find that she herself received any personal call from God, or had a word from the angel of mercy to her own soul. And truly in this she is like very many servants, ay, and sons and daughters too, in godly families who are surrounded by the light, but yet see not, who are where God speaks, and yet He has not spoken personally to them, who enjoy the means of grace, but have never yet got the grace of the means—who are themselves strangers in the midst of Israel, foreigners, though they dwell in the land itself.

Now it would be a source of the greatest imaginable joy to many of us if some of these should be called as Hagar was—should hear the voice from heaven, and be enabled to make the double discovery which she made, namely, that God saw her, and that she might come into contact with God—might look to Him who had seen her.

At this time I shall first direct your attention to a very interesting circumstance, namely—

I. THE SINGULAR SEASON CHOSEN BY GOD FOR THE INTERPOSITION OF HIS MERCY.

Let us dwell on that a moment. God displays His sovereignty in saving souls, both *in the souls whom He chooses to save, in the instrumentality He uses in calling them, and in the conditions of mind in which He finds them* when He is pleased to look upon them in mercy.

Now Hagar at that time—at the time when the angel called to her—seemed to be in somewhat an unlikely state to be visited of God. She was, first of all, at that moment *smarting under a sense of wrong*. She felt that Sarah had not treated her well, and in all probability Sarah had not. The Eastern mistress is often very tyrannical towards her servants, and Hagar stood very much in the position of a slave. We do not doubt but what the jealous wife had been very severe—unjustly severe towards the woman.

There she sat by the well, feeling bitterness in her own soul, that in the house of good people where she had expected better things she had been treated with injustice. It did not seem likely that the God of Abraham should call her, when her heart was seething like a pot with indignation against the household where God was worshipped.

At the same time, as she turned the matter over and her soul grew more and more bitter within her, I should not wonder but what she felt she had brought a good deal of it upon herself. She was but the servant, and she had desired to play the mistress. She had despised the mistress, no doubt spoken to her very contemptuously, and now it had returned upon her, and she was made to suffer for her own pride. Her proud, fierce spirit, perhaps, did not admit it, but yet she must have felt in her conscience that much of what was wrong about her she had, notwithstanding, brought upon herself. Now when a person is under such a feeling as that, disturbed, tossed to and fro, vexed, distracted, it does not seem a likely time for them to hear the voice of God speaking to their souls.

Moreover, at that moment *she was leaving all that was good*, she had turned her back upon the household, the chosen household—left it, I will not say deliberately, but at any rate she had left it, she was going down into Egypt—going “anywhere, anywhere out of the world,” so that she could but get away from the place where her bondage had become irksome. She was going, she scarce knew where, but she did know probably that she was going into heathendom, among heathen people. The best she could hope to meet with was separation from God. She could not but feel that it was black darkness which was before her, and she was rushing madly into it because her high spirit would not bend—would not bow—would not yield before the majesty of the Most High.

I think I see her there, her eyes red with weeping, her spirit broken down with the hunger of her journey, sitting a while and refreshed a moment, and resolved not to stoop and never to go back, and then again shuddering at the darkness that lay before her, and afraid to go on. It was in such a state as that that God met with her, to all intents and purposes she was a friendless, outcast woman. She had left the only tents where she could claim a shelter, she had gone into the wilderness—no father, no mother, no brother, no sister to care for her. She turned her back upon those who had any interest in her, and now she was left alone, alone, alone in a desert land, without an eye to pity or a hand to help. It was then, under those peculiar circumstances of trial and of sin commingled, that God met with her.

I have been wondering in my soul, when I turned over this text, whether there would stray into this Tabernacle some kindred case, and whether, though no angel spake, yet the voice of man might be tonight the voice of the messenger of the covenant to some poor soul. I know thee not by name, nor face, yet I know well thy feeling. It may be tonight thou art sorely angry, greatly vexed, smarting, wrathful, thou hast made up thy mind to choose the world and give up every semblance of that which is good. It may be tonight that thou hast lost everything that makes earth worth living in. Thou longest for death, thou wouldest almost seek the place where the lamps quiver on the dark river, for thy spirit is bitterness itself, thy lamp of hope is gone out.

Oh! but it may be that this is the night when God's mighty mercy is ordained to meet with thee—the very evening in which the Lord shall call out thy name, and thou shalt feel that He knows thee, thy case, and thy circumstances, and that He has come to call thee to Himself as thou never mightest have been called had not these extremities of thine brought God to thy rescue and to thy salvation!

I do not suppose that there will be anyone whose case exactly resembles that of the text, but it has sometimes happened that the turning point of human life has been the point of great sorrow, and great penury, and distress of mind on account of some gigantic fault, or it has been the time of some dreadful alternative put before the soul, in which it seemed as though it must be God or devil that night, heaven or hell that night, eternal joy or eternal misery that night. On some such strange occasion as this in your mental history you have come here tonight, may God, who is here, speak with you. A singular season for mercy.

Now, secondly, let us look at—

II. THE MODE OF MERCY, OR THE HOME QUESTIONS WHICH THE ANGEL PUT TO HER.

She is sitting there by the well, it is in a desert, it may be a little oasis on the road, but there is no one within sight, nor any probability of any caravan passing that way. As she sits quite still she hears a voice, “Hagar.” She starts, she looks up, and there is a brightness like the sun above her, brighter than

the sun at noonday does it shine. She can scarcely bear the light, and she hears it again, "Hagar, Sarah's maid." Whoever it is that is speaking knows who she is, and what she is, and all about her. "Whence comest thou? and whither wilt thou go?" She is so startled, she has just been thinking of the place from whence she came, and that dismal question had just been starting her mind. "Whither wilt thou go?" She felt that there was no place for her to go. It was only a choice of equal horror—she knew not where to go.

Now remark this, that very often the Gospel call comes to the sons of men not by a voice heard by the ear, but through the ministry in the way of describing the person's case with minute accuracy. It was the Savior's way of doing it when He was on earth. The woman was by the well, the Savior spoke to her. The words did not seem to take effect. He turned the subject, and He said, "Go, call thy husband and come hither." "I have no husband," said she. If she could blush, she blushed then—"I have no husband." "Thou hast well said, 'I have no husband,' for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband. In that saidst thou truly."

Then the shock went to her very heart, she perceived that He who spoke was something more than man. And when the Gospel fully preached describes the sinner, paints him, photographs him, holds it before him, and makes him say, "Why, that is myself, he speaks of me—it is even me," then it is that the soul perceives what Hagar perceived, that God saw her, and that she might look to God.

Now I shall not endeavor to make any picture of you, dear hearer. If I were to try it, I could not do it, it is only the Lord Himself that guides us in such matters, but I will put the question to you, "Whence comest thou?" Did you come into the condition in which you now are out of a godly parentage? Have you got into London sin, but was there a time once when you knelt at your mother's knee at eventide and repeated a gracious prayer?

Ah! you have spent many a day and many a night in the haunts of sin! You were once a teacher in the Sabbath school—once a lover of the Gospel (at least professedly so) which now you turn from and abhor. "Whence comest thou?" From old impressions that have been forgotten, from an old profession that has been disgraced, honorable once, dishonorable now—a servant of God once ostensibly, but now a servant at the devil's altar—a ringleader in sin it may be, though once thou wert at heaven's own gates. "Whence comest thou?" Remember whence thou hast fallen, and repent. And "whither wilt thou go?"

Oh! let me put the question! You stand tonight just here, "Whither wilt thou go?" Another sin tempts thee tonight, wilt thou commit it? I would fain stand with thee, as the old Scythian did of old when his country was about to be invaded by the foe. He drew a line before the chieftain of the invading host, and said, "Cross that line, and there is war forever, stay there, and there may be peace." I put a line before your steps tonight, in the name of the everlasting God, I charge you cease from that sin. Once more commit it, and it may be that no mercy's trumpet shall ever sound out a message of forgiveness to thee again.

"Whither wilt thou go?" Oh! go not like a dog to thy vomit, like the sow that was washed to her wallowing, go no further, for "whither wilt thou go" in the future? A man who sins today will sin worse tomorrow, and the next day worse. Many a young man, when he has commenced with what are called the follies of London life had no idea that he would end it debauched, depraved, and abandoned. Many a woman, when she has once begun to trifle with sin had no idea that her name would be coupled one day with infamy. Many a young man at his master's till is scrupulously honest today, and never dreams that he will one day be a thief. Yet he is about to take a step that will surely make him so—the first step to evil.

Oh! "whither wilt thou go?" I believe that many a man, many a woman, if they could go back twenty years and be young people again, and have their history written, the true history as they lived it, would say, "I never shall live so. Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" They would have been indignant at the supposition that they could ever be capable of the transgression into which they have now actually fallen. "Whither wilt thou go?" Halt! Halt! ye that are marching on to evil, halt! in the

name of Him that liveth, halt! lest you march to damnation and take one step that shall be your inevitable ruin, for this is the worst of it.

“Whither wilt thou go?” The way of sin is the way of destruction. Men cannot sin and be happy. The end, the end, the end, the end of it, oh! think of it! It is not today, nor tomorrow, but it is that dying hour, nay, it is not that only, it is that hour when, up from among the dead, you shall arise amidst the ringing of the last judgment trump. It is that opening of the books, that reading of the several dooms—that separation of the righteous from the wicked—it is that which hangs upon this question, “Whither wilt thou go?” Oh! go not to the judgment unforgiven—go not to the judgment to be condemned, to be cast into the place “where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.” God save you, sinner, may He save you tonight instrumentally by the force of those two questions, “Whence comest thou? Whither wilt thou go?”

And now let us notice attentively, having observed the remarkable season and the home questions, let us notice attentively—

III. THE DISCOVERY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

The description had been so accurate, “Hagar, Sarah’s maid.” The questions had been so pertinent, had stuck so close to her soul, “Whence comest thou? and whither wilt thou go?” that she said, “It is God, it is God that speaks to me.” And there came home to her what she had often heard before, but never felt. “There is a God, God is not an impalpable somebody up there, who has nothing to do with me, but there is God here, here, and He sees me, it is God that deals with me—not far away, asleep, or blind, but God sees me.”

Oh! it is a glorious thing when a soul starts up to that conviction, “I am not alone, I am not friendless, after all, there is a God, and a God who sees me and who takes such notice of note that He speaks to me.” A man is never saved until he gets to feel something of the nearness of God, God in Christ Jesus, but yet God. Consciousness of Deity is one of the marks of salvation.

Now Hagar’s thoughts must have been something like this. “After all, there is somebody that has seen me, and marked all my past life, though I did not see Him. He knows everything that I have done or thought, or said, and I perceive now that He has spoken to me, that He cares about me. I thought Abraham did not care for me, Sarah was angry, and then I said, ‘No man cares for my soul, and I will go away.’ Now I see that God was watching me, and He has cared about me, and though He did not interpose to help me just then, just when I was so bitterly oppressed, yet I know He has cared for me, for at last, when I was sitting on this well alone, He spoke to my soul.”

Sinner, I pray the Holy Ghost to make just this discovery to you, that, after all, God does care about you. He that made the heavens and the earth does think of you. Though you are little, and less than nothing as compared with the bulk of His vast creation, yet on you He sets His eyes, for you He has a care.

“Well,” said she in her soul, “seeing that He cares for me, He will interpose on my behalf.” The angel, who spake, spoke words of comfort to her heart—told her that there was a happier lot in future in store for her than she dreamed—sent her away with a comfortable word ringing in her ears.

Oh! soul, I pray God to do that for you tonight. Thou hast said, “God has forgotten me.” He knows all about thee. It may be this is the truth—I hope it is—that thy name is written on the palms of Jesus’ hands. What if it should turn out that thou, rebellious sinner that thou art, are one whom God loved before the foundation of the world? What if thou art one of His chosen, whom the Savior bought with blood? What if thou art one that shall surely sit in heaven, and wear the white robe, and sing the new song—what if thou art a favored one of the Most High?

Oh! I think I hear you say, “If I had half a thought that that was true, I would not lie down in despair, I would up and bestir myself, and I would have done with my old companions, I would have done with my old sins, if that were true.”

Oh! soul, I cannot tell thee that it is true—I hope it is—but I can tell thee one thing that is true, namely, that if thou wilt now come and put thy trust in Jesus Christ, and repent of thine iniquities, then it

is all true. I can only know thine election by thy calling, I can only tell thy calling by thy repentance and by thy faith, and if thou shouldst find peace tonight and I pray thou mayest, then thou art God's beloved. He that made the heavens loves thee, He that made the earth bought thee with His blood, and heaven would not be complete without thee. What if thou hast been far off by wicked works, yet still thou art a child, and heaven shall yet ring with music on your return. What if thou hast been lost in the filth of drunkenness and all manner of lasciviousness, yet still a piece of God's precious silver, the house shall be swept for thee, and the candle lit, and thou shalt be found and put into the Savior's treasury yet.

Oh! what hope this ought to make well up in the poor hopeless sinner's heart! It is not because of your goodness, but because of His infinite goodness that He comes to meet with you, unworthy as you are, for He sees you, sees you, with thoughts of love He sees you, and tonight He interposes as He calls you by your name.

Now when Hagar made that discovery she made another at the same time. She said, "Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?"—as much as to say, and probably she had not known it before, that as God could come to her, so she could go to God. "God has looked after me, and now I can look after Him." There is not a great gulf between the creature and the Creator. We can send messages to heaven, and receive blessings from heaven. She felt from that moment that God was real, and living, and appreciable, and that God would hear her prayers and answer her petitions, and had really and literally spoken to her.

Oh! I do not know anything that puts such strength into a man, such encouragement, such joy, makes him so patient, as the belief that God has spoken to him—that God has spoken in words of love and promise to him. Why, from that day poor Hagar would say, "I will go back, I will go back. The God of Abraham has spoken to me. Abraham may be unkind, but I will bear it, for Abraham's God has spoken to me. Sarah may be more cross than ever—never mind, I do not know that I can tell her of it, but oh! it will be such a joy in my soul—God has spoken to me, assured me of His favor, given me a blessing."

Now that young man who thinks he has been so badly treated, if he gets his sins pardoned tonight, and the Lord speaks with him, he will go back and say, "I daresay I was as much to blame as anybody, but whether or no, I am saved and I can put up with anything now."

And that man that is so poor that he would hardly dare come even into this Tabernacle because his clothes were so shabby, and he was ready to say, "I will give up the battle of life, I will never try again"—oh! if he were able to say, "I know that God has spoken with me tonight, brought me to the Savior's feet, and blotted out my sin"—oh! dear brother, you will pick up the weapons again and go to the battle of life once more, and your poverty will seem to have lost its edge, the bitterness will have departed, the iron will not enter into your soul! Get a word from God, and know that you are His child, and you can say, "Now blow ye winds, rage ye waves, and all ye elements let forth your fury, the God that rules you all is now my friend, no hurt can you do to me."

If you notice, it was just so with Hagar when she had heard the voice of the Lord, and perceived that God saw her and that she could speak to God—then at once she went back. Told to go back, back she went—submitted herself. You don't find her again personally—though the old blood came up afterwards in her son—you don't find her quarrelling with her mistress, but she patiently bears her lot, in the recollection of the blessing that she had received. This is just the way with men, willful, wayward, headstrong—when they get the grace of God, they bend their shoulders to Christ's yoke, and they become tame and gentle. Because they are happy in God's love they are patient at the ills of this life.

Remember the story of the poor raving maniac. They had often bound him with chains, but he snapped them asunder. He had left his family—gone to dwell among the tombs. He made night hideous with his screams and howlings. Men dared not pass that way, for he was worse than a wild beast. He had cut himself and rent his flesh, torn himself with stones and briars—none could tame him. But after Jesus had said to the evil spirit, "I charge thee that thou come out of him," we find him clothed, which he had not been for many a day, in his right mind, and sitting at the feet of Jesus.

Oh! if some wild spirit be here now, some spirit driven to it by suffering, by neglect, by injustice from others, and also by its own personal sin, if the Lord brings thee to trust in Jesus, His dear Son, and see thy sin all laid upon Him, then thou wilt, even at this moment, be a different man. Thy wife will scarce know thee, nor thy children either, thou wilt become another than thou hast ever been before. Thou wilt go back to thy business, back to thy burdens, back to thy sufferings, and bear them all for the sake of Him that spake out of heaven and saved thy soul.

Now the most of this I daresay is not applicable to the most of you. You know I have been thinking, while preaching, that you might say I had not been preaching except to some one or two that were here. Well, I will tell you my excuse. "What man of you, if he hath an hundred sheep, if he loses one, doth not leave the ninety and nine, and go after that which is gone astray?" After that gone-astray one I have gone, and my Master too. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

1 CORINTHIANS 13, EPHESIANS 1

1 Corinthians Chapter 13. Verse 1. *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*

If there is no love to God, and no love to man, the vital element is wanting. Whatever sound we make if the Word of God is not in us, it is a sound that has no meaning, conveys no heavenly meaning. "I have become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." What if any of us who bears witness for Christ with our tongues should be found to be no better than this?

2. *And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*

Judas had, no doubt, faith in God's miracles, but yet he was not saved. Selfishness was his ruling motive, he had no love to God or man. How this clips the wings of those lofty ones who hover on high, boasting of their knowledge and of their gifts! There are many who have few gifts—obscure and unknown—who love God much, and these are the accepted ones. Before God the balances of the sanctuary are rather turned by the shekel of love, than by any weight of talent or position.

3. *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

Love is a matter of the heart, and if the heart be not right with God, external acts, though they are very similar to the highest acts that flow from love, are of no service. God requires the heart to be right, and if that be not right, whatever cometh out of us is not acceptable in His sight.

4-5. *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;*

Always try to put the best construction on other people's actions and work. Let gentleness triumph.

6-11. *Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

Much of what we call knowledge, much of what we call eloquence, will all be put away. As our spiritual growth shall increase, we shall not want these childish things.

12-13. *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three;*

Three abiding graces. Some have said that faith and hope will not be found in heaven. Why not? Why not? It seems to me there will be plenty of room for them—plenty of space for them. Am I to be an

unbeliever when I get to heaven then? Am I not to believe when my disembodied spirit goes to heaven? Am I not to believe in the resurrection of the dead? Am I not hopefully to expect it? Am I not in heaven to believe in the second advent of Christ? Am I not to be hoping for it? Am I not to believe in the complete conquest of Christ, and that He shall reign from the river, even to the ends of the earth? And am I not to hope for it? To miss faith and hope in heaven were to miss two things which the apostle expressly tells us are the abiding things.

13. *But the greatest of these is charity.*

It is the highest, the pinnacle. It is not the foundation—that is faith. Just as a rose in full bloom is greater than the stem that bears it, so, whilst faith is most needful, and hope most cheering, love is the most beautiful and brightest of the three.

Ephesians Chapter 1. Verse 1. *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,—*

He was not made an apostle by man, neither did he take the office upon himself, but he was made an apostle by the will of God.

1. *To the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:*

The saints in Ephesus, the saints where they cried, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians,” had to bear an earnest witness against idolatry. And, dear friends, today saints in London will not have a very easy time of it if they are faithful to their Lord, for there is much to protest against in this evil generation, but as there were holy ones in Ephesus, God grant that there may be many such in London.

2. *Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Paul would have us peaceful, restful, quiet. That peace must be based upon grace. He does not pray that we may have peace apart from grace, but “Grace be to you, and peace.”

3-4. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world,—*

The high mystery of election is taught in the Word of God, but some are afraid to speak of it. Not so our apostle. He brings it out very clearly and distinctly, and so should we, only taking care to keep it in the proportion of other doctrines.

4-5. *That we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,—*

You hear much about the free will of man. Hear a little about the free will of God. You would think, from the talk of some, that God was man's debtor and must needs do according to the will of man. But it is not so. He is a sovereign, and gives His grace where He chooses, and He would have us know that it is according to the good pleasure of His will.

6. *To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

Are there four words in any language which contain choicer meaning than these, “Accepted in the beloved”? Oh! if you can say that, if you can feel it to be true, you are among the happiest of men and women. “Accepted in the beloved.” You can never be accepted apart from Christ, the Father's best Beloved. But there is merit enough in Him to overflow and cover all our sins, and we are accepted in the Beloved.

7. *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*

Notice how the apostle keeps on insisting that we have everything in Christ. He says, times out of number, “in him,” “in Christ.” We have redemption. We are free. We are under bonds no longer. What is the price? “Through his blood.” What is the result? “Forgiveness of sins.” What is the measure of our liberty? “According to the riches of his grace.”

8. *Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;*

Not drowning us with floods of his grace, but handing it out to us as we are able to take it. The riches of His grace we have, but He uses wisdom and prudence, teaching us little by little as we are able to bear

it, and raising us up by degrees from one stage of grace to another, according as our poor frames can endure the joy.

9-10. *Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:*

There are things in Christ in heaven: there the things in Christ on earth, but all the things in Christ shall be gathered together. All the redeemed shall come as one great host to bow before the throne of the infinite Majesty.

11. *In whom also—*

Notice those words.

11. *We have obtained an inheritance,—*

We have got the inheritance. Even now we have entered upon possession of the kingdom of grace.

11-12. *Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*

The first saints led the way in the front of the army, and they are to the praise of God's glory to this day. We thank God for the apostles and martyrs who went before us. We will follow them as they followed Christ.

13. *In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,—*

After faith, the Holy Spirit is given to dwell in the soul. That is the seal. It is not that the Holy Spirit brings a seal with Him. He is the Seal. Where He dwells, He is the seal of God's love to that man.

14. *Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

The Holy Ghost is first the seal, and next the earnest. We all know what an earnest is. It is different from a pledge. A pledge is given, and then it is taken back again when the stipulation is carried out. But an earnest is part of what is to be received ultimately. The man who receives an earnest of his wage gets a few shillings, say, on Thursday, instead of taking all on Saturday. He never returns that. It is a part of his wage. And so the Holy Ghost is a part of him. When we have got Him, we have got Christ.

*“Thou art the earnest of His love,
The pledge of joys to come;
And Thy soft wings, Celestial Dove,
Shall safe convey me home.”*

15-16. *Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;*

Is that the way that we pray? Do we make mention of people in our prayers? It is well to do so. It is a good plan to keep a list of persons for whom we ought to pray, and to put it before us when we draw near to God, and go over the names. I know one man of God who has kept a debtor and creditor list with God for many years. He puts his requests down in the book, and when they are answered he puts that down, and if they are not answered he repeats them. It is a very wonderful book.

I think that he told me that there is a name down there of a person for whom he has prayed, and that he is not converted yet, and that out of several for whom he began to pray, he is the only one who is not converted, and that he is the only one that is alive. The others were brought to Christ, and died in the faith, but he, not yet brought to Christ, still lives, and my friend prays on with as great a confidence of the conversion of that man as I have that Christmas will come in due time. I wish that we did business with God in some such fashion as that, but our prayers are shadowy, unreal. God teach us how to pray!

17-18. *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling,—*

You see he gave thanks to God for their faith and for their love. But there are three divine sisters that must never be separated—faith, hope, and love, and so the apostle prays, “that ye may know what is the hope of his calling.”

18-21. *And what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:*

See how high Christ is raised! The same power that brought Christ from the dead, and set Him on high, works in the salvation of every believer. Nothing less than omnipotence can save a soul, and omnipotence at its very best in the glorification of Christ is none too great for the salvation of a sinner.

22-23. *And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.*

May God bless to us the reading of that chapter.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.