

Occasional Papers, Vol. 2

Manasseh and Ephraim

Genesis 48:51-52

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This volume contained *Surpassing Glory and Surpassing Power*, as well as *The Artificial and the Spiritual*, which are found above, and omitted here.

Manasseh and Ephraim

Genesis 12:51, 52

The names of Joseph's sons, born to him in the land of his exile, are full of the deepest interest and significance; his own history, remarkable and checkered as it was, I do not here refer to further than to notice, how it sets forth in figure and in type the varied exercises and trials to which a servant of God is subjected, in order that he may be a suitable vessel for the Master's use.

We do not find that either of these names was given without a special reason and intent; yet they were not, as is so commonly found, names which served to connect the child with some great members of the family, distinguished either by title or possession; on the contrary, this devoted servant of God will have the children born to him in a strange land, even in their *names*, witnesses of how entirely apart from "his father's house" he was, and how in it he was only left to be fruitful to God amid affliction and trial on every hand. How truly did Joseph, personally and typically, answer to Jacob his father's words of prophetic import: "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall: the archers have sorely grieved him and shot at him and hated him: but this bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob, (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel)" (Gen. 49:22-24; see also Moses' blessing as recorded in Deut. 33:13-17).

Now the meaning of Manasseh is *forgetting*, and of Ephraim, *fruitful*, and these are two great features which the revelation of God's mind and will for the present moment, when received in faith, produce in our hearts! No one can truly say that he forgets "his father's house," until his heart has found a treasure in a brighter scene; then where he is in body, becomes the land of exile to him, yet he has no desire to return to the past, he forgets it; what derives from him bears the confession of it in even the name; his toil and his father's house alike are faded from his remembrance. It is truly a wonderful emancipation to a man, when what he has found and possessed in heaven throws into shade and obscurity and oblivion all that natural pride of birth and pedigree which are connected with our "father's house."

Yet it is never the case, save as the heart has been won and

satisfied by Christ in glory; it is only Christ in heaven that can displace "all things," leading us to count them loss for the excellency of His knowledge. How sorrowful it is to see many so little distinguished by this Manasseh character of testimony; although the doctrine as to it is accepted, at least outwardly, the conformity of the ways in *practice* is often so glaringly inconsistent, as to raise the question how far terms and language are understood, or how far it is the antinomianism of the heart manifesting itself.

It is sorrowful and solemn to reflect upon the feeble connection which seems to exist in many souls between truth and its maintenance; the highest character of testimony may be held doctrinally, along with the most evident self-seeking and worldliness. How is this? is often asked. I shall give the only answer that satisfies my own heart. Truth is sought after or held in the *mind* instead of Christ personally domiciling in the *heart*; I know I shall be met by some with -- "But Christ is the truth." I reply, Quite true; but it is possible to separate Christ from truth, for what is the human heart not capable of? And it is a serious question how far more importance has been attached to natural quickness of apprehension than is its due, even to the slighting of some, who, though slow in apprehension, were far more solid in soul, and more conscientious in their handling of the truth because deeply impressed with the sense of its claims upon those who profess to receive it.

How blessed it is when in heart we can really walk through the world as in a foreign land! Christ in glory having so possessed us, that we are but vessels here at His disposal and pleasure. I say, *vessels*, in contrast with either *agents* or *actors*; as I understand it, a vessel is simply to contain and display what is set therein; we are set in this world as vessels to contain and display Christ, thus forgetting all our toil, and all our father's house.

When the eye is single, that is when Christ alone is filling its vision, all is lost sight of; not only our toil and father's house, but even our *progress* in pressing on to Christ in glory; hence says the apostle "*forgetting* those things which are behind," from the same word as is found in Genesis 46 (see Septuagint). What a wonderful and surpassing power which, by its own excellence and blessedness, turns out every claimant or rival, that Christ alone may rule and reign there! Reader, have