

than this. This will not bring us the substantial benefits we need." What can God do more than come and share with us? What else can He promise in order to encourage us? What more can He do than bring Himself? And if it would have been unreasonable in the Jews to murmur, what must we say of murmuring now after the promise has been fulfilled in a manner which beforehand none could dare to anticipate? Are we to live as if this promise were yet unfulfilled? Are we to make no response, no acknowledgment? Is the fact of His Presence to excite no hope, no ambition, no craving for the Divine? Are we to go on through life practically saying, "What about it; what though God does love me? It is nothing to me though His love for me does draw Him to live with me." If so, we wait in vain for any more encouraging fact to enter our life. In this alone have we all that we need to balance and guide our life. To live as in a world from which God can never pass away, this is the key to happiness and energy.

MARCUS DODS.

THOUGHTS.

1. **Jesus never Sleeping in a Walled Town.**— "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out," is written over every day and night of the life of Christ. There never lived so open a man, so accessible always to all. Sitting at the well of Sychar, and talking freely to the first comer; receiving Nicodemus by night; listening to the Syro-Phœnician mother, who breaks through His concealment; preaching to the five thousand, who disturb His retirement,—He is the property of every man that wants Him, and leaves us an example to follow His steps. Yet His command to us, "Enter into thy closet, shut thy door, pray to the Father in secret"—suffer no man, no business, no allurements, to keep you from the secret place of prayer—was singularly observed by Himself.

“Jesus never slept in a walled town,” is the striking remark of a literary writer (Mr. Hepworth Dixon); but without referring to His devotions which clothed the fact with its lessons. The assertion may seem too absolute, but it stands examination. At Jerusalem Jesus slept in Bethany with open access to the Mount of Olives. Tiberias lay close to the scenes of His daily ministry, yet He never entered its gates; and He “entered Jericho” only to “pass through it,” and sleep in the house of Zaccheus outside the walls.

Jesus loved the “closet,” and enjoins us to use it as the secret place to which most men have the readiest or the only access. But He chose for Himself besides to keep always at command the more absolute loneliness of the “solitary place, the desert, the mountain,” whence no man was shut out, and whither none could intrude. This freedom Jesus had from childhood in Nazareth; He had it again in Capernaum, the home of His own choice; and if throughout His ministry He chose it rather, it was surely that, in the hours when men did not require Him, He might have freedom for the most perfect solitude, that He might be “alone, and yet not alone, because the Father was with Him.”

2. Jesus never Loosing a Fetter Fastened by Man.—“And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.” All these signs of the Messiah Jesus wrought literally except one. He preached the gospel to thousands of the poor, healed with pardon the broken-hearted weeper, shed light on the eyes of the blind, went about delivering all that were oppressed of the devil; but He released no captive bound by any earthly chain. The Son of God had come to live and to die on earth for great spiritual and eternal purposes, of which His outward works were only the transient tokens. He interfered with no human sentence; and He refrained from the work and sign of setting the prisoner free.

There was one captive whom He could have freed with a word, even as from heaven he loosed the chains of Peter, and to refrain from whose release must have been one of the severest trials in the life of Jesus. John is cast into prison for righteousness' sake;

he is familiar with Isaiah's signs of the promised Messiah; and has probably heard of Jesus reading them in the synagogue of Nazareth. All the other tokens are fulfilled in the letter. Here is at once an urgent call for the release of Christ's faithful herald and a bright opportunity for sealing His own Messiahship with the letter of this promised sign. Yet He stretches no hand and speaks no word for John's release. The lonely prisoner hears of all His miracles, is perplexed, and sends two messengers to Jesus. He bids them return and report what they witness,—“the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached, and”—the hour is come for “the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” No: the blank is left unfilled, but in its place Jesus adds, “And blessed is he that shall not be offended in Me.” Wondrous history! strange, mysterious teaching for us all in every age! “Let patience have her perfect work: what I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.”

3. Jesus never Writing except in the Dust.—All in the Bible that is tenderest in love, brightest in truth, and terriblest in judgment, is found in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.” Yet the servant Paul wrote his thoughts, so that even those who deny his inspiration own that we possess many of his exact words; while Jesus the Master never wrote except on the passing dust of the temple floor. Teaching us—

1. That Christ on earth knew that in heaven He could and would so give the Holy Spirit to men of like passions with us, that they would record His words exactly and infallibly as if He had Himself written them all.

2. That the same Spirit has equally directed the inspired writers in writing their own words as in writing their Lord's, thus giving them equal authority.

3. That Jesus Christ, by making His ascent to the Father's right hand and His gift of the Holy Ghost essential for the sure preservation of any of His words, and so making the very memory of His past work on earth altogether dependent on His present power in heaven, assures us how near, by His intercession and by His Spirit, He is to the Church and all its members on earth, even as if outwardly present with us every moment.

A. M. S.