

The Expository
Writings of
C. H. Mackintosh

VOLUME 2

Matthew to Acts

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” – 2 Tim 3:16

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by



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Selected expository writings of C. H. Mackintosh

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Matthew 10:22

And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. Matthew 10:22

Final Perseverance: What is it?

Dear Friend,

The question of final perseverance, though, in our judgment, a very simple one, has perplexed a great many; and the questions which you introduce to our notice, and the passages of scripture which you adduce, furnish abundant proof that your own mind is not quite clear or settled on the point. It may be, however, that the object of your communication is rather to superinduce such a discussion of the doctrine, in the light of holy scripture, as may prove helpful to others, than to obtain any aid for yourself. However this may be, we are always happy to give to others the benefit of any light with which the Lord may have graciously favoured us, in reference to subjects of common interest to all lovers of truth.

In seeking, then, to reply to your interesting letter, we have three things to do, namely, first, to establish the doctrine of final perseverance, or in other words, the eternal security of all Christ's members; secondly, to answer the questions which you have given us, and which we take to be those usually or frequently put by the opposers of the doctrine; and, thirdly, to expound those tests which you have quoted, and in which you seem to find considerable difficulty. May the Holy Spirit be our teacher, and may He give us minds entirely subject to scripture, so that we may be able to form a sound judgment on the question now before us.

1. And, first, as to the doctrine of final perseverance; it seems to us exceedingly clear and simple, if only we look at it in immediate connection with Christ Himself. This indeed is the only true way to look at any doctrine. Christ is the soul, centre, and life of all doctrine. A doctrine separated from Christ becomes a lifeless powerless, worthless dogma — a mere idea in the mind — a mere item in the creed. Hence, therefore, we must look at every truth as it stands connected with Christ. We must make Him our point of view.

It is only as we keep near to Him, and look at all points from that one grand point, that we can have a correct view of any point. If, for example, I make self my point of view and look from thence at the subject of final perseverance, I shall be sure to get a false view altogether, inasmuch as it then becomes a question of *my* perseverance, and anything of *mine* must, necessarily, be doubtful.

But if, on the other hand, I make Christ my viewing point, and look at the subject from thence, I shall be sure to have a correct view inasmuch as it then becomes a question of Christ's perseverance, and I am quite sure that He *must* persevere, and that no power of the world, the flesh, or the devil can ever hinder His final perseverance in the salvation of those whom He has purchased with His own blood, seeing "He is able to save *to the uttermost* them that come unto God by him." This, surely, is final perseverance. It matters not what the difficulty, or what the hostile power may be. "He is able to save to the uttermost." The world, with its ten thousand snares, is against us; but "he is able." Indwelling sin, in its ten thousand workings, is against us; but "he is able." Satan, with his ten thousand devices, is against us; but "he is able." In a word, it is Christ's ability, not ours; it is Christ's faithfulness, not ours; it is Christ's final perseverance, not ours. All depends upon Him, as to this weighty matter. He has purchased His sheep, and surely He will keep them to the best of His ability; and, seeing that *all* power is given unto Him in heaven and on earth, His sheep must be perfectly and for ever safe. If aught could touch the life of the feeblest lamb in all the flock of Christ, He could not be said to have "all power."

Thus it is immensely important to consider the question of final perseverance in inseparable connection with Christ. Difficulties vanish. Doubts and fears are chased away. The heart becomes established, the conscience relieved, the understanding enlightened. It is impossible that one who forms a part of Christ's body can ever perish; and the believer is this, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." (Eph 5:30) Every member of the body of Christ was written in the book of the slain Lamb, before the foundation of the world, nor can anything or any one ever obliterate that writing. Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ saith in reference to those that are His: "My sheep hear my voice, and know them, and

they follow me; and I *give* unto them *eternal* life, and they shall never perish, neither shall *any* [man, devil, or any one else] pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John 10:27-29)

Here then, most assuredly, we have final perseverance, and that moreover, not merely the perseverance of the saints, but of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Yes, dear friend, this is the way we would have you view the matter. It is the final perseverance of the Holy Trinity. It is the perseverance of the Holy Ghost in opening the ears of the sheep. It is the perseverance of the Son in receiving all whose ears are thus opened. And, finally, it is the perseverance of the Father in keeping through His own name, the blood-bought flock in the hollow of His everlasting hand. This is plain enough. We must either admit the truth — the consolatory and sustaining, truth of final perseverance, or succumb to the blasphemous proposition that the enemy of God and man can carry his point against the holy and eternal Trinity. We see no middle ground. "Salvation is of the Lord," from first to last. It is free, unconditional, everlasting salvation. It reaches down to where the sinner is in all his guilt, ruin, and degradation, and bears him up to where God is, in all His holiness, truth, and righteousness. and it endures for ever. God the Father is its source, God the Son is its channel, and God the Holy Ghost is the power of application and enjoyment. It is all of God, from beginning to end, from foundation to top-stone, from everlasting to everlasting. If it were not so, it would be presumptuous folly to speak of final perseverance; but, seeing it is so, it would be presumptuous unbelief to think of aught else.

True, there are great and manifold difficulties in the way — difficulties before, and difficulties after, conversion. There are many and powerful adversaries; but that is the very reason why we must keep the question of final perseverance entirely clear of self and all its belongings, and make it repose simply upon God. It matters not in the least what the difficulties or the adversaries may be, for faith can ever triumphantly inquire, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" And again, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor *any other creature*, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:35-39)

Here, again, we have final perseverance taught in the clearest and strongest way possible: "Not any creature shall be able to separate us." Neither self, in all its forms; nor Satan, in all his wiles and machinations; nor the world, in all its allurements, or all its scorn, can ever separate the "us" of Romans 8:39, from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. No doubt, persons may be deceived, and they may deceive others. Spurious cases may arise; counterfeit conversions may take place. Persons may seem to run well for a time and then break down. The blossoms of spring-time may not be followed by the mellow fruits of autumn. Such things may be; and, moreover, true believers may fail in many things, they may stumble and break down in their course. They may have ample cause for self judgment and humiliation, in the practical details of life. But, allowing the widest possible margin for all these things, the precious doctrine of final perseverance remains unshaken — yea, untouched — upon its own divine and eternal foundation. "I give unto my sheep *eternal* [not temporary or conditional] life, and they shall *never* perish." And again, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." People may argue as they will, and base their arguments on cases which have come under their notice, from time to time, in the history of professing Christians; but, looking at the subject from a divine point of view, and basing our convictions on the sure and unerring word of God, we maintain that all who belong to the "us" of Romans 8, the "sheep" of John 10, and the "church" of Matthew 16, are as safe as Christ can make them, and this we conceive to be the sum and substance of the doctrine of final perseverance.

2 And now, dear friend, we shall, in the second place, briefly and pointedly reply to the questions which you have put before us.

1. "Will a believer be saved, no matter into what course of sin he may fall, and die in?" A true believer will, infallibly, be saved; but we consider that salvation includes, not only full deliverance from the future consequences of sin, but from the present power and practice thereof. And, hence, if we find a person living in sin, and yet talking about his assurance of salvation, we look upon him as an antinomian and not a saved person at all. "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." The believer may fall, but he will be lifted up; he may be overtaken, but he will be restored; he may wander, but he will be brought back because Christ is able to save to the uttermost, and not one of His little ones shall perish.

2. "Will the Holy Spirit dwell in a heart where evil and unholy thoughts are *indulged*?" The body of the believer is the temple of the Holy Ghost. (1 Cor. 6:19) And this precious truth is the ground of exhortation to purity and holiness of heart and life. We are exhorted not to grieve the Holy Spirit. To "*indulge*" evil and unholy thoughts is not Christian walk at all. The Christian may be assaulted, grieved, and harassed, by evil thoughts, and in such a case he has only to look to Christ for victory. Proper Christian walk is thus expressed in John's first epistle; "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." (1 John 5:18) This is the divine side of the question. Alas! we know there is the human side likewise; but we judge the human side by the divine. We do not lower the divine to meet the human, but ever aim at the divine notwithstanding the human. We should never be satisfied with anything lower than 1 John 5:18. It is by keeping up the true standard that we may expect to raise our moral tone. To talk of having the Spirit and yet "*indulge*" in evil and unholy thoughts, is in our judgment, the ancient Nicolaitanism (Rev. 2:6, 15), or modern antinomianism.

3 "If it be so, then, will not people say, they may live as they like?" Well, how does a true Christian like to live? As like Christ as possible. If one had put this question to Paul, what would have been his answer 2 Cor 5:14, 15, and Philippians 3:7-14, furnish the reply.

It is to be feared that the persons who ask such questions know but little of Christ. We can quite understand a person getting entangled in the meshes of a one-sided theological system, and being perplexed by the conflicting dogmas of systematic divinity; but we believe that the man who draws a plea from the freedom, sovereignty, and eternal stability of the Grace of God, to continue in sin, knows nothing of Christianity at all, has neither part nor lot in the matter, but is in a truly awful and dangerous condition.

As to the case which you adduce, of the young man who heard a minister state in his sermon, that "Once a child, always a child," and who took occasion from that to plunge into, and continue in, open sin; it is only one of thousands We believe the minister was right in what he said, but the young man was wrong in what he did. To judge the words of the former by the acts of the latter is utterly false. What should I think of my son, if he were to say, "Once a son always a son, and therefore I may proceed to smash my father's windows and do all sorts of mischief"? We judge the ministers statement by the word of God, and pronounce it true. We judge the young man's conduct by the same rule and pronounce it false. The matter is quite simple. We have no reason to believe that the unhappy young man ever really tasted the true grace of God, for if he had, he would love and cultivate and exhibit holiness. The Christian has to struggle with sin; but *struggling* with it and *wallowing* in it, are two totally different ideas. In the one case, we can count on Christ's sympathy and grace; in the other, we are actually blaspheming His name by implying that He is the minister of sin.

We consider it a very serious mistake to set about judging the truth of God by the actings of men. All who do so must reach a false conclusion. The true way is just to reverse the order. Get hold of God's truth first, and then judge everything by that. Set up the divine standard and test everything thereby. Set up the public scales and weigh every man's load therein. The scales must not be regulated by every mans load, but each mans load tested by the scales. If ten thousand professors were to fall away, and live and die in open sin, it would not shake our confidence in the divine doctrine of final perseverance. The self-same word that proves the doctrine to be true,

proves them to be false. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." (1 John 2:19) "The foundation of God standeth sure, having, this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." (2 Tim. 2:19)

3. We shall now proceed to examine the various passages of scripture, which, as you say, are generally adduced by those who seek to overthrow the doctrine of final perseverance. But, before doing so, we deem it of importance to lay down the following fundamental principle, which will, in our judgment, be found most helpful in the interpretation of scripture generally. The principle is very simple. No one passage of holy scripture can, by any possibility, contradict another. If, therefore, there be a seeming contradiction, it must arise from our want of spiritual intelligence. Thus, for example, if any one were to quote James 2:24, in defence of the doctrine of justification by works, I might not be able to answer him. It is quite possible that thousands, like Luther, have been sadly perplexed by that passage. They may feel the fullest and clearest assurance that they are justified, and that not by any works that they have done, but simply "by faith of Jesus Christ," and yet be wholly unable to explain these words of James, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

Now, how is one to meet such a difficulty as this? He really does not understand the apostle James. He is involved in much perplexity by the apparent contradiction between James and Paul. What is he to do? Just to apply the principle above stated. No one passage of scripture can possibly contradict another. As well might we apprehend a collision between two of the heavenly bodies, while moving in their divinely appointed orbits, as that two inspired writers could possibly clash in their statements. Well, then, I read in Romans 4:5 such plain words as these: "But to him that *worketh not*, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his *faith* is counted for righteousness." Here I find works entirely excluded as a ground of justification, and faith alone recognised. So also in Romans 3 I read: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith,

without [or apart from] works of law." And, again, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Exactly similar is the teaching in the Epistle to the Galatians, where we read such plain words as these, "*Knowing* that a man is not justified by works of law, but by faith of Jesus Christ, even we [Jews] have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by faith of Christ, and not by works of law: for by works of law shall no flesh be justified." (Rom. 2:16)

In all these passages, and many more which might be quoted, works are sedulously excluded as a ground of justification, and that, too, in language so plain that a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. If, therefore, we cannot explain James 2:24, we must either deny its inspiration, or have recourse to our principle, namely, that no one passage of holy scripture can possibly contradict another, and so remain, with unshaken confidence, and unruffled repose, rejoicing in the grand foundation truth of justification by faith alone, apart from law-works altogether.

Having called the readers attention to the famous passage in James 2, it may not be amiss to offer him, in passing, a word or two of exposition which will help him in the understanding of it. There is a little word in verse 14 which will furnish the key to the entire passage. The inspired apostle inquires, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man *say* he hath faith?" Had he said, "What doth it profit though a man have faith?" the difficulty would be insuperable, the perplexity hopeless. But the important word "say" quite removes all difficulty, and unfolds, in the simplest possible way, the point which the apostle has in his mind. We might inquire, "What doth it profit though a man *say* he hath ten thousand a year, if he hath it not?"

Now, we are aware that the word "say" is constantly left out in quoting James 2:14. Some have even ventured to assert that it is not in the original. But any one who can read Greek has only to look at the passage, and he will see the word *legee* (say) placed there by the Holy Ghost, and left there by all our leading, editors and biblical critics; nor can we well conceive a word of more vital importance in a passage. Its influence, we believe, is felt throughout the entire context in which it occurs. There is no use in a man merely *saying* he has faith, but if he really has it, it "profits" him for time and

eternity, inasmuch as it connects him with Christ, and puts him in full inalienable possession of all that Christ has done, and all that He is for us before God.

This leads us to another point, which will greatly tend to clear away the seeming contradiction between the two inspired apostles, Paul and James. There is a very material difference between *law-works* and *life-works*. Paul jealously excludes the former; James as jealously insists on the latter. But, be it carefully noted, that it is only the former Paul excludes; as it is only the latter that James insists on. The acts of Abraham and Rahab were not law-works, but life-works. They were the genuine fruits of faith, apart from which they would have possessed no justifying virtue whatever.

It is well worthy of note that, with the history of four thousand years before Him, the Holy Ghost, in the apostle, should have fixed upon two such works as that of Abraham in Genesis 22 and that of Rahab in Joshua 2. He does not adduce some acts of charity, or benevolence, though surely He might easily have selected many such from the vast mass of materials which lay before Him. But, as if anticipating the use that the enemy would make of the passage now before us, He takes care to select two such illustrations of His thesis as prove, beyond all question, that it is life-works, and not law-works, He is insisting upon, and leaves wholly untouched the priceless doctrine of justification by faith, apart from works of law.

Finally, if any should feel disposed to inquire as to the difference between law-works and life-works, it is simply this: law-works are such as are done in order to get life; life-works are the genuine fruits of life possessed. And how do we get life? By believing on the Son of God. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me *hath* everlasting life." (John 5:24) We must have life before we can do anything; and we get life, not by "saying" we have faith, but by really having it, and when we have it, we shall manifest the precious fruits thereof, to the glory of God.

Thus, then, we not only implicitly believe that Paul and James *must* harmonise, but we can plainly see that they *do*.

Having thus sought to define and illustrate our principle, we shall leave you, dear friend, to apply it in the various cases of difficulty and perplexity which come before you in the study of scripture, while we endeavour to expound, as the Lord may enable us, the important passages of scripture which you have laid before us.

1. The first quotation is from the second Epistle of Peter: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter 2:1) The difficulty of this passage arises, we suppose, from the expression, "Denying, the Lord that bought them." But there is, in reality, no difficulty whatever in these words. The Lord has a double claim on every man, woman, and child beneath the canopy of heaven. He has a claim founded on creation, and a claim founded on redemption. It is to the latter of these two that the apostle refers. The false teachers will not merely deny the Lord that *made* them, but even the Lord that *bought* them. It is of importance to see this. It will help to clear away many difficulties. The Lord Jesus has a purchased right over every member of the human family. The Father has given Him power over all flesh. Hence the sin of those who deny Him. It would be sin to deny Him as Creator; it is a greater sin to deny Him as Redeemer. It is not at all a question of regeneration. The apostle does not say, 'Denying the Lord that quickened them.' This would indeed be a difficulty; but as the passage stands, it leaves wholly untouched the truth of final perseverance.

2. The second passage occurs at the close of the same chapter, verses 20 and 22: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning..... But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again: and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." The diffusion of scriptural knowledge and evangelical light may and does frequently exert an amazing influence upon the conduct and character of persons who have never known the saving,

quickenings, emancipating power of the gospel of Christ. Indeed, it is hardly possible for an open Bible to be circulated, or a free gospel to be preached, without producing very striking results which, after all, will be found to fall far short of *the* grand result of regeneration. Many gross habits may be abandoned, many pollutions" laid aside, under the influence of a merely intellectual "knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" while, at the same time, the *heart* has never really been savingly reached at all. Now, it will be invariably found that when persons shake off the influence of evangelical light — even though that influence never extended beyond their outward conduct — they are sure to plunge into greater depths of evil, and greater excesses of worldliness and folly than ever; "The latter end is worse with them than the beginning." The devil takes delight in dragging the *quondam* professor through deeper mire than that in which he wallowed in the days of his ignorance and thoughtless folly. Hence the urgent need of pressing on all with whom we have to do, the importance of making sure work of it, so that the knowledge of truth may not merely affect their external conduct, but reach the heart and impart that life which, when once possessed, can never be lost. There is nothing in this passage to terrify the sheep of Christ; but very much to warn those who, though they may for a time put on the outward appearance of sheep, have never been, inwardly, aught but as the dog and the sow.

3. Ezekiel 18:24, 26; "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.... When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity, that he hath done, shall he die." With this we may connect your reference to 2 Chronicles 15:2: "The Lord is with you while ye be with him: and if ye seek him, he will be found of you: but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." We feel constrained, dear friend, to say that it evidences a sad want of spiritual intelligence to adduce such passages of scripture as bearing, in any way, upon the truth of the final perseverance of Christ's members. These, and numberless other scriptures in the Old Testament, as well as similar passages in

the New Testament, unfold to us the deeply important subject of God's moral government. Now to be merely a subject of God's government, is one thing; to be a subject of His unchangeable grace is another. We should never confound them. To elaborate this point, and to refer to the various passages which illustrate and enforce it, would demand a volume; we would here only add our full persuasion that no one can understand the word of God who does not accurately distinguish between man under government, and man under grace. In the one case, he is looked at as walking down here, in the place of responsibility and danger; in the other, he is looked at as associated with Christ above, in the place of inalienable privilege and eternal security. These two Old Testament scriptures to which you have referred us, are entirely governmental, and, as a consequence, have nothing whatever to do with the question of final perseverance.

4. Matthew 12:45: "Then goeth he and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be unto this wicked generation." The closing sentence of this passage quite explains the whole context. Our Lord is describing the moral condition of the Jewish people. The spirit of idolatry had gone out of them, but only for a time, and to return again in sevenfold energy and intensity, rendering their last state worse, by far, than ought that has yet appeared in their most marvellous history. This passage, taken in a secondary way, may be very intelligently, applied to an individual who, having undergone a certain moral change, and exhibited a measure of improvement in his outward conduct, afterwards falls back and becomes more openly corrupt and vicious than ever.

5. 2 John 8, 9: "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." In verse 8, the apostle exhorts the elect lady and her children to look to themselves lest, by any means, he should lose ought of the fruit of his ministry. They were to form part of his reward in the coming day of glory, and he longed to present them

faultless, in the presence of that glory, that his reward might be full. Verse 9 needs no explanation; it is solemnly plain. If one does not *abide* in the doctrine of Christ, he has got nothing. Let slip the truth as to Christ, and you have no security as to anything. The Christian most assuredly needs to walk watchfully in order to escape the manifold snares and temptations which surround him; but whether is that watchfulness better promoted by placing his feet upon the shifting sand of his own performances, or by fixing them firmly upon the rock of God's eternal salvation? Whether am I in a more favourable position for the exercise of watchfulness and prayer, while living in perpetual doubt and fear, or reposing in artless confidence in the unchangeable love of my Saviour God? We think, dear friend, we may very safely anticipate your reply.

6. Revelation 3:11: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Two things are here to be considered, namely, first, this is an address to an assembly; and, secondly, it does not say, That no man take thy *life*." A *servant* may lose his *reward*; but a *child* can never lose his eternal *life*. Attention to this would remove a host of difficulties. Sonship is one thing; discipleship is quite another. Security in Christ is one thing; testimony for Christ is quite another. If our security were dependent upon our testimony — our sonship upon our discipleship where should we be? True, the more I know my security and enjoy my sonship, the more effective will be my testimony, and the more faithful my discipleship, but these things must never be confounded.

In conclusion, dear friend, you say that "All those texts which speak of enduring to the end, and overcoming, are thought to mean that, since there is a possibility of our not doing so, we may not be saved in the end." As to this we would merely add that we shall be most happy, at any time, to enter with you upon the close examination of every one of those passages to which you in this general way refer, and to prove, by the grace of God, that not one of them, when rightly interpreted, militates, in the smallest degree, against the precious truth of final perseverance; but that on the contrary, each passage contains within itself, or within its immediate context that which will clearly prove its perfect harmony with the

truth of the eternal security of the very feeblest lamb in all the blood-bought flock of Christ.

May the Lord establish our souls more and more firmly in His own truth, and preserve us unto His heavenly kingdom, to the glory of His holy name! C. H. M.

P.S. — Paley observes that "we should never suffer what we know to be disturbed by what we know not." And Butler remarks nearly the same when he says, "If a *truth* be established, *objections* are nothing. The one is founded on our *knowledge*. and the other on our *ignorance*"

(See Jay's Autobiography, p.170)

A SACRED UNION.

'TWIXT Jesus and the heavenly race

Subsists a bond of sovereign grace —

A tie which hell's tremendous train

Can ne'er dissolve or rend in twain.

Life's sacred bond shall never break,

Though earth should to its centre shake:

We rest in hope, assured of this;

For God has pledged His righteousness.

By Him 'twas counselled, planned, and done,

Wrought in the blood of His dear Son —

The Christ appointed to redeem
All that the Father chose in Him.

Oh sacred union, firm and strong!
How great the grace! How sweet the song!
To God alone be all the praise
Of rich, eternal, heavenly grace.

In spirit one with Him who rose
Victorious o'er His mighty foes;
Who went on high and took His seat,
Pledge of the serpents full defeat.

Triumphant thus o'er adverse powers,
(For all He is and has is ours),
With Him, the Head, we stand or fall —
Our Life, our Surety, and our All.

Thus saved in Him, a chosen race,
Here may we prove our faithfulness,
And live to Him who for us died,

With whom we shall be glorified.

Matthew 11: 28-30

CHRIST AND HIS YOKE

“Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

In this precious and well-known passage we have two points which are very distinct and yet intimately connected — Christ and His yoke. First, we have *coming to Christ* and its results. Secondly, taking His yoke and its results. “Come unto Me and I will give you rest.” “Take My yoke and ye shall find rest.” These things, being distinct, should never be confounded, and being intimately connected, they should never be separated. To confound them is to dim the luster of divine grace; to separate them is to infringe upon the claims of divine holiness. Both these evils should be carefully guarded against.

Many there are who hold up before the eye of the “heavy laden” sinner, the yoke of Christ as something which he must “take on” before his burdened heart can taste of that blessed rest which Christ *gives* to “all” who simply “come unto Him” just as they are. The passage before us does not teach this. It puts Christ first and His yoke afterwards. It does not hide Christ behind His yoke, but rather places Him, in all His attractive grace, before the heart as the One who can meet every need, remove every weight, hush every guilty fear, fill up every blank, satisfy longing desire. He is able to do as He says He will, even to “give rest.” There are no conditions proposed, no demands made, no barriers erected. The simple, touching, melting, subduing, inviting, winning word is “Come.” It is not “Go,” “Do,” “Give,” “Bring,” “Feel,” or “Realize.” No, it is, “Come.” And how are we to “Come?” Just as we are. To whom are we to “Come?” To Jesus. When are we to “Come?” Now.

Observe, we are to come just as we are. We are not to wait to alter a single jot or tittle of our state, condition or character. To do this would be to “come” to some alteration or improvement in

ourselves, whereas Christ distinctly and emphatically says “Come unto Me.” Many souls err on this point. They think they must amend their ways, alter their course or improve their moral condition before they come to Christ. In point of fact, until they really do come to Christ they *cannot* amend or alter or improve anything. There is no warrant whatever for anyone to believe that he will be any better an hour, a day, a month or a year hence, than he is this moment. Even were he better, it would not on that account be worth the wait. The word is, “*Today*, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts” (Heb. 3: 15). “Behold *now* is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6: 2).

There is nothing more certain than that all who have ever tried the self-improvement plan have found it an utter failure. They have begun in darkness, continued in misery and ended in despair. Yet, strange to say, in view of the numberless beacons which are ranged before us to warn us of the folly and danger of traveling that road, we are sure at the first to adopt it. In some way or another, self is looked to and worked upon to procure a warrant to come to Christ. “They, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10: 3). Nothing can possibly be a more dreary, depressing, hopeless task than “going about to establish one's own righteousness.” Indeed, the dreariness of the task must always be commensurate with the earnestness and sincerity of the soul that undertakes it. Such an one will sooner or later have to give utterance to the cry, “O wretched man that I am!” and also to ask the question, “Who shall deliver me?” (Rom. 7: 24). There can be no exception. All with whom the Spirit of God has ever worked, have in one way or another been constrained to own the hopelessness of seeking to work out a righteousness for themselves. Christ must be all; self nothing. This doctrine is easily stated, but oh, the experience!

The same is true in reference to the grand reality of sanctification. Many who have come to Christ for righteousness have not practically and experimentally laid hold of Him as their sanctification. But He is made of God, unto us, the one as well as the other. “But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto

us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption: that according as it is written, He that glorieth, *let him glory in the Lord*" (1 Cor. 1: 30-31). The believer is just as powerless in the work of sanctification as in the work of righteousness. If it were not so, some flesh might glory in the divine presence. I could no more subdue a single lust or trample under foot a single passion or gain the mastery over a single temper, than I could open the kingdom of heaven or establish my own righteousness before God. This is not sufficiently understood. Hence, many true Christians constantly suffer the most humiliating defeats in their practical career. They know that Christ is their righteousness, that their sins are forgiven, that they are children of God, but they are sorely put about by their constant failure in personal holiness, in practical sanctification. Again and again they experience some unhallowed desire or unsanctified temper. Again and again they are compelled to retire with shame and confusion of face. A person or a circumstance crossed their path yesterday and caused them to lose their temper. Having to meet the same today, they resolve to do better, but sorrowfully, they are again forced to retreat in disappointment and humiliation.

It is not that such persons may not pray earnestly for the grace of the Holy Spirit to enable them to conquer both themselves and the influences which surround them. This is not the point. They have not yet learned *practically* — how worthless the mere theory — that they are as completely “without strength” in the matter of “sanctification” as they are in the matter of “righteousness,” and that as regards both the one and the other, Christ must be all; self nothing. They have not yet entered into the meaning of the words, “Come unto Me and I will give you rest.” Here lies the source of their failure. They are as thoroughly powerless in the most trivial matter connected with practical sanctification as they are in the entire question of their standing before God. And they must be brought to believe this before they can know the fullness of the “rest” which Christ gives. It is impossible that I can enjoy rest amid incessant defeats in my practical, daily life.

True, I can come over and over again and pour into my heavenly Father's ear the humiliating tale of my failure and overthrow. I can confess my sins and find Him ever “faithful and

just to forgive me my sins, and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1: 9). *But we must learn Christ as the Lord our sanctification* as well as “The Lord our righteousness.” Moreover, it is by faith and not by effort that we enter into both the one and the other. We look to Christ for righteousness because we have none of our own, and we look to Christ for practical sanctification because we have none of our own. It needed no personal effort on our part to get righteousness because Christ is our righteousness, and it needs no personal effort on our part to get sanctification because Christ is our sanctification.

It seems strange that, while the inspired apostle distinctly tells us that Christ is “made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption,” we nevertheless should attach the idea of personal effort to one out of the four things which he enumerates. Can we guide ourselves in the ten thousand difficulties and details of our Christian course by our own wisdom or discernment? Surely not. Should we make an effort? By no means. Why not? Because God has made Christ to be our “wisdom.” Therefore it is our precious privilege, having been brought to our wits' end, to look to Christ for wisdom. In other words, when Christ says, “Come unto Me,” He means that we are to come unto Him for wisdom as well as for all else, and we cannot come to Christ and to our own efforts at the same time. No, so long as we are making efforts, we must be strangers to “rest.”

The same holds good with respect to “righteousness.” Can we work out a righteousness for ourselves? Surely not. Should we make an effort? By no means. Why not? Because God has made Christ to be unto us “righteousness,” and that righteousness is “to him that worketh not” (Rom. 5: 5).

So also in the matter of “redemption,” which is put last in 1 Corinthians 1: 30 because it includes the final deliverance of the body of the believer from under the power of death. Could we by personal effort deliver our bodies from the dominion of mortality? Surely not. Should we try? The thought is impious. Why? Because God has made Christ to be unto us “redemption” as regards both soul and body, and He who has already applied by the power of His

Spirit that glorious redemption to our souls, will before long apply it to our bodies.

Why then should “sanctification” be singled out from the precious list and be saddled with the legal and depressing idea of personal effort? If we cannot by our own efforts get “wisdom, righteousness and redemption,” are we any more likely to succeed in getting “sanctification?” Clearly not. Have we not proved this times without number? Have not our closet-walls witnessed our tears and groans evoked by the painful sense of failure after failure in our own efforts to tread with steady step and erect carriage, the lofty walks of personal sanctity? Will the reader deny this? I trust not. I would certainly hope he has responded to the call of Jesus, “Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” It is vain to “labor” in our own strength after sanctification. We must come to Jesus for *that* as well as for everything else. And having come to Jesus, we shall find that there is no lust which He cannot slay, no temper that He cannot subdue, no passion that He cannot overcome. The self-same hand that has cancelled our sins, that guides us in our difficulties and that will soon deliver our bodies from the power of death, can give us complete victory over all our personal infirmities and besetments, and fill our hearts with His sacred rest.

It is immensely important to have a clear understanding of the question of sanctification. Many have gone on “laboring and heavy laden” for years, endeavoring to work out in one way or another, their sanctification, and not succeeded to their satisfaction, for who ever did or ever could? They have even been tempted to question if they were ever converted at all. Many, were they to tell “all the truth,” could adopt as their own, the mournful lines of the poet,

“’Tis a point I long to know,

Oft it causeth anxious thought,

Do I love the Lord or no?

Am I His or am I not?”

Such persons have clear views of gospel truth. They could with Scriptural accuracy tell an inquirer after righteousness how, where and when he could get it. And yet, if that self-same inquirer were to ask them about their own state of heart before God, they could give but a sorry answer. Why is this? Simply because they have not laid hold of Christ as their sanctification as well as their righteousness. They have been endeavoring, partly in their own strength and partly by praying for the influences of the Holy Spirit, to stumble along the path of sanctification. They would deem a person very ignorant of “the plan of salvation” if they found him “going about to establish his own righteousness,” but they do not see that they themselves exhibit ignorance of that “plan” by going about to establish their own sanctification. Truly if in the one case it is a sorry righteousness which is worked out, so in the other case it is a lame sanctification. For if it be true that “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,” it is equally true that all our sanctifications are as filthy rags.

Whatever has the word “our” attached to it must be altogether imperfect. Christ is God's righteousness and Christ is God's sanctification. Both the one and the other are obtained by simply coming, looking, clinging, trusting to Christ. I need hardly say, it is by the power of the Spirit and through the Holy Scriptures that Christ is applied to us, both as our righteousness and our sanctification. But all this only takes the matter more and more out of our hands and leaves us nothing to glory in. If we could conquer an evil temper, we might indeed think ourselves clever, but since we are not asked to pick up a feather to add to our righteousness or our wisdom or our redemption, so neither are we asked to pick up a feather in order to add to our sanctification. In this as in those, Christ is all, self nothing. This doctrine is easily stated, but oh, the experience!

Will anyone say that the writer is doing away with sanctification? If so, he may just as well say that he is doing away with “righteousness,” “wisdom” or “redemption.” Who will contend for self-righteousness, self-wisdom or self-redemption? Who but the man that contends for self-sanctification? Who is likely to attain and exhibit the more elevated standard of personal sanctity? Is it the man

who is perpetually floundering amid his own imperfect struggles and cobweb-resolutions, or he who is daily, hourly and momentarily clinging to Christ as his sanctification? The answer is simple. The sanctification which we get in Christ is as perfect as the righteousness, the wisdom and the redemption. Am I doing away with “wisdom” because I say I am foolish? Am I doing away with “righteousness” because I say I am guilty? Am I doing away with “redemption” because I say I am mortal? Am I doing away with “sanctification” because I say I am vile? Yes, I am doing away with all these things so far as “I” am concerned, so I may find them all in Christ. This is the point. All — all in Christ!

Oh! when shall we learn to get to the end of self and cling simply to Christ? When shall we enter into the depth and power of those words “Come unto Me?” He does not say, “Come unto My yoke.” No; but “come unto Me.” We must cease from our own works in every shape and form, and come to Christ, come just as we are, come now. We come to Christ and get rest from and in Him before ever we hear a word about the “yoke.” To put the yoke first is to displace everything. If a “heavy laden” sinner thinks of the yoke, he must be overwhelmed by the thought of his own total inability to take it upon him or carry it. But when he comes to Jesus and enters into His precious rest, he finds the “yoke is easy and the burden light.”

This conducts us to the second point in our subject — “the yoke.” We must keep the two things distinct. To confound them is to tarnish the heavenly luster of the grace of Christ and to put a yoke upon the sinner's neck and a burden upon his shoulder which he, being “without strength,” is wholly unable to bear. But they are morally connected. All who come to Christ must take His yoke upon them and learn of Him, if they would “find rest unto their souls.”

To come to Christ is one thing; to walk with Him or learn of Him is quite another. Christ was “meek and lowly in heart.” He could meet the most adverse and discouraging circumstances with an “even so, Father.” The Baptist's heart might fail amid the heavy clouds which gathered around him in Herod's dungeon; the men of that generation might refuse the double testimony of righteousness and grace as furnished by the ministry of John and of our Lord

Himself; Bethsaida, Chorazin and Capernaum might refuse the testimony of His mighty works — a torrent of evidence which one might suppose would sweep away every opposing barrier. All these things and many more might cross the path of the divine Workman, but being “meek and lowly in heart,” He could say, “I thank Thee, O Father — even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.” His “rest” in the Father’s counsels was profound and perfect, and He invites us to take His yoke, to learn of Him, to drink into His spirit, to know the practical results of a subject mind, that we may “find rest unto our souls.”

A broken will is the real ground of the rest which we are to “find” after we have come to Christ. If God wills one thing and we will another, we cannot find rest in that. It matters not what the scene or circumstance may be. We may expand a list of things to any imaginable extent, in which our will may run counter to the will of God, but in whatever it is, we cannot find rest so long as our will is unbroken. We must get to the end of self in the matter of will as well as in the matter of “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification or redemption,” else we shall not “find rest.”

This, my beloved reader, is deep, real, earnest, personal work. Moreover, it is a daily thing. It is a continual taking of Christ’s yoke upon us and learning of Him. It is not that we take the yoke in order to come to Christ. No. We come to Christ first, and when His love fills and satisfies our souls, when His rest refreshes our spirits, when we can gaze by faith upon His gracious countenance and see Him stooping down to confer upon us the high and holy privilege of wearing His yoke and learning His lesson, we find that His yoke is indeed easy and His burden light. Unsubdued, unjudged, unmortified nature could never wear that yoke or bear that burden. The first thing is, “Come unto Me and I will give you rest.” The second thing is, “Take My yoke upon you and ye shall find rest.”

We must never reverse these things, never confound them, never displace them, never separate them. To call upon a sinner to take Christ’s yoke before he has gotten Christ’s rest, is to place Christ on the top of Mount Sinai, the sinner at the foot of that Mount and a dark impenetrable gulf between. This must not be done. Christ stands in all His matchless grace before the sinner’s eye and pours

forth His touching invitation, “Come,” and adds His heart-assuring promise, “I will give.” There is no condition, no demand, “no servile work.” All is the purest, freest, richest grace. Just, “come and I will give you rest.” And what then? Is it bondage, doubt and fear? Ah! no. “Take My yoke upon you.” How marvelously near this brings us to the One who has already given us rest! What a high honor to wear the same yoke with Him! It is not that He puts a grievous yoke upon our neck and a heavy burden upon our shoulder which we have to carry up the rugged sides of yon fiery Mount. This is not Christ's way. It is not thus He deals with the weary and heavy laden who come unto Him. He gives them rest. He gives them part of His yoke and a share of His burden. In other words, He calls them into fellowship with Himself, and in proportion as they enter into this fellowship they find still deeper rest in Him and in His blessed ways. And at the close, He will conduct them into that eternal rest which remains for the people of God.

May the Lord enable us to enter more fully into the power of all these divine realities, so that His joy remain in us and our joy may be full. There is an urgent need of a full, unreserved surrender of the heart to Christ and a full, unreserved acceptance of Him in all His precious adaptation to our every need. We want the whole heart, the single eye, the mortified mind, the broken will. Where these exist, there will be little complaining of doubts and fears, ups and downs, heavy days, vacant hours, restless moments, dullness and stupor, wandering and barrenness. When one has got to the end of himself regarding wisdom, righteousness, holiness and all beside, and when he has really found Christ as God's provision for *all*, then, but not until then, he will know the depth and power of that word “*rest*.”

“Now, then, my Lord, my Way, my Life,

Henceforth, let trouble, doubt, and strife,

Drop off as Autumn leaves:

Henceforth, as privileged by Thee,

Simple and undistracted be,

My soul which to Thy scepter cleaves.

At all times, to my spirit bear
An inward witness, soft and clear,
Of Thy redeeming power:
This will instruct Thy child, and fit,
Will sparkle forth what'er is meet,
For exigence of every hour.

Thus, all the sequel is well weighed;
I cast myself upon Thine aid,
A sea where none can sink,
Yea, in that sphere I stand, poor worm,
Where Thou wilt for Thy Name perform
Above what'er I ask or think.”

Matthew 11.

The True Workman

- his rebuffs, his resources, his returns.

There is a never-failing freshness in every part of the Word of God, but especially in those portions of it which present to us the blessed Person of the Lord Jesus; which tell us what He was, what He did, what He said, how He did it, and how He said it; which present Him to our hearts in His comings and goings, and matchless ways; in His spirit, tone, and manner, yea, in His very look. There is something in all this that commands and charms the heart. It is far more powerful than the mere statement of doctrines, however important, or the establishment of principles, however profound. These have their value and their place, most assuredly; they enlighten the understanding, instruct the mind, form the judgement, govern the conscience, and, in so doing, render us invaluable service.

But the presentation of the Person of Christ draws the heart, rivets the affections, satisfies the soul, commands the whole being. In short, nothing can exceed the occupation of heart with Christ Himself as the Holy Ghost has unfolded Him to us in the Word, and especially in the inimitable narratives of the Gospels. May it be given us to prove this, as we hang together over the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, in which we shall get a view of Christ, the true Workman, in His rebuffs, His resources and His returns — the rebuffs which He met with in His ministry; the resources which He found in God; and the returns which He makes to us.

And first, let us look at *the rebuffs*.

There never yet was one who stood as a workman for God in this world, that had not to encounter rebuffs in some shape or form, and the only perfect Workman is no exception to the general rule. Jesus had His rebuffs and disappointments; for had it been otherwise with Him, He could not sympathise with those who have to meet them at every stage of their career. He, as man, perfectly entered into everything that man is capable of feeling — sin excepted. "He was in all points tempted like as we are, except sin." "He is touched

with the feeling of our infirmities." He perfectly understands, and fully enters into, all that His servants have to pass through in their work.

Now, in this eleventh chapter, the Spirit has grouped together a series of those rebuffs or disappointments which the perfect Workman, the true Servant, the divine Minister had to encounter in the discharge of His ministry. The first of these came from a quarter from which we should not have expected it, namely, from — John the Baptist himself. "Now, when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto Him, Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?"

It is very evident that at the moment in which the Baptist sent this message to his Master, his spirit was under a cloud. It was a dark season in his experience. This was nothing uncommon. The very best and truest of Christ's servants have had their spirits overcast at times by the dark shadows of unbelief, despondency, and impatience. Moses, that highly honoured, faithful servant of God, gave forth on one occasion such accents as these, "Wherefore hast Thou afflicted Thy servant, and wherefore have I not found favour in Thy sight, that Thou layest the burden of all this people upon me . . . I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if Thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray Thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in Thy sight, and let me not see my wretchedness" (Num. 11: 11-15).

Such was the language of the meekest man upon the face of the earth — language drawn forth, no doubt, by very aggravating circumstances, even by the murmuring voices of six hundred thousand footmen — but still it was the language of Moses; and surely it would ill become us to marvel, for where is the mere mortal who could have endured the intense pressure of such a moment? What merely human embankment could have resisted the violence of such a mighty tide?

Again, we find Elijah the Tishbite, in a moment of heavy pressure, when a dark cloud was passing over his soul, flinging himself down under a juniper tree, and requesting for himself that he might die. "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am

not better than my fathers" (1 Kings 19:4). This was the language of Elijah, one of the most highly honoured of the servants of Christ — language evoked, no doubt, by a combination of the most discouraging influences — but still it was the language of Elijah the Tishbite; and let no one blame him until he himself has passed, without a wavering feeling or a faltering word, through like conditions.

In like manner also we find Jeremiah, another of Christ's high-favoured workmen, when under the smittings of Pashur, and the derisive insults of the ungodly around him, giving vent to his feelings in such language as this, "O Lord, Thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed; I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name."

And, again, "Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee; making him very glad. And let that man be as the cities which the Lord overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide, because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb to be always great with me. Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?" (Jer. 20: 7-9, 14-18) Such was the language of the weeping prophet — language drawn forth, no doubt, by sharp rebuffs and sore disappointments in his prophetic ministry, but still the language of Jeremiah; and, ere we condemn him, let us see if we could acquit ourselves better under similar pressure.

Need we wonder, then, after reading such records as the above, when we find the Baptist, amid the gloom of Herod's dungeon, faltering for a moment? Should we be greatly astonished to discover that he was made of no better material than the workmen of former generations? If Israel's lawgiver, Israel's reformer, and Israel's weeping prophet had, each in his day and generation, tottered beneath the ponderous weight of his burden, are we to be

surprised to find "John, the son of Zacharias," giving way to a momentary feeling of impatience and unbelief beneath the dark shadow of his prison walls? Assuredly, not until we ourselves have sat unmoved amid similar influences.

And yet we have ventured to assert, that John's message was a rebuff and a disappointment to the spirit of his Master. Yes, that is just what we assert; and we find the authority for our assertion in the style of Christ's answer. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me."

It is very possible, nay probable, that the Baptist, under a passing shadow of unbelief, had been tempted to wonder if indeed Jesus was the One to whom he had, in the discharge of his ministry, borne such full and unqualified testimony. He was, doubtless, stumbled for the moment, when he saw himself in the iron grasp of Herod, and heard of the works of Christ. His poor heart might indulge itself in such reasoning as this, "If indeed this be the glorious Messiah for whom we looked, whose kingdom was to be set up in power, then why is it thus with me His servant and witness? Why am I here in the gloom of this prison? Why is not the strong hand of power stretched forth to free me from these bonds and fling open these prison doors?"

If such were the reasonings of the captive Baptist, and we can easily believe it, what a powerful, pointed, pungent answer lay folded up in his Master's reply! He points him to those grand moral evidences of His divine mission, which were amply sufficient to carry conviction to every one that was taught of God. Was it not to be expected that if the God of Israel appeared in the midst of His people, He should address Himself to their actual condition? Was that the moment for the display of mere power? Could the Son of David set up His throne amid disease and misery? Was there not a demand for the exercise of patient, lowly grace and mercy in the midst of the varied and multiplied fruits of sin?

True, mere power could have burst open Herod's prison, and set the captive free; but then what about the lame, the blind, the deaf, the leper, the dead, the poor, the wretched? Could the display of royalty alleviate their condition? Was it not plain that something else was needed? And was it not equally plain that that something was being supplied by the gracious, tender, soothing ministrations of the lowly Jesus of Nazareth?

Yes, and the Baptist ought to have known this. But ah! you and I may well tread softly in the prison chamber of this honoured servant of Christ, not only because grace would have us so to do, but also because of the conviction which assuredly must possess our souls that, had *w e* been in his position, the foundations of our personal faith, if not sustained by grace, would have given way far more deplorably.

Still, it is important that we should fully comprehend the failure of John the Baptist, and sedulously gather up the seasonable instruction furnished by his temporary depression. We shall do well to see, with distinctness, what was lacking in his faith, in order that we ourselves may profit by this touchingly interesting narrative. It would have greatly helped the Baptist had he only understood and remembered that this is the day of Christ's *sympathy* and not the day of His *power*. Were it the day of His power, there would be no dungeon, no block, no stake, no trial or sorrow of any sort for the saints of God. There would then be no tumultuous waves of the ocean, no cloud in the sky, no storm to brave, no roughness to endure.

But this is the day of Christ's sympathy; and the question for the tried and tempted, the harassed and oppressed, is this, "Which would you rather have, the *power* of Christ's *hand* in deliverance *from* the trial, or the *sympathy* of Christ's *heart* in the trial?" The carnal mind, the unsubdued heart, the restless spirit, will, no doubt, at once exclaim, "Oh! let Him only put forth His power and deliver me from this insupportable trial, this intolerable burden, this crushing difficulty. I sign for deliverance. I only want deliverance."

Some of us can well understand this. We are so often like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, restlessly struggling, instead of

patiently submitting; rendering the yoke all the more galling and grievous by our senseless and useless efforts to shake it off. But the spiritual mind, the subdued heart, the lowly spirit, will say, and that without a single particle of reserve, Let me only enjoy the sweet sympathy of the heart of Jesus in my trial, and I ask no more. I do not want even the power of His hand to deprive me of one drop of consolation supplied by the tender love and profound sympathy of His heart. I know, assuredly, that He could deliver me. I know that He could, in the twinkling of an eye, snap these chains, level these prison walls, rebuke that sickness, raise up that beloved object that lies before me in the cold grasp of death, remove this heavy burden, meet this difficulty, supply this need.

But if He does not see fit to do so, if it does not fall in with His unsearchable counsels, and harmonise with His wise and faithful purpose concerning me so to do, I know it is only to lead me into a deeper and richer experience of His most precious sympathy. If He does not see it right to take me off the rough path of trial and difficulty — that path which He himself, in perfection, and all His saints from age to age, in their measure, have trodden — it is His gracious purpose to come and walk with me along that path which, though rough and thorny, leads to those everlasting mansions of light and blessedness above.

We cannot, for a moment, doubt but that the knowledge and recollection of these things would greatly have relieved the heart of John the Baptist in the midst of his prison experiences; and surely they would serve to soothe and sustain our hearts amid the varied exercises through which we are called to pass in this wilderness scene. The moment has not yet arrived for Jesus to take to Himself His great power, and reign. It is the day of His patience with the world, of His sympathy with His people. We must ever remember this. He did not put forth the strong hand of power to avert aught of His own suffering. Nay, when Peter, in mistaken zeal, drew the sword in His defence, He said, "Put up thy sword into its place; for all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" (Matt. 26: 52-54)

But while we fully recognise the momentary failure of John the Baptist, and while we clearly discern the points in which his faith proved itself defective, let us remember the pressure of his circumstances, and the great practical difficulty of the lesson which he was called to learn within his prison walls. It is very hard for a workman to find himself laid aside. Indeed, there are few things more difficult for an active mind than to learn that we can be dispensed with. We are so apt to think that the work cannot get on without us. And yet the Lord can soon teach us our mistake. Paul's bonds advanced the cause of Christ. The imprisonment of one great preacher drew out a multitude of minor preachers. Luther's confinement in the Wartburg furthered the cause of the Reformation.

Thus it is always; and we have all to learn the wholesome lesson, that God can do without us; that the work can go on without us. This holds good in every case. It matters not, in the least, what our sphere of action may be. We may not be apostles or reformers, teachers or preachers; but whatever we are, it is well for us to learn that we can very easily be spared from the scene around us. The remembrance of this gives great rest to the heart. It tends amazingly to cure us of all that bustling self-importance which is so truly hateful, and it enables us to say, "The Lord be praised! The work is being done. I am satisfied."

The reader will discern a very marked difference between Christ's message *to* John and his testimony *of* John. In speaking to His servant, He lets him know, in a way not to be mistaken, that He *felt* his question. We can have no difficulty in seeing this. We feel persuaded that the Lord's answer to His servant contained a sharp arrow. True, that arrow was enclosed in a very delicate case; but it was an arrow, and a sharp one too.

"Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me." John would, doubtless, understand this. It was designed to go right home to his very inmost soul. That dear servant had said, in reference to Jesus, "He must increase, but I must decrease," and he was called to enter practically into this, not merely in his ministry, but in his person. He had to be content to end his career by the sword of the executioner, after having spent his closing days in the gloom of a dungeon. How mysterious! What a profound lesson to be set down

to! How difficult to flesh and blood! What need — what urgent need there was, at such a moment, for John to have whispered into his ear these words, afterwards uttered to Peter, "What I do, thou knowest not *now*; but thou shalt know *hereafter*."

What pregnant words! "*Now*" and "*Hereafter*!" How much we all need to remember them! Often it happens with us that "Now" is involved in deep and impenetrable obscurity. Heavy clouds hang upon our path. The dealings of our Father's hand are perfectly inexplicable to us. Our minds are bewildered. There are circumstances in our path for which we cannot account — ingredients in our cup the object of which we cannot understand or appreciate. We are confounded and feel disposed to cry out, "Why am I thus?" We are wholly engrossed with "Now," and our minds are filled with dark and unbelieving reasonings until those precious words fall, in a still small voice upon the ear, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

Then the reasonings are answered, the storm hushed, the dark and depressing "Now" is lighted up with the beams of a brilliant and glorious "Hereafter," and the subdued heart breathes forth, in accents of holy and intelligent acquiescence, "As Thou wilt, Lord." Would that we knew more of this! Assuredly, we need it, whatsoever may be our lot in this world. We may not be called, like the Baptist, to the prison and the block; but each has his "Now" which must be interpreted in the light of "Hereafter." We must look at the "seen and temporal" in the clear and blessed light of the "unseen and eternal."

But let us now turn, for a moment, and hearken to Christ's testimony of John. "And, as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a

greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

[In order fully to understand this last clause, we must distinguish John's personal character and walk, and his dispensational and official position. If we look at him, in his person and walk, few, even in the kingdom, could bear comparison with him, in separation and devotedness. But when we look at him, in his dispensational position, *i. e.*, in the place assigned him in the divine economy, the very weakest and least in the kingdom occupies a better and higher place. The same remark holds good with respect to the saints of Old Testament times. If we take Abraham, for example, and compare him with the best of the children of God of this dispensation, the "father of the faithful" might stand higher, as regards personal faith and devotedness the feeblest member of the Church of God occupies, dispensationally, in the divine economy, a place which Abraham never thought of, because it was not revealed. Very many pious and godly people are prevented from seeing the dignities and privileges of the saints of this dispensation, by comparing themselves *personally* with Old Testament believers. But we must remember it is not a question of what we are in ourselves, but of the *place* which God, in the arrangement of His kingdom and household, has thought proper to assign us: and if He has been pleased to give us a higher place than that occupied by His people in Old Testament times, it is not true humility on our part to refuse it; yea, rather let us seek grace to occupy it aright, and to walk worthy of it.]

Such was the glowing testimony borne by Christ of His servant, John the Baptist. "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than he." There is a great principle in this — a principle which we may see illustrated, again and again, in the record of God's dealings with His people. If the Lord had a message to send *to* His servant, He would send it. He would speak to him, plainly and pointedly. But, the moment He proceeds to speak *of* him, the case is totally different.

Thus it is always, and blessed be God that it is so. We have our ways and God has His thoughts; and while He will deal with us faithfully as to the former, He can only speak of us according to the

latter. What relief for the heart is here! What comfort! What moral power! What solid ground for self-judgment! God has given us a standing, and He thinks of us, and speaks of us, according to that. We have our practical ways, and He deals with us and speaks to us in reference to them. He will expose us to ourselves, and make us feel our ways and judge our doings; but the moment He begins to speak of us to others, He brings out the perfection of His own thoughts respecting us, and speaks of us according to the perfect standing which He has given us in His presence, the fruit of His own eternal counsels respecting us, and of His perfect work on our behalf.

Thus it was with Israel, in the plains of Moab. They had their ways, and God had His thoughts; and while He had, often and often, to reprove them for their ways, to speak plainly to them about their perverseness and stiff-neckedness, yet no sooner did the covetous prophet appear upon the scene, to curse Israel, than the Lord placed Himself right between His people and the enemy to turn the curse into a blessing, and pour forth the most sublime and marvellous strains of testimony on their behalf.

"God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless, and He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt: he hath, as it were, the strength of a unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel; according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!" (Num. 23: 19-23)

What grace is here! "I have not beheld iniquity, nor seen perverseness." What could the enemy say to this? "What hath God wrought!" It is not, "What hath Israel wrought!" They had wrought folly, many a time; but God had wrought salvation. He had wrought for His own glory, and that glory had shone out in the perfect deliverance of a crooked, perverse, and stiff-necked people. It was no use the enemy's talking of iniquity and perverseness, if Jehovah

would not see either the one or the other. It is of very little consequence to us that Satan accuses, when God has acquitted; that Satan counts up our sins, when God has blotted them all out for ever; that Satan condemns, when God has justified.

I hear the accuser roar,

Of ills that I have done;

I know them well, and thousands more,

Jehovah findeth none.

But some may feel disposed to ask, "Is there not danger in the statement of such a principle as this? Might it not lead us into the dark and perilous region of antinomianism?" Be thou well assured of this, thou art never further removed from that justly dreaded region than when thy soul is basking in the bright and blessed beams of God's eternal favour, and exulting in the stability of His unconditional and everlasting salvation. There never was a greater mistake than to imagine that God's free grace and full salvation could ever lead to unholy results. Man's notions of these things may have that effect, but wherever grace is fully known and salvation enjoyed, there you will most assuredly find "The fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

But we know it is an old habit of ignorant and self-exalting legality to attribute an antinomian tendency to the free grace of God. "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" is no modern objection to the precious doctrines of grace; and yet those doctrines remain untouched in all their purity and power, and find their divine centre in the Person of Christ Himself, who, having died on the cross to put away our sins, has become our life and righteousness, our sanctification and redemption, our all in all. He has not only delivered us from the future consequences of sin, but from the present power thereof.

This is what God hath wrought, and this is the groundwork of the great principle on which we have been dwelling, and which we

have seen variously illustrated in God's dealings with Israel in the plains of Moab, and in Christ's dealings with the Baptist in the dungeon of Herod. Jehovah was compelling Balaam to exclaim in the ears of Balak, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel," at the very moment when those tents and tabernacles were furnishing ample material for judgement. So also, Jesus was telling out in the ears of the multitude the greatness of John the Baptist, at the very moment when the messengers were on their way back to their master, carrying with them an arrow for his heart.

Now, we want the reader to get a clear view of this principle, and to bear it in constant remembrance. If we mistake not, it will greatly help him, not only in the understanding of God's Word, but also in the interpreting of His ways. God judges His people. He will not and cannot pass over a jot or a tittle in their ways. The splendid testimony of Balaam on Moab's heights, was followed by the sharp javelin of Phineas in Moab's plains. "*Our* God is a consuming fire." This is what *our* God is now. He cannot tolerate evil. He speaks of us, He thinks of us, He acts toward us according to the perfection of His own work; but He will judge our ways. Let an enemy come forth to curse, and what is it? Not a spot, not a stain, all perfect and comely and goodly. How could it be otherwise? How could the eye of God behold those sins which have been for ever obliterated by the blood of the Lamb? Utterly impossible.

What then? Does this make light of sin? Far be the thought. Does it open the door for a loose walk? Nay, it lays the only true foundation of personal holiness. "The Lord will judge His people." He will look after the ways of His children. He will take care of His holiness; and not only so, but He will make His people partakers of that holiness, and chasten them with the rod of faithful discipline for that very purpose. It was just because Israel's tents were goodly in the eyes of Jehovah, that He sent Phineas into those very tents with the javelin of righteous judgement in his hand.

And so, now, it is because His people are precious to Him, and comely in His eyes, that He will not suffer aught in them, or in their ways, contrary to His holiness. "The time is come that judgement must begin at the house of God" (1 Peter 4: 17). God is not judging

the world now. He is judging His people now. He will judge the world by-and-by. But, be it remembered, that it is as a "holy Father" He judges His people; it is as a righteous God He will judge the world. The object of the former is practical holiness; the issue of the latter will be eternal perdition. Solemn thought!

But there is another point in connection with this, which we desire to press upon the attention of the Christian reader — a point of very great practical moment, namely this, we must not measure our standing by our state, but ever judge our state by our standing. Many err in reference to this, and their error leads to most disastrous results. The standing of the believer is settled, perfect, eternal, divine. His state is imperfect and fluctuating. He is partaker of the divine nature which cannot sin; but he bears about with him also his old nature which can do nothing else but sin.

Now his standing is in the new and not in the old. God sees him only in the new. He is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. He is not under law, but under grace. He is in Christ. God sees him as such. This is his perfect and unalterable standing; his sins gone; his person accepted; all complete. His practical state can never touch his standing. It can very seriously affect his communion, his worship, his testimony, his usefulness, his spiritual enjoyment, his mental repose, the glory of Christ as involved in his practical career. These are grave consequences in the estimation of every sensitive conscience and well-regulated mind; but the standing of the true believer remains — ever remains *intact* and unalterable. The feeblest member of the family of God has this place of security, and is perfect in Christ. To deny this is to remove the true basis of self-judgement and practical holiness.

Hence, if the Christian sets about measuring his standing by his state, he must be miserable, and his mental misery must be commensurate with his honesty and intelligence. There may be cases in which ignorance, self-complacency, or want of sincerity, will lead to a sort of false peace; but where there is any measure of light, intelligence, and uprightness, there must be mental anguish if the standing is measured by the state.

On the other hand, let it never be forgotten — indeed the earnest Christian never could desire to forget — that the state must be judged by the standing. If this wholesome truth be lost sight of, we shall very speedily make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. We have to keep the eye of faith steadily fixed on a risen Christ, and never be satisfied with anything short of perfect conformity to Him, in spirit, soul, and body.

A very few words will suffice to present the remainder of those rebuffs with which our blessed Lord had to deal, as recorded in our chapter. Having disposed of the question of the Baptist and his ministry, He turns to the men of that generation, and says, "But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children."

The piping and the mourning were alike neglected by an unbelieving age. "John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not." The Lord Jesus came in perfect grace, and they would not have Him. The stern and distant minister of righteousness, with the axe of judgement in his hand, and the lowly, gentle Minister of divine grace, with words of tenderness and acts of goodness, were alike rejected by the men of that generation. But wisdom's children will ever justify her, in all her doings and in all her sayings. The Lord be praised for this rich mercy! What a privilege to be of the favoured number of wisdom's children! To have an eye to see, an ear to hear, and a heart to understand and appreciate the ways and works and words of divine Wisdom! "Oh, to grace how great a debtor!"

"Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall

be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgement than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgement than for thee."

With what deep and awful solemnity does the word "Woe!" fall upon the ear, as coming from the lips of the Son of God. It is the woe consequent upon rejected grace. It is no longer merely a question of law broken, ordinances dishonoured and abused, divine institutions shamefully corrupted, prophets and wise men rejected and stoned.

All this there was, alas! But there was more. The Son Himself had come, in richest grace. He had spoken in their ears such words as none other had ever spoken. He had wrought His mighty miracles in their midst. He had healed their sick, cleansed their lepers, raised their dead, fed their hungry, opened the eyes of their blind. What had He not done? What had He not said? He longed to gather them beneath His sheltering wing; but they would not nestle there. They preferred the wings of the archenemy to the wings of Jehovah. He had opened His bosom to receive them; but they would not trust Him. All day long had He stretched forth His hands to them; but they would not have Him; and now, at length, after long forbearing, He pours forth His solemn woes upon them, and tells them of the appalling destiny awaiting them.

But, beloved reader, does it not occur to you that the "woe" of the eleventh of Matthew may have a wider range than even Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum? Should it not fall with still deeper emphasis, and more soul-subduing power, upon the ear of Christendom? For our part, we cannot doubt it for a moment. We cannot attempt to enter upon the circumstances which conspire to aggravate the guilt of the professing Church — the wide diffusion of scriptural knowledge and evangelical light — the numberless and nameless forms in which spiritual privileges lie scattered upon the pathway of this generation.

And what is the return? What the true practical condition of even those who occupy the very highest platform of Christian profession? Alas! who shall venture a reply? We look in one direction, and see the dark shadows of superstition enwrapping the minds of men. We turn the eye to another point, and there we see infidelity raising its bold and audacious front, and daring to lay its impious hand upon the sacred canon of inspiration. Combined with these, we see the poor heart eagerly grasping at everything that can possibly minister to ease and self-indulgence.

In a word, it may be safely affirmed that during the entire history of the world, there has not been exhibited a darker spectacle than that which professing Christianity presents at this very hour. Take Chorazin and its companion cities; take Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain; take Tyre and Sidon; put all these together into one scale, with all their guilt, and Christendom will outweigh them all. For if, in those cities, you find wickedness and infidelity, you do not find them, as in Christendom, tacked on to the name of Christ, or covered with the specious robes of Christian profession. No; this latter is the aggravated sin of Christendom, and hence the terrible "woe unto thee" is to be measured by the greatness of the privileges and consequent responsibility.

And if these lines should be scanned by one who up to this moment has rejected the testimony of the gospel, we would affectionately remind him that he should feel the solemnity of the words, "Woe unto thee." We fear that very few, comparatively, realise the awful responsibility of continually hearing and rejecting the gospel message. If it was a solemn thing for Capernaum to reject the light which shone upon it, how much more solemn it is for any one now to reject the still brighter light that shines upon him in the gospel of the grace of God! Redemption is now accomplished, Christ is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, the Holy Ghost has come down, the canon of inspiration is complete, everything has been done that love could do.

If, therefore, in the face of all this accumulated light and privilege, a man is found still in unbelief, still living in his sins, surely he has much reason to fear lest this word be pronounced upon him at the last, "Woe unto thee, gospel-rejector." "Because I have

called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me" (Prov. 1: 24-28). May these words be used by the Holy Ghost to awaken some careless reader, and lead him to the feet of Jesus!

Let us now turn, for a moment, to *the resources* which the true, the perfect, the divine Workman found in God. That blessed One had, most surely, His rebuffs in this wretched world; but He had His never-failing resources in God; and, hence, when everything seemed against Him, when He might say, "I have laboured in vain, and spent My strength for nought and in vain"; when unbelief, hardness of heart, and rejection met His view on every side, "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him."

Here, then, were the resources — the rich and varied resources of the true Workman, who could thank God in everything, and at all times. He was unmoved in the midst of all. If the testimony was rejected, if the message fell upon deaf ears and uncircumcised hearts, if the precious seed which was scattered by His loving hand fell upon the beaten highway and was borne off by the fowls of the air, He could bow His head and say, "I thank Thee, O Father. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." There was no failure on His part. He ever walked and worked in the perfect line of the divine counsels.

Not so with us. If our testimony is rejected, if our work is unproductive, we may have to inquire as to the cause. We may have to judge ourselves in the matter. Perhaps we have not been faithful. The lack of result may be wholly attributable to ourselves. It might

have been different had we been more single-eyed and devoted. We might have gathered golden sheaves in yonder corner of the field, had it not been for our own carnality and worldliness. We were self-indulgent when we ought to have been self-denying; we were governed by mixed motives. In short, there may be a thousand reasons, in ourselves and in our ways, why our labour has proved unproductive.

But with the only perfect Workman, this was not the case, and hence He could calmly retire from the rebuffs without into the resources within. It was all bright with Him there. "I thank *Thee*." He stayed His heart upon the eternal counsels of God. All things were delivered unto Him; and, as He says, elsewhere, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." It was all settled, and all right. The divine counsel shall stand, and the divine good pleasure shall be accomplished. What a sweet relief for the heart amid rebuffs and disappointments!

God will perfect that which concerneth His servants; and even where there are mistakes and failures, as alas! there are in abundance with all of us, the Lord's rich grace abounds over all, and actually takes occasion from our very mistakes to shine out all the more brightly — though, assuredly, the mistakes must produce their own painful and humiliating results. It is the remembrance of this which alone can give calm repose in the midst of the most discouraging circumstances. If we take the eye off God, our souls must soon be overwhelmed. It is our privilege to be able, in our little measure, to thank God in view of everything, and take refuge in His eternal counsels, which must be made good despite all the unbelief of man, and all the malice of Satan.

But we must draw this paper to a close, and shall do little more than quote the precious words which set forth *the returns* which our blessed Lord and Saviour makes to us. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

These words are familiar to our readers, and we but introduce them here as completing the lovely picture presented in our chapter. We feel assured the spiritual reader will greatly enjoy the presentation of the divine Workman in His rebuffs, His resources, and His returns. It is a marvellous lesson indeed. The Lord Jesus retires from a scene of disappointments, and finds all His springs in God; He then comes forth into the midst of the very scene that had repulsed Him, and makes His gracious returns. It is all in perfect grace — grace unfailing — mercy inexhaustible — patience unwearied.

True, He had sent an answer to the Baptist; He had faithfully portrayed the men of that generation; He had denounced a solemn woe upon the impenitent cities; but He can come forth in all the divine freshness and fullness of the grace that was in Him, and say, to every heavy laden soul, "*Come unto Me.*"

All this is divine. It draws out our hearts in worship and thanksgiving. If *faithfulness* is constrained, in the view of aggravated impenitence, to say, "*Woe unto thee,*" *grace* can address every burdened heart in the touching accents, "*Come unto Me.*" Both are perfect. The Lord Jesus felt the rebuffs. He would not have been very man if He had not felt them. Yes, He felt the rebuffs. He could say, "I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none." Mark, "I *looked.*" His loving human heart fondly "looked" for pity, but found it not. He looked for comforters, but looked in vain. There was no pity for Jesus — no comforters for Him. He was left alone.

Loneliness and desolation, thirst, ignominy and death — such was the portion of the Son of God and Son of man. "Reproach," says He, "hath broken My heart." It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the Lord Jesus did not feel in every respect, as man should feel, the varied exercises through which He passed. He felt everything that man is capable of feeling except sin, and this latter He bore and expiated on the cross, blessed be His name!

This is not only a great cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith, but a truth of infinite sweetness to the heart of every true believer. Jesus, as man, felt what it was to be neglected, to be disappointed, to

be wounded and insulted. Blessed Jesus! thus it was with Thee, down here, because Thou wast very man, perfect in all that became a man, in the midst of this heartless world. Thy loving heart sought sympathy, but found it not. Loneliness was Thy portion while craving sweet companionship. This world had no pity, no comfort for Thee.

And yet, mark the grace which breathes in those words, "Come unto Me." How unlike us! If we, who so often deserve them, because of our ways, meet with rebuffs and disappointments, what returns do we make? Alas! for the answer. Chagrin and sourness, fault-finding and bitter complaints. And why is this? It may be said we are not perfect: certainly not in ourselves; but we may rest assured, that if we were more in the constant habit of retiring from the rebuffs of the world or of the professing Church, into our resources in God, we should be much better able to come forth and make gracious returns in the midst of the scene which had repulsed us. But it too often happens that instead of being driven in upon God, we are driven in upon *self*; and the consequence is that, instead of returning grace, we return bitterness. It is impossible that we can make a right return if we fail to realise our right resource.

Oh, that we may really learn of Jesus, and take His yoke upon us! May we drink into His meek and lowly spirit! What words — "Meek and lowly!" How unlike nature! How unlike the world! How unlike us! How much pride haughtiness, and self-sufficiency in us! What self-confidence, self-seeking, and self-exaltation! May the Lord give us to see ourselves as He sees us, so that we may be in the dust in His presence, and ever walk humbly before Him.

May it be given us to prove, in this day of headiness and high-mindedness, the moral security of a lowly mind and humble spirit — gladly bearing His yoke — the yoke of entire subjection to our Lord's will in all things. This is the secret of true peace and power. We can only taste of true rest of heart when the will is kept in subjection. It is when we can meet every dispensation of our Father's hand with an "Even so," that rest is our portion. If our will is active, rest must be out of the question. It is one thing to *receive* rest of conscience on coming to Jesus, at the first, and quite another thing to *find* rest of heart through taking His yoke and learning of Him.

May it be given us to know very much more of the latter, in this day of restless activity.

Matthew 12:24-32

“THE UNPARDONABLE SIN”

There are very false notions afloat as to the point to which you call our attention, and many like yourself are troubled thereby. We are continually asked about the “unpardonable sin” and the “sin against the Holy Spirit.” If you read carefully Matthew 12: 24-32 you will see that our Lord speaks of “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” of which the apostate Jews were guilty. For this there was and could be no forgiveness. What could be done for those who not only rejected the Son but resisted the Holy Spirit and attributed His blessed operation to Beelzebub? They could neither be forgiven in the “age” of the law nor in that of Messiah. In short, it is wholly a question in this scripture of the apostate nation of Israel given over to hopeless perdition. We know that, just before the opening of the millennial age, there will be a repentant remnant for whom a fountain shall be opened and who shall be the nucleus of the restored nation. But this is far too wide a subject to enter upon here. We merely add that we judge it to be a temptation of Satan to lead you to imagine that you have committed “the unpardonable sin.” You may rest assured, dear friend, that you have never been guilty of any sin which cannot be cancelled by that blood which cleanses us from *all* sin.

Many find difficulty in 1 John 5: 16. “There is a sin unto death.” This we believe to be a question of God's governmental dealings. We learn from 1 Corinthians 11 that God visits His people with sickness and even physical death because of their ways, but in neither of these passages is there any thought of “an unpardonable sin.” We do not believe that any sinner in this acceptable year, this day of salvation, is beyond the reach of the pardoning love of God and the atoning blood of Jesus. Those who reject the gospel shall be given over to “a strong delusion” (2 Thess. 2: 10-12). But that terrible moment has not yet arrived. “The day of vengeance” is held back in God's longsuffering mercy.

Matthew 14: 1-21 and Mark 6: 30-44

THE SYMPATHY AND GRACE OF JESUS

(Read carefully Matthew 14: 1-21 and Mark 6: 30-44)

In these two parallel scriptures we are presented with two distinct conditions of heart which both find their answer in the sympathy and grace of Jesus. Let us look closely at them and may the Holy Spirit enable us to gather up and bear away their precious teaching!

It was a moment of deep sorrow to John's disciples when their master fell by the sword of Herod, when the one on whom they had been accustomed to lean and from whose lips they had been accustomed to drink instruction, was taken from them after such a fashion. This was indeed a moment of gloom and desolation to the followers of the Baptist.

But there was One to whom they could come in their sorrow and into whose ear they could pour their tale of grief — the One of whom their master had spoken, to whom he had pointed and of whom he had said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” To Him the bereaved disciples betook themselves. We read, “They came and took up the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus” (Matt. 14: 12). This was the very best thing they could have done. There was not another heart on earth in which they could have found such a response as in the tender, loving heart of Jesus. His sympathy was perfect. He knew all about their sorrow. He knew their loss and how they would be feeling it. They therefore acted wisely when “they went and told Jesus.” His ear was ever open and His heart ever prepared to soothe and sympathize. He perfectly exemplified the precept afterwards embodied in the words of the Holy Spirit, “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep” (Rom. 12: 15).

Who can tell the value of genuine sympathy? Who can declare the value of having one who can really make your joys and sorrows his own? Thank God! we have such an one in the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Although we cannot see Him with the bodily eye, yet can faith use Him in all the preciousness and power of His perfect

sympathy. We can, if only our faith is simple and childlike, come from the tomb where we have just deposited the remains of some fondly-cherished person, to the feet of Jesus and there pour out the anguish of a bereaved and desolate heart. We shall there meet no rude repulse, no heartless reproof for our folly and weakness in feeling so deeply. Nor any clumsy effort to say something suitable, an awkward effort to put on some expression of condolence. Ah! no; Jesus knows how to sympathize with a heart that is crushed and bowed down beneath the heavy weight of sorrow. His is a perfect human heart. What a thought! What a privilege to have access at all times, in all places and under all circumstances, to a perfect human heart! We may look in vain for this down here. In many cases, there is a real desire to sympathize, but a total lack of capacity. I may find myself, in moments of sorrow, in company with one who knows nothing about my sorrow or the source thereof. How could he sympathize? And even though I should tell him, his heart might be so occupied with other things as to have no room and no time for me.

Not so with the perfect Man, Christ Jesus. He has both room and time for each and all. No matter when, how or with what you come, the heart of Jesus is always open. He will never repulse, never fail, never disappoint. If we are in sorrow, what should we do? We should just do as the disciples of the Baptist did, “go and tell Jesus.” This is the right thing to do. Let us go straight from the tomb to the feet of Jesus. He will dry up our tears, soothe our sorrows, heal our wounds and fill up our blanks. In this way we shall be able to enter into the truth of Rutherford's words when he says, “I try to lay up all my good things in Christ and then a little of the creature goes a great way with me.” This is an experience which we may well covet. May the blessed Spirit lead us more into it!

We may now contemplate another condition of heart as furnished by the twelve apostles on their return from a successful mission. “And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught” (Mark 6: 30). Here we have not a case of sorrow and bereavement, but one of rejoicing and encouragement. The twelve made their way to Jesus to tell Him of their success, just as the

disciples of the Baptist made their way to Him in the moment of their loss. Jesus was equal to both. He could meet the heart that was crushed with sorrow and He could meet the heart that was flushed with success. He knew how to control, to moderate and to direct both the one and the other. Blessings forever be upon His honored name!

“And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat” (Mark 6: 31). Here we are conducted to a point at which the moral glories of Christ shine out with uncommon luster and correct the selfishness of our poor narrow hearts. Here we are taught with unmistakable clearness that to make Jesus the depository of our thoughts and feelings will never produce in us a spirit of haughty self-sufficiency and independence, or a feeling of contempt for others. Quite the reverse. The more we have to do with Jesus, the more will our hearts be opened to meet the varied forms of human need which may present themselves to our view from day to day. It is when we come to Jesus and empty our whole hearts to Him, tell Him of our sorrows and our joys, and cast our whole burden at His feet, that we really learn how to feel for others.

There is great beauty and power in the words, “come ye yourselves apart.” He does not say, “Go ye.” This would never do. There is no use in going apart into a desert place if Jesus is not there to go to. To go into solitude without Jesus is but to make our cold, narrow hearts, colder and narrower still. I may retire from the scene around me in chagrin and disappointment, only to wrap myself up in an impenetrable selfishness. I may fancy that my fellows have not made enough of me and I may retire to make much of myself. I may make myself the center of my whole being and thus become a coldhearted, contracted, miserable creature. But when Jesus says “come,” the case is totally different. Our finest moral lessons are learned alone with Jesus. We cannot breathe the atmosphere of His presence without having our hearts expanded. If the apostles had gone into the desert without Jesus, they would have eaten the loaves and fishes themselves, but having gone with Jesus they learned differently. He knew how to meet the need of a hungry multitude, as

well as that of a company of sorrowing or rejoicing disciples. The sympathy and grace of Jesus are perfect. He can meet all. If one is sorrowful, he can go to Jesus; if he is happy, he can go to Jesus; if he is hungry, he can go to Jesus. We can bring everything to Jesus, for in Him all fullness dwells, and, blessed be His name, He never sends anyone away empty.

Not so, regretfully, with His poor disciples. How forbidding is their selfishness when viewed in the light of His magnificent grace! “And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.” He had gone to a desert place to give His disciples rest, but no sooner does human need present itself than the deep flowing tide of compassion rolls forth from His tender heart.

“And when the day was now far spent, His disciples came unto Him and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far past: send them away.” What words from men who had just returned from preaching the gospel! “Send them away.” Ah! it is one thing to preach grace and another thing to act it. It is well to preach, but it is also well to act. Indeed, the preaching will be worth little if not combined with acting. It is well to instruct the ignorant, but it is also well to feed the hungry. The latter may involve more self-denial than the former. It may cost us nothing to preach, but it may cost us something to feed, and we do not like to have our private store intruded upon. The heart is ready to put forth its ten thousand objections, “What shall I do for myself? What will become of my family? We must act judiciously. We cannot do impossibilities.” These and similar arguments the selfish heart can urge when a needy object presents itself.

“Send them away.” What made the disciples say this? What was the real source of this selfish request? Simply unbelief. Had they only remembered that they had in their midst the One who of old had fed “600,000 footmen” for forty years in the wilderness, they would have known that He would not send a hungry multitude away. Surely the same hand that had nourished such a host for so long a time could easily furnish a single meal for five thousand. Thus faith would reason, but unbelief darkens the understanding and

contracts the heart. There is nothing so absurd as unbelief and nothing which so shuts up the bowels of compassion. Faith and love always go together, and in proportion to the growth of the one is the growth of the other. Faith opens the floodgates of the heart and lets the tide of love flow forth. Thus the apostle could say to the Thessalonians, "Your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth." This is the divine rule. A heart full of faith can afford to be charitable; an unbelieving heart can afford nothing.

Faith places the heart in immediate contact with God's exhaustless treasury and fills it with the most benevolent affections. Unbelief throws the heart in upon itself and fills it with all manner of selfish fears. Faith conducts us into the soul-expanding atmosphere of heaven. Unbelief leaves us enwrapped in the withering atmosphere of this heartless world. Faith enables us to hearken to Christ's gracious words, "Give ye them to eat." Unbelief makes us utter our own heartless words, "Send the multitude away." In a word, there is nothing which enlarges the heart like simple faith, and nothing so contracting as unbelief. Oh! that our faith may grow exceedingly so that our love may abound more and more! May we reap much permanent profit from the contemplation of the sympathy and grace of Jesus!

What a striking contrast between "Send the multitude away" and "Give ye them to eat." Thus it is ever. God's ways are not as our ways. It is by looking at His ways that we learn to judge our ways — by looking at Him that we learn to judge ourselves. In this lovely scene Jesus corrects the selfishness of the disciples, first by making them the channels through which His grace may flow to the multitude, and secondly, by making them gather up "twelve baskets full of the fragments" for themselves.

Nor is this all. Not merely is selfishness rebuked, but the heart is most blessedly instructed. Nature might say, "What need is there of the five loaves and two fishes at all? Surely, the One who can feed such a multitude with the loaves and fishes, can as easily feed them without such an instrumentality." Nature might argue thus, but Jesus teaches us that we are not to despise God's creatures. We are to use what we have with God's blessing. This is a fine moral lesson

for the heart. “What hast thou in the house?” is the question. It is just that and nothing else that God will use. It is easy to be liberal with what we have not, but the thing is to bring out what we have and with God's blessing, apply it to the present need.

So also in the gathering up of the fragments. The foolish here might say, “What need of gathering up those scattered crumbs? Surely the One who has wrought such a miracle can have no need of fragments.” Yes, but we are not to waste God's creatures. If in the using of the loaves and fishes we are taught not to despise any creature of God, in the gathering up of the fragments we are taught not to waste it. Let human need be liberally met, but let not a single crumb be wasted. How divinely perfect! How unlike us! Sometimes we are stingy, at other times extravagant. Jesus was never either the one or the other. “Give ye them to eat.” But, “Let nothing be lost.” Perfect grace! Perfect wisdom! May we adore it and learn from it! May we rejoice in the assurance that the blessed One who manifested all this wisdom and grace *is our life*. Christ is our life, and it is the manifestation of this life that constitutes practical Christianity. It is not living by rules and regulations, but simply having Christ dwelling in the heart by faith — Christ the source of perfect sympathy and perfect grace.

Matthew 14: 22-33

PETER ON THE WATER

There are two ways in which we may view the interesting portion of Scripture given above. We may read it from a dispensational standpoint as bearing upon the subject of God's dealings with Israel. Also, we may read it as a portion directly bearing on the subject of our own practical walk with God from day to day.

Our Lord, having fed the multitude and dismissed them, “went up into a mountain apart to pray, and when the evening was come, He was there alone.” This answers precisely to His present position with reference to the nation of Israel. He has left them and gone on high to enter upon the blessed work of intercession. Meanwhile, the disciples — a type of the pious remnant — were tossed on the stormy sea during the dark watches of the night, deeply tried and exercised in the absence of their Lord. But He never for a moment lost sight of them, never withdrew His eyes from them. And when they were brought, as it were, to their wits' end, He appears for their relief, hushes the wind, calms the sea and brings them to their desired haven.

Thus much as to the dispensational bearing of this passage of Scripture, inasmuch as our object is to present to the heart of the reader the precious truth unfolded in the narrative of Peter on the water — truth bearing directly upon our own individual path, whatever the nature of that path may be.

It demands no stretch of imagination to see in the case of Peter, a striking figure of the Church of God collectively or of the individual Christian. Peter left the ship at the call of Christ. He abandoned all that the heart would so fondly cling to, and came forth to walk on the stormy water — a path of faith, a path in which nothing but simple faith could live for a single hour. To all who are called to tread that path, it must be either Christ or nothing. Our only source of power is in keeping the eye of faith firmly fixed on Jesus, “Looking off unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith” (Heb. 12). The moment we take the eye off Him, we begin to sink.

It is not a question of salvation — of reaching the shore in safety. By no means! We are speaking now of the walk of the Christian in this world, of the practical career of one who is called to abandon this world, to give up all that mere nature would lean upon and trust in, to relinquish earthly things and human resources to walk with Jesus above the power and influence of things seen and temporal.

Such is the high calling of the Christian and of the whole Church of God, in contrast with Israel, God's earthly people. We are called to live by faith, to walk in calm confidence above the circumstances of this world altogether, to move in holy companionship with Jesus. It was after this that Peter's soul was seeking when he uttered those words, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water." Here was the point: "If it be Thou." If it were not He, the wildest mistake that Peter could possibly make would be to leave the ship. But if indeed it was Jesus — that blessed One, that most glorious, most gracious One who Peter saw moving peacefully over the surface of the troubled deep — then, assuredly, the very highest, the very happiest, the very best thing he could do was to abandon every earthly and natural resource to come forth to Him and taste the wonderful blessedness of companionship with Him.

There is immense force, depth and significance in these clauses — "If it be Thou" — "Bid me come unto Thee" — "On the water." Mark, it is "unto Thee *on the water*." It was not Jesus coming to Peter *in the ship*, blessed and precious as that is, but Peter coming to Jesus on the water. It is one thing to have Jesus coming into the midst of our circumstances, hushing our fears, allaying our anxieties, tranquilizing our hearts, but it is quite another thing for us to push out from the shore of circumstances or from the ship of nature's devices, to walk in calm victory over the circumstances simply to be with Jesus where He is. The former reminds us somewhat of the Sareptan in 1 Kings 17. The latter, of the Shunammite in 2 Kings 4.

Is it that we do not appreciate the excellent grace that breathes in those words, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid?" Far be the thought! These words are most precious. Moreover, Peter might

have tasted, yes reveled in their sweetness, even though he had never left the ship at all. It is well to distinguish between these two things. They are very often confounded. We are all prone to rest in the *thought* of having the Lord with us and His mercies around us in our daily path. We linger amid the relationships of nature, the joys of earth, such as they are, and the blessings which our gracious God pours so liberally upon us. We cling to circumstances instead of breathing after more intimate companionship with a rejected Christ. In this way we suffer immense loss.

Yes, we say it advisedly, "*immense loss.*" It is not that we should prize God's blessings and mercies less, but we should prize *Him* more. We believe that Peter would have been a loser had he remained in the ship. Some may deem it restlessness and forwardness; we believe it was the fruit of earnest longing after his much loved Lord — an intense desire to be near Him, cost what it might. He beheld his Lord walking on the water and he longed to walk with Him, and his longing was right. It was pleasing to the heart of Jesus.

Besides, he had the authority of his Lord for leaving the ship. That word "come" — a word of mighty moral force — fell on his heart and drew him forth from the ship to go to Jesus. Christ's word was the authority for entering on that strange mysterious path, and Christ's realized presence was the power to pursue it. Without that word he dare not start; without that presence he could not proceed. It was strange, it was unearthly, it was above and beyond nature to walk on the sea, but Jesus was walking there and faith could walk with Him. So Peter thought, and therefore "he came down out of the ship, and walked on the water to go to Jesus."

Now this is a striking figure of the true path of a Christian, the path of faith. The warrant for that path is Christ's Word. The power to pursue it is to keep the eye fixed on Him. It is not a question of right or wrong. There was nothing wrong in remaining in the ship. But the question is, "At what do we aim?" Is it the fixed purpose of the soul to get as near as we can to Jesus? Do we desire to taste a deeper, closer, fuller communion with Him? Is He enough for us? Can we give up all that mere nature clings to, and lean on Jesus only? He beckons us forth to Himself in His infinite love. He says,

“Come.” Shall we refuse? Shall we hesitate and hang back? Shall we cling to the ship while the voice of Jesus bids us “come”?

It may be said that Peter broke down and therefore it is better, safer and wiser to remain in the ship than to sink in the water. It is better not to take a prominent place, than having taken it, to fail therein. Well, it is quite true that Peter failed, but why? Was it because he left the ship? No, but because he ceased to look to Jesus. “When he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.” Thus it was with poor Peter. His mistake was not in leaving the ship, but in looking at the waves and the winds — looking at his surroundings in place of looking off unto Jesus. He had entered upon a path which could only be trodden by faith — a path in which, if he had not Jesus, he had nothing at all — no ship, not a spar or a plank to cling to. In a word, it was either Christ or nothing. It was either walking with Jesus on the water or sinking beneath it without Him. Nothing but faith could sustain the heart in such a course. But faith could sustain, for faith can live amid the roughest waves and the stormiest skies. Faith can walk on the roughest waters; unbelief cannot walk on the smoothest.

But Peter failed. Yes; and what then? Does that prove he was wrong in obeying the call of his Lord? Did Jesus reprove him for leaving the ship? Ah! no; that would not have been like Him. He could not tell His poor servant to come, and then rebuke him for coming. He knew and could feel for Peter's weakness. Hence we read that “Immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” He does not say, “O you restless forward one, why did you leave the ship?” No; but “wherefore didst thou doubt?” Such was the tender reproof. And where was Peter when he heard it? *In the arms of his Lord!* What a place! What an experience! Was it not well worth leaving the ship to taste such blessedness? Assuredly it was! Peter was right in leaving the ship, and although he broke down in that lofty path on which he had entered, it only led him into a deeper sense of his own weakness and nothingness, and of the grace and love of his Lord.

Christian reader, what is the moral of all this to us? Simply this. Jesus calls us forth from the things of time and sense to walk

with Him. He summons us to abandon all our earthly hopes and creature confidences — the props and resources on which our poor hearts lean. His voice may be heard far above the din of waves and storms, and that voice says “Come!” Oh! let us obey. Let us heartily yield ourselves to His call. “Let us go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.” He wants to have us near Himself, walking with and leaning on Him, not looking at circumstances, but looking only and always unto Him.

Matthew 16:13-18

“Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:13-18).

The Assembly of God; or, The All-sufficiency of the Name of Jesus.

In a day like the present, when almost every new idea becomes the centre or gathering-point of some new association, we cannot but feel the value of having divinely formed convictions as to what the assembly of God really is. We live in a time of unusual mental activity, and hence there is the more urgent need of calm and prayerful study of the word of God. That word, blessed be its Author, is like a rock amid the ocean of human thought. — There it stands unmoved, notwithstanding the raging of the storm and the ceaseless lashing of the waves. And not only does it thus stand unmoved itself, but it imparts its own stability to all who simply take their stand upon it. What a mercy to make one's escape from the heavings and tossings of the stormy ocean, and find a calm resting place on that everlasting Rock.

This, truly, is a mercy, Were it not that we have "the law and the testimony," where should we be? Whither should we go? What should we do? What darkness! What confusion! What perplexity! Ten thousand jarring voices fall, at times, upon the ear, and each voice seems to speak with such authority, that if one is not well taught and grounded in the word, there is great danger of being drawn away, or, at least, sadly unhinged. One man will tell you that *this* is right; another will tell *that* is right; a third will tell you that *everything* is right; and a fourth will tell you that *nothing* is right. With reference to the question of church position, you will meet with some who go *here*; some who go *there*; some who go *everywhere*; and some who go *nowhere*.

Now, under such circumstances, what is one to do? All cannot possibly be right. And yet, surely, there is something right. It cannot be that we are *compelled* to live in error, in darkness, or uncertainty. "*There is a path,*" blessed be God, though "no fowl knoweth it, and the vulture's eye hath not seen it. The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it." Where is this safe and blessed path? Hear the divine reply: "Behold, *the fear of the Lord*, that is wisdom: and *to depart from evil* is understanding." (Job 28)

Let us, therefore, in the fear of the Lord, in the light of His infallible truth, and in humble dependence upon the teaching of His Holy Spirit, proceed to the examination of the subject which stands at the head of this paper; and may we have grace to abandon all confidence in our own thoughts, and the thoughts of others, that so we may heartily and honestly yield ourselves up to be taught only of God.

Now, in order to get fairly into the grand and all-important subject of the assembly of God, we have first to state a *fact*; and, secondly, to ask a *question*. The fact is this, *There is an assembly of God on the earth*. The question is, *What is that assembly?*

I. And, first then, as to our *fact*. There is such a thing as the assembly of God on the earth. This is a most important fact, surely. God has an assembly on the earth. I do not refer to any merely human organisation, such as the Greek Church; the Church of Rome; the Church of England; the Church of Scotland; or to any of the various systems which have sprung from these, framed and fashioned by man's hand, and carried on by man's resources. I refer simply to that assembly which is gathered by God the Holy Ghost, round the Person of God the Son, to worship, and hold fellowship with, God the Father.

If we set forth upon our search for the assembly of God, or for any expression thereof, with our minds full of prejudice, preconceived thoughts, and personal predilections; or if, in our searchings, we seek the aid of the flickering light of the dogmas, opinions, and traditions of men, nothing is more certain than that we shall fail to reach the truth. To recognize God's assembly, we must be exclusively taught by God's word, and led by God's Spirit; for, of

God's assembly, as well as of the sons of God, it may be said, "the world knoweth it not."

Hence, then, if we are, in any wise, governed by the spirit of the world; if we desire to exalt man; if we seek to commend ourselves to the thoughts of men; if our object be to gain the attractive ends of a plausible and soul-ensnaring expediency, we may as well, forthwith, abandon our search for any true expression of the assembly of God, and take refuge in that form of human organisation which most fully commends itself to our thinkings or our conscientious convictions.

Further, if our object be to find a religious community in which the word of God is read, or in which the people of God are found, we may speedily satisfy ourselves, for it would be hard indeed to find a section of the professing body in which either or both of these objects might not be fully realized.

Finally, if we merely aim at doing all the good we can, without any question as to how we do it; if *Per fas aut nefas*, "right or wrong," be our motto, in whatever we undertake; if we are prepared to reverse those weighty words of Samuel, and say that, "To sacrifice is better than to obey, and the fat of rams better than to hearken;" then is it worse than vain for us to pursue our search for the assembly of God, inasmuch as that assembly can only be discovered and approved by one who has been taught to flee from the ten thousand flowery pathways of human expediency, and to submit his conscience, his heart, his understanding, his whole moral being to the supreme authority of "Thus saith the Lord."

In one word, then, the obedient disciple knows that there is such a thing as God's assembly: and he it is, too, that will be enabled, through grace, to understand what is a true expression of it. The intelligent student of scripture knows, full well, the difference between that which is founded, formed, and governed by the wisdom and the will of man, and that which is gathered round and governed by, Christ the Lord. How vast is the difference! It is just the difference between God and man.

But we may here be asked for the scripture proofs of our fact that there is such a thing on the earth as *the* assembly of God, and

we shall, at once, proceed to furnish these; for we may be permitted to say that, without the authority of the word, all statements are utterly valueless. What, therefore, saith the scripture?

Our first question shall be that famous passage, in Matthew 16, When Jesus came into the coast of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my assembly [The words "church" and "assembly" are both from the same Greek word.] (ekkleisia); and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Vers. 13-18)

Here our blessed Lord intimates His purpose to build an assembly, and sets forth the true foundation of that assembly, namely, "Christ the Son of the living God." This is an all-important point in our subject. The building is founded on the Rock, and that Rock is not the poor failing, stumbling, erring Peter, but Christ, the eternal Son of the living God; and every stone in that building partakes of the Rock-life which, as being victorious over all the power of the enemy, is indestructible.

{It is of the utmost importance to distinguish between what Christ builds, and what man builds. "The gates of hell" shall assuredly prevail against all that is merely of man; and hence it would be a fatal mistake to apply to man's building words which only apply to Christ's. Man may build with "wood, hay, stubble," alas! he does — but all that our Lord Christ builds shall stand for ever. The stamp of eternity is upon every work of His hand. All praise to His glorious name.}

Again, passing over a section of Matthew's Gospel, we come to an equally familiar passage: "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not

hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the assembly; but if he neglect to hear the assembly, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. Again, I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are *gathered* together *in my name*, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:15-20)

We shall have occasion to refer to this passage again, under the second division of our subject. It is here introduced merely as a link in the chain of scripture evidence of the fact that there is such a thing as the assembly of God on the earth. This assembly is not a name, a form, a pretence, an assumption. It is a divine reality — an institution of God, possessing His seal and sanction. It is a something to be appealed to in all cases of personal trespass and dispute which cannot be settled by the parties involved. This assembly may consist of only "two or three" in any particular place — the smallest plurality, if you please; but there it is, owned of God, and its decisions ratified in heaven.

Now, we are not to be scared away from the truth on this subject, by the fact that the Church of Rome has attempted to base her monstrous pretensions on the two passages which we have just quoted. That church is not God's assembly, built on the Rock Christ, and gathered in the name of Jesus; but a human apostasy, founded on a failing mortal, and governed by the traditions and doctrines of men. We must not, therefore suffer ourselves to be deprived of God's reality by reason of Satan's counterfeit. God has His assembly on the earth, and we are responsible to confess the truth of it, and be a practical expression of it. This may be difficult, in a day of confusion, like the present. It will demand a single eye — a subject will — a mortified mind. But let the reader be assured of this, that it is his privilege to possess as divine certainty as to what is a true expression of the assembly of God as in reference to the truth of his own salvation through the blood of the Lamb; nor should he be

satisfied without this. I should not be content to go on for an hour without the assurance that I am, in spirit and principle, associated with those who gather on the ground of the assembly of God. I say, in spirit and principle; because I may happen to be in a place where there is no local expression of the assembly, in which case I must be satisfied to hold fellowship, in spirit, with all those on the ground of the assembly of God, and wait on Him so to order my way that I may enjoy the real privilege of being present in person with His people, to taste the blessings as well as to share in the holy responsibilities of His assembly.

This simplifies the matter amazingly. If I cannot have a true expression of God's assembly, I shall have nothing. It will not do to point me to a religious community, with some Christians therein, the gospel preached, and the ordinances administered. I must be convinced, by the authority of the word and Spirit of God, that it is, in very truth, gathered on the ground and marked by the characteristics of God's assembly, else I cannot own it. I can own the children of God therein, if they will permit me to do so, outside the bounds of their religious system; but their system I cannot own or sanction in any one way whatever. Were I to do so, it would just be tantamount to the assertion that it makes not a whit of difference whether I maintain the principles of the assembly of God, or take up with the systems of man — whether I acknowledge the Lordship of Christ, or the authority of man — whether I bow to the word of God, or the opinions of man.

No doubt, this will give offence to many. It will be pronounced bigotry, prejudice, narrow-mindedness, intolerance, and the like. But this need not discourage us. All we have to do is to ascertain the truth as to God's assembly, and cleave to it, heartily and energetically, at all cost. If God has an assembly — and scripture says He has — then let me be with those who maintain its principles, and nowhere else. It must be obvious that where there are several conflicting systems, they cannot all be divine. What am I to do? Am I to be satisfied to take the less of two evils? Surely not. What then? The answer is plain, pointed, and direct — the principles of God's assembly or nothing. If there be a local expression of that assembly, well; be there in person. If not, be content to hold spiritual

communion with all who humbly and faithfully own and occupy that holy ground. It may sound and seem like liberality to be ready to sanction and go with everything and everybody. It may appear very easy and very pleasant to be in a place "where everybody's will is indulged, and nobody's conscience is exercised" — where we may hold what we like, and say what we like, and do what we like, and go where we like. All this may seem very delightful — very plausible — very popular — very attractive; but oh! it will be barrenness and bitterness in the end; and, in the day of the Lord, it will assuredly be burnt up as so much wood, hay, and stubble, that cannot stand the action of His judgement.

But let us proceed with our scripture proofs. In the Acts of the Apostles, or rather, the Acts of the Holy Ghost, we find the assembly formally set up. A passage or two will suffice: "And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the assembly, daily, such as should be saved." (Acts 2:47) Such was the original, simple apostolic order. When a person was converted, he took his place in the assembly: there was no difficulty in the matter, there were no sects or parties, each claiming to be considered a church, a cause, or an interest. There was just the one thing, and that was the assembly of God, where He dwelt, acted, and ruled. It was not a system formed according to the will, the judgement, or even the conscience of man. Man had not, as yet, entered upon the business of church-making. This was God's work. It was just as exclusively God's province and prerogative to gather the saved, as to save the scattered.

{There is no such thing in scripture as being a member of a church. Every true believer is a member of *the* church of God — the body of Christ, and can therefore no more be, properly, a member of anything else than my arm can be a member of any other body.

The only true ground on which believers can gather is set forth in that grand statement, "There is one body, and one Spirit." And, again, "We being many are one loaf and one body." (Eph. 4. 4; 1 Cor. 10:17) If God declares that there is but one body," it must be contrary to His mind to have many bodies, sects, or denominations.

Now, while it is quite true that no given number of believers in any given place can be called "the body of Christ," or "the assembly of God;" — yet they should be gathered on the ground of that body and that assembly, and on no other ground. We call the reader's special attention to this principle. It holds good at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances. The fact of the ruin of the professing church does not touch it. It has been true since the day of Pentecost; is true at this moment; and shall be true until the church is taken to meet her Head and Lord in the clouds, that "*there is one body.*" All believers belong to that body; and they should meet on that ground, and on no other.}

Why, we may justly inquire, should it be different now? Why should the regenerated seek any ground beyond, or different to, that of the assembly of God? Is not that sufficient? Assuredly. Should they rest satisfied with aught else? Assuredly not. We repeat, with emphasis, "*Either that or nothing.*"

True it is, alas! that failure, and ruin, and apostasy have come in. Man's wisdom, and his will; or, if you please, his reason, his judgement, and his conscience have wrought, in matters ecclesiastical, and the result appears before us in the almost numberless and nameless sects and parties of the present moment. Still, we are bold to say, that the original ground of the assembly is the ground of the assembly still, notwithstanding all the failure, the error, and the confusion, consequent thereon. The difficulty in reaching it practically may be great, but its reality, when reached, is unaltered and unalterable. In apostolic times the assembly stood out, in bold relief, from the dark background of Judaism on the one hand, and Paganism on the other. It was impossible to mistake it; there it stood, a grand reality! a company of living men, gathered, indwelt, ruled and regulated by God the Holy Ghost, so that the unlearned or unbelieving coming in, were convinced of all, and constrained to acknowledge that God was there. (See carefully, 1 Cor. 12, 14 throughout.)

Thus, in the gospel, our blessed Lord intimates His purpose of building an assembly. This assembly is historically presented to us in the Acts of the Apostles. Then, when we turn to the Epistles of Paul, we find him addressing the assembly, in seven distinct places,

namely, Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, and Thessalonica; and finally, in the opening of the book of Revelation, we have addresses to seven distinct assemblies. Now, in all these places, the assembly of God was a plain, palpable, real thing, established and maintained by God Himself. It was not a human organisation, but a divine institution testimony — a light bearer for God, in each place.

Thus much as to our scripture proofs of the fact that God has an assembly on the earth, gathered, indwelt, and governed by the Holy Ghost who is the true and only Vicar of Christ upon earth. The Gospel prophetically intimates the assembly; the Acts historically presents the assembly; and the Epistles formally address the assembly. All this is plain. And if it be broken into fragments now, it is for us to be gathered on the ground of the *one* assembly of God, and to be a true expression of it.

And let it be carefully noted that we will listen to nothing on this subject but the voice of holy scripture. Let not reason speak, for we own it not. Let not tradition lift her voice, for we wholly disregard her. Let not expediency thrust itself upon us, for we shall give it no place whatever. We believe in the all-sufficiency of holy scripture — that it is sufficient to furnish the man of God thoroughly — to equip him perfectly for all good works. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17.) The word of God is either sufficient or it is not. We believe it to be amply sufficient for every exigency of God's assembly. It could not be otherwise if God be its author. We must either deny the divinity or admit the sufficiency of the Bible. There is not a single hair's breadth of middle ground. It is impossible that God could have written an imperfect, an insufficient book.

This is a very grave principle in connection with our subject. Many of our Protestant writers have, in assailing popery, maintained the sufficiency and authority of the Bible; but it does seem very plain to us that they are always at fault when their opponents turn sharp round upon them and demand proof from scripture for many things sanctioned and adopted by Protestant communities. There are many things adopted and practised in the National Establishment and other Protestant communities, which have no sanction in the word; and when the shrewd and intelligent defenders of popery have

called attention to these things, and demanded authority for them the weakness of mere protestantism has been strikingly apparent. If we admit, for a moment, that, in some things, we must have recourse to tradition and expediency, then who will undertake to fix the boundary line? If it be allowable to depart from scripture at all, how far are we to go? If the authority of tradition be admitted at all, who is to fix its domain? If we leave the narrow and well defined pathway of divine revelation, and enter upon the wide and bewildering field of human tradition, has not one man as much right as another to make a choice? In short, it is obviously impossible to meet the adherents of Roman Catholicism on any other ground than that on which the assembly of God takes its stand, namely, the all-sufficiency of the word of God, the name of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Ghost. Such, blessed be God, is the impregnable position occupied by His assembly; and however weak and contemptible any expression of that assembly may be in the eye of the world, we know, for Christ has told us, that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Those gates shall assuredly prevail against every human system — against all those corporations and associations which men have set on foot. And in no case has that triumph been, even already, made more awfully manifest than in that of the Church of Rome itself, although it has arrogantly laid claim to this very declaration of our Lord as the bulwark of its strength. Nothing can withstand the power of the gates of hell, but that assembly which is built upon "the living Stone;" and the local expression of that assembly may be "two or three gathered in the name of Jesus;" a poor, feeble, contemptible handful — the filth of the earth, and the off-scouring of all things.

It is well to be clear and decided as to this. Christ's promise can never fail. He has, blessed be His name, come down to the lowest possible point to which an assembly can be reduced, even "two." How gracious! How tender! How considerate! How like Himself! He attaches all the dignity — all the value — all the efficacy of His own divine and deathless name to an obscure handful gathered round Himself. It must be very evident to the spiritual mind that the Lord Jesus, in speaking of the "two or three" thought not of those vast systems which have sprung up in ancient, mediæval, and modern times, throughout the eastern and western world, numbering their adherents and votaries, not by "twos or threes," but by kingdoms,

provinces, and parishes. It is very plain that a baptised kingdom, and "two or three" living souls, gathered in the name of Jesus, do not and cannot mean the same thing. Baptised Christendom is one thing, and an assembly of God is another. What this latter is, we have yet to unfold; we are here asserting that they are not, and cannot be, the same thing. They are constantly confounded, though no two things can be more distinct.

{The reader will need to ponder the distinction between the church viewed as the body of Christ," and as "the house of God" He may study Ephesians 1:22, 1 Corinthians 12 for the former, Ephesians 2:21; 1 Corinthians 3; 1 Timothy 3 for the latter. The distinction is as interesting as it is important}

If we would know under what figure Christ presents the baptised world, we have only to look at the "leaven" and the "mustard tree" of Matthew 13. The former gives us the internal, and the latter the external character of "the kingdom of heaven" — of that which was originally set up in truth and simplicity — a real thing, though small, but which, through Satan's crafty working, has become inwardly a corrupt mass, though outwardly a far-spreading, showy, popular thing in the earth, gathering all sorts beneath the shadow of its patronage. Such is the lesson — the simple but deeply solemn lesson to be learnt by the spiritual mind from the "leaven" and the "mustard tree" of Matthew 13. And we may add, one result of learning this lesson would be an ability to distinguish between "the kingdom of heaven" and "the assembly of God." The former may be compared to a wide morass, the latter to a running stream passing through it, and in constant danger of losing its distinctive character, as well as its proper direction, by intermingling with the surrounding waters. To confound the two things is to deal a death-blow to all godly discipline and consequent purity in the assembly of God. If the kingdom and the assembly mean one and the same thing, then how should we act in the case of "that wicked person" in 1 Corinthians 5? The apostle tells us "to put him away." Where are we to put him? Our Lord Himself tells us distinctly that "the field is *the world*," and again, in John 17, He says that His people are not of the world. This makes all plain enough. But men tell us, in the very face of our Lord's statement, that the field is the assembly, and the tares and

wheat, ungodly and godly, are to grow together, that they are on no account to be separated. Thus the plain and positive teaching of the Holy Ghost in 1 Corinthians 5 is set in open opposition to the equally plain and positive teaching of our Lord in Matthew 13; and all this flows from the effort to confound two distinct things, namely, "the kingdom of heaven" and "the assembly of God."

It would not by any means comport with the object of this paper to enter farther upon the interesting subject of "the kingdom." Enough has been said, if the reader has thereby been convinced of the immense importance of duly distinguishing that kingdom from the assembly. What this latter is we shall now proceed to inquire; and may God the Holy Ghost be our Teacher!

II. In handling our question as to the assembly of God, it will give clearness and precision to our thoughts to consider the four following points, namely: —

First, what is the material of which the assembly is composed?

Secondly, what is the centre round which the assembly is gathered?

Thirdly, what is the power by which the assembly is gathered?

Fourthly, what is the authority on which the assembly is gathered?

1. And, first, then, as to the material of which God's assembly is composed; it is, in one word, those possessing salvation, or eternal life. We do not enter the assembly in order to be saved, but as those who are saved. The word is, "On this rock I will build my church." He does not say, "On my church I will build the salvation of souls." One of Rome's boasted dogmas is this — "There is no salvation out of the true church." Yes, but we can go deeper still, and say, "Off the true Rock there is no church." Take away the Rock, and you have nothing but a baseless fabric of error and corruption. What a miserable delusion, to think of being saved by that! Thank God, it is

not so. We do not get to Christ through the church, but to the church through Christ. — To reverse this order is to displace Christ altogether, and thus have neither Rock, nor church, nor salvation. We meet Christ as a life-giving Saviour, before we have anything to say to the assembly at all; and hence we could possess eternal life, and enjoy full salvation, though there were no such thing as an assembly of God on the earth. [The reader will do well to note the fact that, in Matthew 16 we have the very earliest allusion to the church. and there our Lord speaks of it as a future thing, He says, "On this Rock I *will* build my church." He does not say, "I *have been*, or I *am* building." In short, the church had no existence until our Lord Christ was raised from the dead and glorified at the right hand of God. Then. but not until then, the Holy Ghost was sent down to baptize believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, into one body, and unite them to the risen and glorified Head in heaven. This body has been on the earth since the descent of the Holy Ghost; is here still, and shall be until Christ comes to fetch it to Himself. It is a perfectly unique thing. It is not to be found in Old Testament scripture. Paul expressly tells us it was not revealed in other ages; it was hid in God, and never made known until it was committed to him. (See carefully, Rom. 16:25, 26; Eph. 3:3-11; Col. 1:24-27) True it is — most blessedly true — that God had a people in Old Testament times. Not merely the nation of Israel, but a quickened. saved. spiritual people, who lived by faith, went to heaven. and are there "the spirits of just men made perfect But the church is never spoken of until Matthew 16, and there only as a future thing. As to the expression used by Stephen, "The church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38). it is pretty generally known that it simply refers to the congregation of Israel. The termini of the church's earthly history are Pentecost (Acts 2), and the rapture. (1 Thess, 4:16, 17)]

We cannot be too simple in grasping this truth, at a time like the present, when ecclesiastical pretension is rising to such a height. The church, falsely so called, is opening her bosom with delusive tenderness, and inviting poor sin-burdened, world-sick, and heavy-laden souls to take refuge therein. She with crafty liberality, throws open her treasury door, and places her resources at the disposal of needy, craving, yearning souls. And truly those resources have powerful attractions for those who are not on "The Rock." There is

an ordained priesthood, professing to stand in an unbroken line with the apostles. — Alas! how different the two ends of the line! — There is a continual sacrifice. Alas! a blood-less one, and therefore a worthless one. (Heb. 9:22) — There is a splendid ritual. Alas! it seeks its origin amid the shadows of a by-gone age — shadows which have been for ever displaced by the Person, the work, and the offices of the eternal Son of God. For ever be His peerless name adored.

The believer has a very conclusive answer to all the pretensions and promises of the Romish system. He can say he has found his all in a crucified and risen Saviour. What does He want with the sacrifice of the mass? He is washed in the blood of Christ. What does he want with a poor, sinful, dying priest, who cannot save himself? He has the Son of God as his priest. What does he want with a pompous ritual, with all its imposing adjuncts? He worships in spirit and in truth, within the holiest of all, whither he enters with boldness, through the blood of Jesus.

Nor is it merely with Roman Catholicism we have to do in the establishment of our first point. We fear there are thousands besides Roman Catholics who, in heart, look to the church, if not for salvation, at least to be a stepping-stone thereto. Hence the importance of seeing clearly that the materials of which God's assembly is composed are those possessing salvation or eternal life; so that whatever be the object of that assembly, it most certainly is not to provide salvation for its members. seeing that all its members are saved ere they enter its precincts at all. God's assembly is a houseful of salvation from one end to the other. Blessed fact! It is not an institution set on foot for the purpose of providing salvation for sinners, nor yet for providing for their religious wants. It is a saved, living body formed and gathered by the Holy Ghost, to make known to "Principalities and powers in the heavenlies, the manifold wisdom of God," and to declare to the whole universe the all-sufficiency of the name of Jesus.

Now, the great enemy of Christ and the church is well aware of what a powerful testimony the assembly of God is called and designed to yield on the earth; and therefore he has put forth all his hellish energy to quash that testimony in every possible way. He

hates the name of Jesus, and everything tending to glorify that name. Hence his intense opposition to the assembly as a whole, and to each local expression thereof, wherever it may happen to exist. He has no objection to a mere religious establishment set on foot for the purpose of providing for man's religious wants, whether maintained by government or by voluntary effort. You may set up what you please. You may join what you please. You may be what you please; anything and everything for Satan but a practical expression of the assembly of God. That he hates most cordially, and will seek to blacken and blast by every means in his power. But those consolatory accents of the Lord Christ fall with divine power on the ear of faith: "On this Rock I will build my assembly, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

2. This conducts us naturally to our second point, namely, What is the centre round which God's assembly is gathered? The centre is Christ — the living Stone, as we read in the Epistle of Peter, "To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priest hood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:4, 5)

It is around the Person of a living Christ, then, that God's assembly is gathered. It is not round a doctrine, however true; nor round an ordinance, however important; but round a living divine Person. This is a great cardinal and vital point which must be distinctly seized, tenaciously held, and faithfully and constantly avowed and carried out. "To whom coming." It is not said "To *which* coming." We do not come to a thing, but to a Person; "Let us go forth therefore unto *him*." (Heb. 13) The Holy Ghost leads us *only* to Jesus. Nothing short of this will avail. We may speak of joining a church, becoming a member of a congregation, attaching ourselves to a party, a cause, or an interest. All these expressions tend to darken and confuse the mind, and hide from our view the divine idea of the assembly of God. It is not our business to join anything. When God converted us, He joined us by His Spirit to Christ, and that should be enough for us. Christ is the only centre of God's assembly.

And, we may ask, is not He sufficient? Is it not quite enough for us to be "joined to the Lord?" Why add aught thereto? "Where two or three are gathered together *in my name*, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:20) What more can we possibly need? If Jesus is in our midst, why should we think of setting up a human president? Why not unanimously and heartily allow Him to take the president's seat, and bow to Him in all things? Why set up human authority, in any shape or form, in the house of God? But this is done, and it is well to speak plainly about it. Man is set up in that which professes to be an assembly of God. We see human authority exercised in that sphere in which divine authority alone should be acknowledged. It matters not, so far as the foundation principle is concerned, whether it be pope, parson, priest, or president. It is man set up in Christ's place. It may be the pope appointing a cardinal, a legate, or a bishop to his sphere of work; or it may be a president appointing a man to exhort or to "pray for ten minutes. The principle is one and the same. It is human authority acting in that sphere where only God's authority should be owned. If Christ be in our midst, we can count on Him for every thing. Now, in saying this, we anticipate a very probable objection. It may be said by the advocates of human authority, "How could an assembly ever get on without some human presidency? Would it not lead to all sorts of confusion? Would it not open the door for everyone to intrude himself upon the assembly, quite irrespective of gift or qualification? Should we not have men popping up on all occasions, and worrying us with their empty twaddle and tiresome rodomontade?"

Our answer is a very simple one. Jesus is all-sufficient. We can trust Him to keep order in His house. We feel ourselves far safer in His gracious and powerful hand than in the hands of the most attractive human president. We have all spiritual gifts treasured up in Jesus. He is the fountain head of all ministerial authority. "He hath the seven stars." Let us only confide in Him, and the order of our assembly will be as perfectly provided for as the salvation of our souls. This is just the reason of our connecting, in the title of this pamphlet, "The all-sufficiency of the name of Jesus" with the "Assembly of God." We believe that the name of Jesus is, in very truth, all-sufficient, not only for personal salvation, but for all the exigencies of the assembly — for worship, communion, ministry,

discipline, government, everything. Having Him, we have all and abound.

This is the real marrow and substance of our subject. Our one aim and object is to exalt the name of Jesus; and we believe He has been dishonoured in that which calls itself His house. He has been dethroned, and man's authority has been set up. In vain does He bestow a ministerial gift; the possessor of that gift dare not exercise it without the seal, the sanction, and the authority of man. And not only is this so, but if man thinks proper to give his seal, his sanction and authority, to one possessing not a particle of spiritual gift — yea, it may be, not a particle of spiritual life — he is nevertheless a recognized minister. In short, man's authority without Christ's gift makes a man a minister; whereas Christ's gift without man's authority does not. If this be not a dishonour done to the Lord Christ, what is?

Christian reader, pause here, and deeply ponder this principle of human authority. We confess we are anxious you should get to the root of it, and judge it thoroughly, in the light of holy scripture, and the presence of God. It is, be assured of it, the grand point of distinction between the principles of the assembly of God and every human system of religion under the sun. If you look at all those systems, from Romanism down to the most refined form of religious association, you will find man's authority recognized and demanded. With that you may minister, without it you must not. On the contrary, in the assembly of God, Christ's gift alone makes a man a minister, apart from all human authority. "Not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead." (Gal. 1:1) This is the grand principle of ministry in the assembly of God.

Now, in classing Romanism with all the other religious systems of the day, let it, once for all, be distinctly understood that it is *only* in reference to the principle of ministerial authority. God forbid that we should think of comparing a system which shuts out the word of God, and teaches idolatry, the worship of saints and angels, and a whole mass of gross and abominable error and superstition, with those systems where the word of God is held up, and more or less of scriptural truth promulgated. Nothing can be further from our

thoughts. We believe popery to be Satan's master-piece, in the way of a religious system, although "many of the people of God have been, and may yet be, involved therein.

Further, let us at this stage most clearly aver that we believe the saints of God are to be found in every Protestant community, both as ministers and members; and that the Lord uses them in many ways — blesses their work, service, and personal testimony.

And, finally, we feel it right to declare that we would not move a finger to touch any one of those systems. It is not with the systems we have to do; the Lord " will deal with them. Our business is with the saints in those systems, to seek by every spiritual and scriptural agency to get them to own and act upon the divine principles of the assembly of God.

Having said thus much, in order to prevent misunderstanding, we return with increased power to our point, namely, that the thread of human authority runs through every religious system in Christendom, and that, in good truth, there is not a hair's breadth of consistent standing ground between the church of Rome and a true expression of the assembly of God. We believe that an honest seeker after truth, setting out from amid the dark shadows of popery, cannot possibly halt until he finds himself in the clear and blessed light of that which is a true expression of the assembly of God. He may take years to travel over the intervening space. His steps may be slow and measured; but if only he follows the light, in simplicity and godly sincerity, he will find no rest between those two extremes. The ground of the assembly of God is the true position for all the children of God. Alas! they are not all there; but this is only their loss and their Lord's dishonour. They should be there because not only is God there, but He is allowed to act and *rule* there.

This latter is of all-importance, inasmuch as it may be truly said, Is not God everywhere? And does He not act in various places? True, He is everywhere, and He works in the midst of palpable error and evil. But He is not allowed to *rule* in the systems of men, seeing that man's authority is really supreme, as we have already shown. And in addition to this, if the fact of God's converting and blessing souls in a system be a reason why we should be there, then we ought

to be in the church of Rome, for how many have been converted and blessed in that awful system? Even in the recent revival we have heard of persons being stricken in Roman Catholic chapels. What proves too much proves nothing at all, and hence no argument can be based on the fact of God's working in a place. He! is sovereign, and may work where He pleases. We are to be subject to His authority, and work where we are commanded. My Master may go where He pleases, but I must go where I am told.

But some may ask, "Is there no danger of incompetent men intruding their ministry upon an assembly of God? And in the event of this, where is the difference between that assembly and the systems of men?" We reply, assuredly there is very great danger. But then such a thing would be *despite*, not in virtue, of the principle. This makes all the difference. Alas! Alas! we have seen mistakes and failures which are most humiliating.

Let no one imagine that, while we contend for the truth concerning the assembly of God, we are at all ignorant or forgetful of the dangers and trials to which any carrying out its principles are exposed. Far from it. No one could be for twenty-eight years on that ground without being painfully conscious of the difficulty of maintaining it. But then the very trials, dangers, and difficulties only prove to be so many proofs — painful if you please, but proofs of the truth of the position; and were there no remedy but an appeal to human authority — a setting up of man in Christ's place — a return to worldly systems, we should without hesitation pronounce the remedy to be far worse than the disease. For were we to adopt the remedy, we should have the very worst symptoms of the disease, not to be mourned over as disease, but gloried in as the fruits of so-called order.

But, blessed be God, there is a remedy. What is it? "*There am I in their midst.*" This is enough. It is not, "There is a pope, a priest, a parson, or a president in their midst, at their head, in the chair, or in the pulpit." No thought of such a thing, from cover to cover of the New Testament. Even in the assembly at Corinth, where there was most grievous confusion and disorder, the inspired apostle never hints at such a thing as a human president, under any name whatsoever. "*God is the author of peace* in all the assemblies of the

saints." (1 Cor. 14:33) God was there to keep order. They were to look to Him, not to a man, under any name. To set up man to keep order in God's assembly is sheer unbelief, and an open insult to the Divine Presence.

Now, we have been often asked to adduce scripture in proof of the idea of divine presidency in an assembly. We at once reply, "There am I;" and "God is the Author." On these two pillars, even had we no more, we can triumphantly build the glorious truth of divine presidency — a truth which must deliver all, who receive and hold it from God, from every system of man, call it by what name you please. It is, in our judgement, impossible to recognize Christ as the centre and sovereign ruler in the assembly, and continue to sanction the setting up of man. When once we have tasted the sweetness of being under Christ, we can never again submit to the servile bondage of being under man. This is not insubordination or impatience of control. It is only the utter refusal to bow to a false authority — to sanction a sinful usurpation. The moment we see man usurping authority in that which calls itself the church, we simply ask, "Who are you?" and retire to a sphere where God alone is acknowledged.

"But, then, there are errors, evils, and abuses even in this very sphere." Doubtless; but if there are, we have God to correct them. And hence, if an assembly should be troubled by the intrusion of ignorant and foolish men — men who have never yet measured themselves in the presence of God — men who boldly overleap the wide domain over which common sense, good taste, and moral propriety preside, and then vainly talk of being led by the Holy Ghost — restless men, who *will* be at something, and who keep the assembly in a continual state of nervous apprehension, not knowing what is to come next — should any assembly be thus grievously afflicted, what should they do? Abandon the ground in impatience, chagrin, and disappointment? give all up as a myth, a fable, an idle chimera? go back to that from which they once came out? Alas! this is what some have done, thus proving that they never understood what they were doing, or, if they understood it, that they had not faith to pursue it. May the Lord have mercy upon such, and open their eyes that they may see from whence they have fallen, and get a

true view of the assembly of God, in contrast with the most attractive of the systems of men.

But what is an assembly to do when abuses creep in? Simply look to Christ as the Lord of His house. Own Him in His proper place. Bring the name of Jesus to bear upon the abuse, whatever it be. Will; any say this is not enough? Has it ever been tried and proved ineffectual? We do not, and cannot, believe it. And, most assuredly we can say, if the name of Jesus is not enough, we shall never betake ourselves to man and his miserable order. We shall never, God being our helper, erase that peerless name from the standard round which the Holy Ghost has convened us, to place the perishable name of a mortal in its stead.

We are fully aware of the immense difficulties and painful trials connected with any expression of the assembly of God. We believe its difficulties and trials are perfectly characteristic. There is nothing under the canopy of heaven that the devil hates as he hates such an assembly. He will leave no stone unturned to oppose it. We have seen this exemplified again and again. An evangelist may go to a place and preach the all-sufficiency of the name of Jesus for the salvation of the soul, and he will have thousands hanging on his lips. Let the same man return, and, while he preaches the same gospel, take another step and proclaim the all-sufficiency of that same Jesus for all the exigencies of an assembly of believers, and he will find himself opposed on all hands. Why is this? Because the devil hates the very feeblest expression of the assembly of God. You may see a town left for ages and generations to its dark and dull routine of religious formalism — a dead people, gathering once a week, to hear a dead man go through a dead service, and all the rest of the week living in sin and folly. There is not a breath of life, not a leaf stirring. The devil likes it well. But let some one come and unfurl the standard of the name of Jesus — Jesus for the soul and Jesus for the assembly — and you will soon see a mighty change. The rage of hell is excited, and the dark and dreadful tide of opposition rises.

This, we most fully believe, is the true secret of many of the bitter attacks that have been recently made on those who maintain the principles of the assembly of God. No doubt we have to mourn over many mistakes, errors, and failures. We have given much

occasion to the adversary, by our follies and inconsistencies. We have been a poor blotted epistle, a faint and feeble witness, a flickering light. For all this, we have to be deeply humbled before our God. Nothing could be more unbecoming in us than pretension or assumption, or the putting forth of high-sounding ecclesiastical titles or claims. The dust is our place. Yes, beloved brethren, the place of confession and self judgement becomes us, in the presence of our God.

Still, we are not to let slip the glorious principles of the assembly of God because we have so shamefully failed in carrying them out: we are not to judge the truth by our exhibition of it, but to judge our exhibition by the truth. It is one thing to occupy divine ground, and another thing to carry ourselves properly thereon; and while it is perfectly right to judge our practice by our principles, yet truth is truth for all that, and we may rest assured that the devil hates the truth which characterises the assembly. A mere handful Of poor people, gathered in the name of Jesus to break bread, is a thorn in the side of the devil. True it is that such an assembly evokes the wrath of men, inasmuch as it throws their office and authority overboard, and they cannot bear that. Yet we believe the root of the whole matter will be found in Satan's hatred of the special testimony which such an assembly bears to the all-sufficiency of the name of Jesus for every possible need of the saints of God.

This is a truly noble testimony, and we earnestly long to see it more faithfully carried out. We may fully count upon intense opposition. It will be with us as it was with the returned captives in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. We may expect to encounter many a Rehum and many a Sanballat. Nehemiah might have gone and built any other wall in the whole world but the wall of Jerusalem, and Sanballat would never have molested him. But to build the wall of Jerusalem was an unpardonable offence. And why? Just because Jerusalem was God's earthly centre, round which He will yet gather the restored tribes of Israel. This was the secret of the enemy's opposition. And mark the affected contempt. "If a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." And yet Sanballat and his allies were not able to break it down. They might cause it to cease because of the Jews' lack of faith and energy; but they could not

break it down when God would have it up. How like is this to the present moment! Surely there is nothing new under the sun. There is affected contempt, but real alarm. And, oh! if those who are gathered in the name of Jesus were only more true in heart to their blessed centre, what testimony there would be! What power! What victory! How it would tell on all around. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I." There is nothing like this under the sun, be it ever so feeble and contemptible. The Lord be praised for raising up such a witness for Himself in these last days. May He greatly increase its effectiveness, by the power of the Holy Ghost!

3. We must now very briefly glance at our third point, namely, what is the power by which the assembly is gathered. Here again man and his doings are set aside. It is not man's will choosing; nor man's reason discovering; nor man's judgement dictating; nor man's conscience demanding: it is the Holy Ghost gathering souls to Jesus. As Jesus is the only centre, so the Holy Ghost is the only gathering power. The one is as independent of man as the other. It is "where two or three are *gathered*." It does not say "where two or three are *met*." Persons may meet together round any centre, on any ground, by any influence, and merely form a society, an association, a community. But the Holy Ghost gathers souls to Jesus on the ground of salvation; and this is the principle of the assembly of God.

An assembly may not embrace all the saints of God in a locality, but may yet be really on the ground of the assembly of God, when nothing else is. It may consist of but "two or three," and there may be hundreds of Christians in the various religious systems around; yet the "two or three" would be on the ground of the assembly of God.

This is a very simple truth. A soul led by the Holy Ghost will gather only to the name of Jesus; and if we gather to aught else, be it a point of truth, or some ordinance or another, we are not in that matter led by the Holy Ghost. It is not a question of life or salvation. Thousands are saved by Christ that do not own Him as their Centre. They are gathered to some form of church government, some favourite doctrine, some special ordinance, some gifted man. The Holy Ghost will never gather to any one of these. He gathers only to

a risen Christ. This is true of the whole church of God upon earth; and each local assembly, wherever convened, should be the expression of the whole.

Now, the power in an assembly will very much depend upon the measure in which each member thereof is gathered in integrity of heart to the name of Jesus. If I am gathered to a party holding peculiar opinions — if I am attracted by the people, or by the teaching — if, in a word, it be not the power of the Holy Ghost, leading me to the true centre of God's assembly, I shall only prove a hindrance, a weight, a cause of weakness. I shall be to an assembly what a waster is to a candle, and instead of adding to the general light and usefulness, I shall do the very reverse.

All this is deeply practical. It should lead to much exercise of heart and self-judgement as to what has drawn me to an assembly. and as to my ways therein. We are fully persuaded that the tone and testimony of an assembly have been greatly weakened by the presence of persons not understanding their position. Some present themselves there because they get teaching and blessing there which they cannot get anywhere else. some come because they like the simplicity of the worship. Others come looking for love. None of these things are up to the mark. We should be in an assembly simply because the name of Jesus is the only standard set up there, and the Holy Spirit has gathered" us thereto.

No doubt ministry is most precious, and we shall have it, in more or less power, where all is ordered aright. So also as to simplicity of worship, we are sure to be simple, and real, and true, when the Divine Presence is realized, and the sovereignty of the Holy Ghost fully owned and submitted to. And as to love, If we go *looking for it* we shall surely be thoroughly disappointed; but if we are enabled to *cultivate and manifest it*, we shall be sure to get a great deal more than we expect or deserve. It will generally be found that those persons who are perpetually complaining of want of love in others are utterly failing in love themselves; and, on the other hand, those who are really walking in love will tell you that they receive ten thousand times more than they deserve. Let us remember that the best way to get water out of a dry pump is to pour a little water in. You may work at the handle until you are tired, and then

go away in fretfulness and impatience, complaining of that horrible pump; whereas, if you would just pour in a little water, you would get in return a gushing stream to satisfy your utmost desire.

We have but little conception of what an assembly would be were each one distinctly led by the Holy Ghost, and gathered only to Jesus. We should not then have to complain of dull, heavy, unprofitable, trying meetings. We should have no fear of an unhallowed intrusion of mere nature and its restless doings — no making of prayer — no talking for talking's sake — no hymn-book seized to fill a gap. Each one would know his place in the Lord's immediate presence — each gifted vessel would be filled, fitted, and used by the Master's hand — each eye would be directed to Jesus — each heart occupied with Him. If a chapter were read, it would be the very voice of God. If a word were spoken, it would tell with power upon the heart. If prayer were offered, it would lead the soul into the very presence of God. If a hymn were sung, it would lift the spirit up to God, and be like sweeping the strings of the heavenly harp. We should have no ready-made sermons — no teaching or preaching prayers, as though we would explain doctrines to God, or tell Him a whole host of things about ourselves — no praying at our neighbours, or asking for all manner of graces for them, in which we ourselves are lamentably deficient — no singing for music's sake, or being disturbed if harmony be interfered with. All these evils would be avoided. We should feel ourselves in the very sanctuary of God, and enjoy a foretaste of that time when we shall worship in the courts above, and go no more out.

We may be asked, "Where will you find all this down here?" Ah! this is the question. It is one thing to present a *beau ideal* on paper, and another thing to realize it in the midst of error, failure, and infirmity. Through mercy, some of us have tasted, at times, a little of this blessedness. We have occasionally enjoyed moments of heaven upon earth. Oh! for more of it! May the Lord, in His great mercy, raise the tone of the assemblies everywhere! May He greatly enlarge our capacity for more profound communion and spiritual worship! May He enable us so to walk, in private life, from day to day — so as to judge ourselves and our ways in His holy presence,

that at least we may not prove a lump of lead or a waster to any of God's assemblies.

And then, even though we may not be able to reach in experience the true expression of the assembly, yet let us never be satisfied with anything less. Let us honestly aim at the loftiest standard, and earnestly pray to be lifted up thereto. As to the ground of God's assembly, we should hold it with jealous tenacity, and never consent for an hour to occupy any other. As to the tone and character of an assembly, they may and will vary immensely, and will depend upon the faith and spirituality of those gathered. Where the tone of things is felt to be low — when meetings are felt to be unprofitable — where things are said and done repeatedly which are felt by the spiritual to be wholly out of place, let all who feel it wait on God — wait continually — wait believingly — and He will assuredly hear and answer. In this way the very trials and exercises which are peculiar to an assembly will have the happy effect of casting us more immediately upon Him, and thus the eater will yield meat, and the strong sweetness. We must count upon trials and difficulties in any expression of the assembly, just because it is *the* right and *only* divine thing on this earth. The devil will put forth every effort to drive us from that true and holy ground. He will try the patience, try the temper, hurt the feelings, cause offence in nameless and numberless ways — anything and everything to make us forsake the true ground of the assembly.

It is well to remember this. We can only hold the divine ground by faith. This marks the assembly of God, and distinguishes it from every human system. You cannot get on there save by faith. And, further, if you want to be somebody, if you are seeking a place, if you want to exalt *self*, you need not think of any true expression of the assembly. You will soon find your level there, if it be in any measure what it should be. Fleshly or worldly greatness, in any shape, will be of no account in such an assembly. The Divine Presence withers up everything of that kind, and levels all human pretension. Finally, you cannot get on in the assembly if you are living in secret sin. The Divine Presence will not suit you. Have we not often experienced in the assembly a feeling of uneasiness, caused by the recollection of many things which had escaped our

notice during the week? Wrong thoughts — foolish words — unspiritual ways — all these things crowd in upon the mind, and exercise the conscience, in the assembly! How is this? Because the atmosphere of the assembly is more intense than that which we have been breathing during the week. We have not been in the presence of God in our private walk. We have not been judging ourselves; and hence, when we take our place in a spiritual assembly, our hearts are detected — our ways are exposed in the light; and that exercise which ought to have gone on in private — even the needed exercise of self judgement, must go on at the table of the Lord. This is poor miserable work for us, but it proves the power of the presence of God in the assembly. Things must be in a miserably low state in any assembly when hearts are not thus detected and exposed. It is a fine evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit in an assembly when careless, carnal, worldly, self-exalting, money-loving, unprincipled persons are compelled to judge themselves in God's presence, or, failing this, are driven away by the spirituality of the atmosphere. Such an assembly is no place for these. They can breathe more freely outside.

Now, we cannot but judge that numbers that have departed from the ground of the assembly have done so because their practical ways did not comport with the purity of the place. No doubt it is easy, in all such cases, to find an excuse in the conduct of those who are left behind. But if the roots of things were in every case laid bare, we should find that many leave an assembly because of inability or reluctance to bear its searching light. "Thy testimonies are very sure; holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, for ever." Evil must be judged, for God cannot sanction it. If an assembly can, it is not practically God's assembly at all, though composed of Christians, as we say. To pretend to be an assembly of God, and not judge false doctrine and evil ways, would involve the blasphemy of saying that God and wickedness can dwell together. The assembly of God must keep itself pure, because it is His dwelling-place. Men may sanction evil, and call it liberality and large-heartedness so to do; but the house of God must keep itself pure. Let this great practical truth sink down into our hearts, and produce its sanctifying influence upon our course and character.

4. A very few words will suffice to set forth, in the last place, "the *authority*" on which the assembly is gathered. It is the word of God alone. The charter of the assembly is the eternal word of the living and true God. It is not the traditions, the doctrines, nor the commandments of men. A passage of scripture, to which we have more than once referred in the progress of this paper, contains at once the standard round which the assembly is gathered, the power by which it is gathered, and the authority by which it is gathered — "the name of Jesus" — "the Holy Ghost" — "the word of God."

Now these are the same all over the world. Whether I go to New Zealand, to Australia, to Canada, to London, to Paris, to Edinburgh, or Dublin, the centre, the gathering power, and the authority are one and the same. We can own no other centre but Christ; no gathering energy but the Holy Ghost; no authority but the word of God; no characteristic but holiness of life and soundness in doctrine.

Such is a true expression of the assembly of God, and we cannot acknowledge aught else. Saints of God we can acknowledge, love, and honour as such, wherever we find them; but human systems we look upon as dishonouring to Christ, and hostile to the true interest of the saints of God. We long to see all Christians on the true ground of the assembly. We believe it to be the place of real blessing and effective testimony. We believe there is a character of testimony yielded by carrying out the principles of the assembly which could not be yielded were that assembly broken up, and each member a Whitefield in evangelistic power. We say this not to lower evangelistic work. God forbid. We would that all were Whitefields. But then we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that many affect to despise the assembly, under the plea of going out as evangelists; and when we trace their path, and examine the results of their work, we find that they have no provision for the souls that have been converted by their means. They seem not to know what to do with them. They quarry the stones, but do not build them together. The consequence is that souls are scattered hither and thither, some pursuing a desultory course, others living in isolation, all at fault as to true church ground.

Now, we believe that all these should be gathered on the ground of the assembly of God, to have "fellowship in the breaking of bread

and in prayer." They should 'come together on the first day of the "week, to break bread," looking to the Lord Christ to edify them by the mouth of whom He will. This is the simple path — the normal, the divine idea, needing, it may be, more faith to realize it, because of the clashing and conflicting sects of the present day, but not the less simple and true on that account.

We are aware of course, that all this will be pronounced proselytising, prejudice, and party spirit, by those who seem to regard it as the very *beau ideal* of Christian liberality and large-heartedness to be able to say, "I belong to nothing." Strange, anomalous position! It just resolves itself in this: it is *somebody* professing *nothingism* in order to get rid of all responsibility, and go with all and everything. This is a very easy path for nature, and amiable nature, but we shall see what will come of it in the day of the Lord? Even now we regard it as positive unfaithfulness to Christ, from which may the good Lord deliver His people.

But let none imagine that we want to place the evangelist and the assembly in opposition. Nothing is further from our thoughts. The evangelist should go forth from the bosom of the assembly, in full fellowship therewith; he should work not only to gather souls to Christ, but also bring them to an assembly, where divinely-gifted pastors might watch over them, and divinely-gifted teachers instruct them. We do not want to clip the evangelist's wings, but only to guide his movements. We are unwilling to see real spiritual energy expended in desultory service. No doubt it is a grand result to bring souls to Christ. Every soul linked to Jesus is a work done for ever. But ought not the lambs and sheep to be gathered and cared for? Should anyone be satisfied to purchase sheep, and then leave them to wander whithersoever they list? Surely not. But whither should Christ's sheep be gathered? Is it into the folds of man's erection, or into an assembly gathered on divine ground? Into the latter unquestionably; for that, we may rest assured, how ever feeble, however despised, however blackened and maligned, is the place for all the lambs and sheep of the flock of Christ.

Here, however, there will be responsibility, care, anxiety, labour, a constant demand for watchfulness and prayer; all of which flesh and blood would like to avoid, if possible. There is much that is

agreeable and attractive in the idea of going through the world as an evangelist, having thousands hanging on one's lips, and hundreds of souls as the seals of one's ministry: but what is to be done with these souls? By all means show them their true place with those gathered on the ground of the assembly of God, where, notwithstanding the ruin and apostasy of the professing body, they can enjoy spiritual communion, worship, and ministry. This will involve much trial and painful exercise. It was so in apostolic times. Those who really cared for the flock of Christ had to shed many a tear, send up many an agonising prayer, spend many a sleepless night. But, then, in all these things, they tasted the sweetness of fellowship with the chief Shepherd; and when He appears, their tears, their prayers, their sleepless nights will be remembered and rewarded; while those who are building up human systems will find them all come to an end, to be heard of no more for ever, and the false shepherds, who ruthlessly seize the pastoral staff only to use it as an instrument of filthy gain to themselves, shall have their faces covered with everlasting confusion.

Here we might close, were it not that we are anxious to answer three queries which may possibly suggest themselves to the reader's mind.

And, in the first place, we may be asked, "Where are we to find this thing that you call 'A true expression of the assembly of God,' from the days of the apostles up to the nineteenth century? And where are we to find it now?" Our answer is simply to point to the words of Christ — "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I." It matters but little to us if Neander, Mosheim, Milner, and scores of ecclesiastical historians besides have failed, in their interesting researches, in discerning a single trace of the true expression of God's assembly, from the close of the apostolic era to the opening of the current century. It is quite possible there may have been here and there, amid the thick gloom of the middle ages, "two or three" really "gathered in the name of Jesus," or at least those that sighed after the truth of such a thing. But, be this as it may, it leaves that truth wholly untouched. It is not on the records of historians that we build, but on the infallible truth of God's word; and therefore, although it could be proved that for eighteen hundred

years there were not even "two or three gathered in the name of Jesus," it would not in the smallest degree affect the question. The word is not, "What saith the ecclesiastical historian?" but "What saith the scripture?"

[The vast gold fields of Australia and California lay concealed from man's view for thousands of years. Does this fact render the gold less precious to those who have now discovered it?]

If there be any force in the argument founded on history, it would apply equally to the precious institution of the Lord's supper. For how did it fare with that ordinance for over a thousand years? It was stripped of one of its grand elements, wrapped in a dead language, buried in a sepulchre of superstition, and bore this inscription, "A bloodless sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead." And even when, at the time of the Reformation, the Bible was once more permitted to speak to man's conscience, and pour its living light upon the sepulchre in which the Eucharist lay buried, what was produced? Under what form does the Lord's supper appear before us in the Lutheran church? Under the form of consubstantiation. Luther denied that there was any change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ; but he maintained, and that, too, in fierce and unbending opposition to the Swiss divines, that there was a mysterious presence of Christ *with* the bread and wine.

Well, then, should we not have the Lord's supper celebrated in our midst, according to the order laid down in the New Testament? Ought we to lend our countenance to the sacrifice of the mass, or consubstantiation, because the true idea of the Eucharist seems to have been lost to the professing church for so many ages? Surely not. What are we to do? Take the New Testament and see what it says on the point — bow in reverent submission to its authority — spread the Lord's table in its divine simplicity, and celebrate the feast according to the order laid down by our Lord and Master, who said to His disciples, and therefore to us, "This do in remembrance of me."

But, again, we may be asked, "Is it not worse than useless to seek to carry out the principles of the assembly of God, seeing that

the professing church is in such complete ruin?" We reply by asking, "Are we to be disobedient because the church is in ruin? Are we to continue in error because the dispensation has failed?" Surely not. We own the ruin, mourn over it, confess it, take our share in it, and in its sad consequences, seek to walk softly and humbly in the midst of it, confessing ourselves to be most unfaithful and unworthy. But though we have failed, Christ has not failed. He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself. He has promised to be with His people to the end of the age. Matthew 18:20 holds as good today as it did eighteen hundred years ago. "Let God be true and every man a liar." We utterly repudiate the idea of men setting about church-making, or pretending to ordain ministers. We look upon it as a pure assumption, without a single shadow of scripture authority. It is God's work to gather His church and raise up ministers. We have no business to form ourselves into a church, or to ordain office-bearers. No doubt the Lord is very gracious, tender, and pitiful. He bears with our weakness, and overrules our mistakes, and where the heart is true to Him, even though in ignorance, He will assuredly lead on into higher light.

But we must not use God's grace as a plea for unscriptural acting, any more than we should use the church's ruin as a plea for sanctioning error. We have to confess the ruin, count on the grace, and act in simple obedience to the word of the Lord. Such is the path of blessing at all times. The remnant, in the days of Ezra, did not pretend to the power and splendour of Solomon's days, but they obeyed the word of Solomon's Lord, and they were abundantly blessed in their deed. They did not say, "Things are in ruin, and therefore we had better remain in Babylon, and do nothing." No; they simply confessed their own and their people's sin, and counted on God. This is precisely what we are to do. We are to own the ruin, and count on God.

Finally, if we be asked, "Where is the true expression of this assembly of God now?" We reply, "Where two or three are gathered in the name of Jesus." And be it carefully noted, that in order to reach divine results there must be divine conditions. "To lay claim to the latter without the former is only an empty conceit. If we are not really gathered in the name of Jesus, we have no right to expect

that He will be in our midst; and if He be not in our midst our assembly will be a poor affair. But it is our happy privilege to be assembled in such wise as to enjoy His blessed presence amongst us; and having Him, we do not need to set up a poor mortal to preside over us. Christ is Lord of His own house; let no mortal dare to usurp His place. When an assembly is convened for worship, God presides in its midst, and if He be fully owned, the current of communion, worship, and edification will flow on without a ripple and without a curve.* All will be in lovely harmony. But if the flesh be suffered to act, it will grieve and quench the Spirit, and spoil everything. Flesh must be judged in the assembly, just as it should be judged in our individual walk from day to day. But we have to remember that errors and failures in the assembly are no more to be used as arguments against the truth of the divine Presence there, than are our individual failures and errors to be used against the admitted truth of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the believer.

{*We must remember there is a very material difference between those occasions on which the assembly is gathered for worship, and other special services. In these latter the evangelist or the teacher, the preacher or the lecturer, serves in his individual capacity, in responsibility to his Lord. Nor does it make any difference whether such services are conducted in the rooms usually occupied by the assembly or elsewhere. Those forming the assembly may be present or not, as they feel disposed. But when the assembly, as such, is gathered for worship, for one man however gifted, to assume a place, would be to quench the Spirit.}

“Are you the people, then?” some one may say. Well, the question is not, Are we the people? but are we on divine ground? If we are not, the sooner we abandon our position the better. That there is a divine ground, notwithstanding all the darkness and confusion, will hardly be denied. God has not left His people under the necessity of abiding in connection with error and evil. And how are we to know whether we are on divine ground or not? Simply by the divine word. Let us honestly and seriously test everything with which we stand connected by the standard of scripture, and if it cannot abide the trial, let us abandon it at once. Yes, at once. If we pause to reason or weigh consequences we shall surely miss our

way. Pause, certainly, to make yourself sure of the mind of the Lord; but never pause to reason when once you have ascertained it. The Lord never gives light for two steps at a time. He gives us light, and when we act on that He gives us more. "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Precious, soul-stirring motto "More and more." There is no halting — no standing still — no resting in attainment. It is "more and more," until we are ushered into the full-orbed light of the perfect day of glory.

Reader, are you assembled on this divine ground? If so, cling to it with your whole soul. Are you in this path? If so, press on with all the energies of your moral being. Never be content with anything short of His dwelling in you, and your conscious nearness to Him. Let not Satan rob you of your proper portion by leading you to rest in a mere name. Let him not tempt you to mistake your ostensible *position*. for your real *condition*. Cultivate secret communion — secret prayer — constant self judgement. Be especially on your guard against every form of spiritual pride. Cultivate lowliness, meekness, and brokenness of spirit tenderness of conscience, in your own private walk Seek to combine the sweetest grace towards others with the boldness of a lion where truth is concerned. Then will you be a blessing in the assembly of God, and an effective witness of the all-sufficiency of the Name of Jesus.

C. H. M.

Matthew 20:16

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD, THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MAN AND THE HEART OF GOD AS REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL

Matthew 20: 16 sets forth the grand principle of divine sovereignty. "The last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called but few chosen." God has a right to do what He will with His own. Will anyone dare to question this? If so, it is plain he has never felt his true place as utterly lost. The only resource for a lost sinner is God's sovereign grace. There is no man who can stand before God on the ground of his own righteousness. All are guilty; hence the only resource is in divine mercy, but this mercy must be sovereign. To deny God's right to be sovereign is to deny His existence.

Does this touch for a moment the truth of man's responsibility? By no means. Both are true, and it is utterly impossible that two truths can ever clash. To attempt to reconcile divine sovereignty and human responsibility is worthless labor. They are reconciled already, being both set forth with equal clearness in the divine Word. It is wonderful how simple everything becomes when we fling aside the dogmas of one-sided theology and come like a child to Holy Scripture. Would that all the Lord's people would do this!

There is a lovely passage at the close of the book of Revelation. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22: 17). This is but one of a large number of passages which give us the other side of the subject.

The writer of the article to which you call our attention, rejects utterly the notion of man's free will. He believes that man is completely powerless; and not only so, but in a state of positive enmity against God so that, if left to himself, he never would come to Christ. All who come to the supper are compelled to come, else they never would be there. Moreover he most fully believes in the sovereignty of God and that the names of all who are saved were written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world.

But then, on the other side (for we must take both sides), let us ponder such words as these: “I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; *who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.* For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; *who gave Himself a ransom for all,* to be testified in due time” (1 Tim. 2: 1-6).

And again, “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to usward, *not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3: 9).

Now, if it be said that, in the above Scriptures, the words “any” and “all” refer to the elect, we reply that this is an unwarrantable liberty to take with the Word of God. If the inspired writer had meant “any of the elect” or “all of the elect,” he would most assuredly have said so. But he says nothing of the kind. *It is not according to the desire of the heart of God that any should perish.*

But man is a responsible being, although your letter is totally silent on this very important question. In short, you seem to lose sight altogether of two weighty truths: first, the largeness of the heart of God — the fullness and freeness of His grace, the wide aspect of His salvation, that His righteousness is unto all, that the gospel is to be preached to every creature, that God commands all men everywhere to repent (Mark 16: 15; Acts 17: 30; Romans 3: 22).

And, secondly, man's responsibility. Is the sinner responsible or is he not? If he is not responsible, then what mean such words as “Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels; in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be

punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power!" And again, "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 1: 6-9; 2 Thess. 2: 11-12).

Are men responsible to believe the gospel? Yes, truly, inasmuch as they shall be punished with everlasting destruction for rejecting it. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? People find difficulty in reconciling man's powerlessness with his responsibility. It is not one's business to reconcile things that are revealed in Holy Scripture. It is ours to believe. They are reconciled inasmuch as they are distinctly taught in the Word of God. It is remarkable that we do not see the same difficulty in reference to the things of this life. Suppose a man owes you a thousand dollars but he has by unprincipled extravagance, rendered himself wholly unable to pay you. He is quite powerless. Is he responsible? And are you not perfectly justified, according to worldly principles, in taking legal proceedings against him? How much more will God be justified in His judgment of all those who reject the glad tidings of a full and free salvation sent to them on the ground of the atoning death of His only begotten Son!

We cannot at all agree with you in your remark that, "It appears a yes and no gospel" to call upon men to believe. Our blessed Master called upon men to "repent and believe the gospel" (Mark 1: 15). And when asked by the men of His time, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" His reply was, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John 6: 28-29). Again, He challenges the Jews with this pointed question, "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?" (John 8: 46). Then, when we turn to the Acts of the Apostles we find Peter calling upon the Jews to repent and be converted. We find Paul telling the Philippian jailer to "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." He tells the Athenians that "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." We read in 2 Thessalonians that our Lord Jesus Christ will take vengeance on those who obey not the gospel, and further that "God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth."

Now, it seems to us a very serious thing, in the face of all these passages, to call it “a yes and no gospel” to press upon men their responsibility to believe. But the fact is, dear friend, your difficulty is occasioned by the influence of a one-sided theology — a system which we can only compare to a bird with one wing or a boat with one oar. When we turn to the sacred page of God's Word, we find the truth, not one side of truth, but the whole truth in all its bearings. We find, lying side by side, the truth of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Are we called to reconcile them? No, they are reconciled already because they are both set forth in the Word. We are to believe and obey.

It is a fatal mistake for men to frame systems of divinity. You can no more systematize the truth of God than you can systematize God Himself. Let us abandon, therefore, all systems of theology and schools of divinity and take the truth. There is not a single theological system under the sun that contains the truth. All may contain some truth, not one contains all. And very often you find that whatever little truth the system contains is misplaced and turned the wrong way, to the serious damage of truth as a whole and the stumbling and injury of souls. Every day we live we are more and more struck with the vast difference between the dogmas of divinity and the heart of the Christ of God.

The rendering of 1 Timothy 2: 4 in our excellent Authorized Version is absolutely correct. Your difficulty arises from your not seeing the immense difference between theology and the heart of God. Theology consists of the conclusions of men's minds drawn from the facts of Scripture; and you may constantly find souls harassed and perplexed by the dogmas of conflicting schools of theology, instead of resting in child-like simplicity upon the plain statements of the Word of God.

In point of fact, what is called the high school of doctrine is right in what it holds and wrong in what it rejects. The low school of doctrine also is right in what it holds and wrong in what it rejects. The former holds predestination, election, divine sovereignty and the eternal security of all true believers, and herein it is right. But it denies the full offer of salvation to all men and human responsibility, and herein it is wrong. The low school of doctrine

holds the freeness and fullness of salvation and the moral responsibility of the sinner, and herein it is right. But it denies the sovereignty of divine grace and the security of the believer, and herein it is wrong. You will bear in mind, dear friend, that when we use the terms “high school” and “low school,” we do not at all mean to give offense; far from it; we merely speak of things as they are.

For ourselves we desire to be taught exclusively by Scripture and not by any school of divinity. We are sure that God never meant to puzzle, to repulse or to discourage poor souls. God is love, His grace has brought salvation unto all. “He willeth not the death of a sinner.” “He willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” “He will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Such is His gracious aspect toward all. Hence if any perish, it is not in pursuance of the will of God. But there is another side to this great question. Man is responsible. What mean those touching words of the weeping Savior, “How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, *but ye would not!*” And again, “*Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life.*”

Do you not see, dear friend, that Scripture as distinctly teaches divine sovereignty as it teaches human responsibility, and the permanency of salvation as distinctly as its freeness? Are we called upon to reconcile these things? No; they are reconciled by God Himself inasmuch as they are taught in His holy Word. We have only to bow our heads in believing and adoring reverence. It is a great matter to make one's escape from the labyrinths of systematic divinity and yield ourselves to the formative power of the whole truth of God.

We shall add that Scripture clearly teaches the doctrine of election, but diligently excludes the repulsive doctrine of reprobation. It teaches that all who reach heaven will have to thank God for it, and all who find their place in hell will have to thank themselves. 2 Corinthians 5: 14 and many other passages of Scripture teach in the most distinct manner that Christ died for all. This aspect of the death of Christ, as also of the righteousness of God, is *unto all*, but when we came to the practical application, it is *“upon all them that believe.”* All who hear are responsible to

believe, for the message is sent into all the world and to every creature. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

But what stumbles and perplexes so many people is that they are occupied with the dogmas of theology instead of the love of God, the atonement of Christ and the record of the Holy Spirit. The moment you take any doctrine of Scripture, whether it be election, predestination, final perseverance, or any other doctrine whatsoever, and detach it from the Person of Christ and the living and eternal reality of what God is, you instantly turn it into a stumbling-block. You may set it down as an absolute truth, dear friend, that our gracious God would never have people to be puzzled about their souls' salvation. Theology often puzzles people, but God never does. As to quibblers, it would be far more honest of them to declare plainly that they do not want to have anything to say to God, than to be seeking to find flimsy objections against His Word.

You must distinguish between Genesis 25: 23 and Malachi 1: 2-3. The former was uttered before the children were born; the latter, hundreds of years afterwards, when the conduct and character of each were fully manifested. It is important to mark this difference. And not only so, but we must seek to understand the object of the Holy Spirit in His use of the above Scriptures in Romans 9. The apostle is establishing the absolute sovereignty of divine mercy: God's right to do as He wills. He proves to Israel that to argue against divine sovereignty is to surrender all their privileges. For how did they get in? Was it by birth? No; for on that ground Ishmael and Esau had the precedence. Was it by works? No; for they made the golden calf. How then? Simply by God's sovereign mercy. Well then, if God is sovereign He can have mercy upon whom He will; and blessed be His Name, that opens the door for us poor Gentiles.

Like many others, you confound two distinct passages of Holy Scripture. "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated" was not said before the children were born, but hundreds of years after, when the real character and practical ways of each had been fully manifested. All that was said before the children were born was that "the elder shall serve the younger." It is more than a sad mistake to represent God as hating a man before he was born. In Amos 1: 11 we read "For three transgressions of Edom [Esau] and for four I will not turn

away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever.” Have we not here ample grounds for the divine hatred? If you will carefully compare Genesis 25: 23 with Malachi 1: 2-3, you will see your mistake and you will better understand the apostle's use of both passages in his magnificent argument in Romans 9 — an argument so little understood by theologians.

You are fully warranted by the Word of God to entreat any sinner to come to Jesus at once. It is very evident that your mind is perplexed by the misapplication of Scripture. If you will only submit to the authority of the Word and not labor to reconcile things according to your own thoughts or the creeds of men, you will find that human responsibility is as distinctly taught in Scripture as human impotency. We must bow down with unquestioning submission to the teachings of divine inspiration.

We could not think of confining Matthew 11: 28-30 in the way you suggest. We believe it refers to every weary, heavy laden, laboring sinner, Jew or Gentile. All such are made welcome to the “rest” which Jesus gives to those who come to Him.

We do not consider that John 9: 31 has anything to do with the matter to which you refer. The Holy Spirit records what the blind man said to the Pharisees, but we believe that God is ever ready to hear the cry of any poor needy soul that looks to Him through Jesus. We are more and more convinced of the vast differences between the cold dogmas of theology and the loving heart of a Savior-God. There is a rigid, repulsive manner of using the letter of certain texts of Scripture, with which we have no sympathy. We believe it to be contrary to the spirit of the gospel and the mind of Christ. “God is love.” Precious words! True, He has His counsels and purposes, but the activity of His nature is love and therefore all are welcome to come. He is a Savior-God and “there is one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.” Go on, therefore, beloved, to press upon your fellow-sinners, with all possible earnestness, their solemn responsibility to flee now from the wrath to come and lay hold upon eternal life.

You must remember there are two sides to every question. Hence, while it is blessedly true that salvation is free to all and the righteousness of God is to him who works not, but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly (see Rom. 4: 5 and Titus 2: 11), yet is the sinner most solemnly responsible to flee from the wrath to come and strive to enter by the narrow gate — the open door. To make use of the freeness of God's grace and of the gift of righteousness to set aside man's responsibility and the need of intense earnestness in the matter of the soul's salvation, is a fatal mistake. Hence the exceeding value of the passage to which you call our attention (Luke 13: 24) In it we have the Lord's reply to a curious enquirer whom He would make anxious. He, as was His habit, answers the man, not his question.

2 Thessalonians 1: 8-9 contains a distinct and clear answer to your question, "What will become of those who reject the gospel?" We most assuredly believe there will be no further offer of mercy to those who deliberately reject the gospel now preached — no mercy for baptized Christendom, the vine of the earth. "The everlasting gospel" shall go forth previous to the opening of the millennial kingdom, and a testimony will be given to those nations who have not heard the gospel, but all this leaves untouched the solemn fact that unmitigated warrior judgment shall overtake that terrible thing called Christendom — that dark and awful mass of baptized profession, the most dreadful moral blot in the universe of God. There is nothing for the false professing Church except the deep and dark delusion which God, in His judicial dealing, shall send upon all who obey not the truth. And after that comes the deeper and darker doom of the Lake of Fire.

Dear friend, should not the thought of this make us more solemn, more earnest, more real in our dealing with our fellow men? Ought we not be more alive to the awful condition and destiny of those who die in their sins? Are we doing all we might to rescue our fellows from impending danger? Is it right to fold our arms and say, with chilling indifference, "God will save the elect, we can do nothing?" We believe it to be simply absolute heartless cruelty to souls.

Matthew 26: 6-13

THE ALABASTER BOX

It is needful to bear in mind in this day of busy doing and restless activity that God looks at everything from one standpoint, measures everything by one rule, tries everything by one touchstone, and that touchstone, that rule that standpoint is Christ. He values things just so far as they stand connected with the Son of His love, and no farther. Whatever is done to Christ, whatever is done for Him, is precious to God. Everything else is valueless. A large amount of work may be done and a great deal of praise drawn forth thereby, from human lips, but when God comes to examine it, He will simply look for one thing and that is the measure in which it stands connected with Christ. His great question will be, has it been done *in* and *to* the Name of Jesus? If it has, it will stand approved and be rewarded; if not, it will be rejected and burned up.

It does not matter in the least what men's thoughts may be about any particular piece of work. They may praise a person to the skies for something he is doing; they may parade his name in the public journals of the day; they may make him the subject of discourse in their circle of friends; he may have a great name as a preacher, a teacher, a writer, a philanthropist, a moral reformer, but if he cannot connect his work with the name of Jesus — if it is not done for Him and to His glory — if it is not the fruit of the constraining love of Christ, it will all be blown away like the chaff of the summer threshing floor, and sink into eternal oblivion.

A man may pursue a quiet, humble, lowly path of service, unknown and unnoticed. His name may never be heard, his work may never be thought of, but what has been done, has been done in simple love to Christ. He has worked in obscurity with his eye on his Master. The smile of his Lord has been quite enough for him. He has never thought for one moment of seeking man's approval; he has never sought to catch man's smile or shun his frown; he has pursued the even tenor of his way, simply looking to Christ and acting for Him. His work will stand. It will be remembered and rewarded, though he did not do it for remembrance or reward, but from simple

love to Jesus. It is work of the right kind, a genuine coin which will abide the fire of the day of the Lord.

The thought of all this is very solemn, yet very comforting. It is solemn for those who are working in any measure under the eye of their fellows, but comforting for all those who are working beneath the eye of their Lord. It is an unspeakable mercy to be delivered from the time-serving, menpleasing spirit of the present day and to be enabled to walk before the Lord — to have all our works begun, continued and ended in Him.

Let us look at the lovely and most touching illustration of this, presented to us in “the house of Simon the leper” and recorded in Matthew 26. “Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head as He sat at meat.”

If we enquire as to this woman's object as she walked to Simon's house, what was it? Was it to display the exquisite perfume of her ointment or the material and form of her alabaster box? Was it to obtain the praise of men for her act? Was it to get a name for extraordinary devotedness to Christ in the midst of a little group of personal friends of the Savior? No, reader, it was none of these things. How do we know? Because the Most High God, the Creator of all things, who knows the deepest secrets of all hearts and the true motive of every action was present, and He weighed her action in the balances of the sanctuary and affixed to it the seal of His approval. He was there in the person of Jesus of Nazareth — He the God of knowledge by whom actions are weighed. He sent her action forth as a genuine coin of the realm. He would not, He could not, have done this if there had been any alloy, any admixture of base metal, any false motive, any undercurrent. His holy and all-penetrating eye went right down into the very depths of this woman's soul. He knew, not only what she had done, but how and why she had done it, and He declared, “She hath wrought a good work upon Me.”

In a word, Christ Himself was the immediate object of this woman's soul, and it was this which gave value to her act and sent

the odor of her ointment straight up to the throne of God. Little did she know or think that untold millions would read the record of her deep personal devotedness. Little did she imagine that her act would be engraved by the Master's hand on the very pages of eternity, and never be obliterated. She thought not of this. She neither sought nor dreamed of such marvelous notoriety; had she done so, it would have robbed her act of all its beauty and deprived her sacrifice of all its fragrance.

But the blessed Lord to whom the act was done, took care that it should not be forgotten. He not only vindicated it at the moment, but handed it down into the future. This was enough for the heart of this woman. Having the approval of her Lord, she could well afford to bear the "indignation" even of "the disciples" and to hear her act pronounced "waste." It was sufficient for her that His heart had been refreshed. All the rest might go for what it was worth. She had never thought of securing man's praise or of avoiding man's scorn. Her one undivided object from first to last, was Christ. From the moment she laid her hand upon that alabaster box, until she broke it and poured its contents upon His sacred Person, it was of Himself alone she thought. She had an intuitive perception of what would be suitable and pleasing to her Lord in the solemn circumstances in which He was placed at the moment, and with exquisite tact she did that thing. She had never thought of what the ointment was worth; or, if she had, she felt that He was worth ten thousand times as much. As to "the poor," they had their place and their claims also, but she felt that Jesus was more to her than all the poor in the world.

In short, the woman's heart was filled with Christ, and it was this that gave character to her action. Others might pronounce it "waste," but we may rest assured that nothing is wasted which is spent for Christ. So the woman judged, and she was right. To put honor upon Him at the very moment when earth and hell were rising up against Him, was the very highest act of service that man or angel could perform. He was going to be offered up. The shadows were lengthening, the gloom was deepening, the darkness thickening. The cross with all its horrors was at hand; this woman anticipated it all and came beforehand to anoint the body of her adorable Lord.

Mark the result. See how immediately the blessed Lord comes to her defense and shields her from the indignation and scorn of those who ought to have known better. "When Jesus understood it, He said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon Me. For ye have the poor always with you, but Me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on My body, she did it for My burial. Verily, I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

Here was a glorious vindication in the presence of which all human indignation, scorn and misunderstanding must pass away like the vapor of the morning before the beams of the rising sun. "Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon Me." It was this that stamped the act — "a good work upon Me." This marked it off from all else. Everything must be valued according to its connection with Christ. A man may traverse the wide world to carry out the noble objects of philanthropy; he may scatter with a princely hand the fruits of a large-hearted benevolence; he may give all his goods to feed the poor; he may go to the utmost possible length in the wide range of religiousness and morality and yet never do one single thing of which Christ can say, "It is a good work upon Me."

Reader, whoever you are or however you are engaged, ponder this. See that you keep your eye directly upon the Master in all you do. Make Jesus the immediate object of every little act of service, no matter what. Seek to do your every work so He may be able to say, "It is a good work upon Me." Do not be occupied with the thoughts of men as to your path or as to your work. Do not mind their indignation or their misunderstanding, but pour your alabaster box of ointment upon the person of your Lord. See that your every act of service is the fruit of your heart's appreciation of Him. Then be assured He will appreciate your work and vindicate you before assembled myriads.

Thus it was with the woman of whom we have been reading. She took her alabaster box and made her way to the house of Simon the leper with one object in her heart, namely, Jesus and what was

before Him. She was absorbed in Him. She thought of none beside, but poured her precious ointment on His head. As a result, her act has come down to us in the gospel record, coupled with His blessed Name. No one can read the gospel without reading also the memorial of her personal devotedness. Empires have risen, flourished and passed away into oblivion. Monuments have been erected to commemorate human genius, greatness and philanthropy, and these monuments have crumbled into dust, but the act of this woman still lives and shall live forever. The hand of the Master has erected a monument to her, which shall never perish. May we have grace to imitate her; and in this day when there is so much of human effort in the way of philanthropy, may our works, whatever they are, be the fruit of our heart's appreciation of an absent, rejected, crucified Lord!

There is nothing which so thoroughly tests the heart as the doctrine of the cross — the path of the rejected, crucified Jesus of Nazareth. This probes man's heart to its deepest depths. If it be merely a question of religiousness, man can go an amazing length, but religiousness is not Christ. We need not travel farther than the opening lines of our chapter (Matt. 26) to see a striking proof of this. Look at the palace of the high priest and what do you see? A special meeting of the heads and leaders of the people. "Then assembled together the chief priests and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest who was called Caiaphas."

Here you have religion in a very imposing form. We must remember that these priests, scribes and elders were looked up to by the professed people of God as the great depositories of sacred learning, as the sole authority in all matters of religion and as holding office under God in that system which had been set up of God in the days of Moses. The assembly in the palace of Caiaphas was not composed of the pagan priests and prophets of Greece and Rome, but of the professed leaders and guides of the Jewish nation. What were they doing in their solemn meeting? They were "consulting that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill Him."

Reader, ponder this. Here were religious men, men of learning, men of weight and influence among the people; and yet these men hated Jesus, and they met in council to plot His death — to take Him

craftily and kill Him. Now those men could have talked to you about God and His worship, about Moses and the law, about the Sabbath and all the great ordinances and solemnities of the Jewish religion. But they hated Christ. Remember this most solemn fact. Men may be very religious; they may be the religious guides and teachers of others and yet hate the Christ of God. This is one grand lesson to be learned in the palace of Caiaphas the high priest. Religiousness is not Christ; on the contrary, the most zealous religionists have often been the most bitter and vehement haters of that blessed One.

But, it may be said, "Times have changed. Religion is now so intimately associated with the Name of Jesus, that to be a religious man is, of necessity, to be a lover of Jesus. You could not now find anything answering to the palace of Caiaphas." Is this really so? We cannot believe it for a moment. The name of Jesus is as thoroughly hated in Christendom now as it was in the palace of Caiaphas. And those who seek to follow Jesus will be hated too. We need not go far to prove this. Jesus is still a rejected one in this world. Where will you hear His name? Where is He a welcome theme? Speak of Him where you will, in the drawing-rooms of the wealthy and the fashionable, in the railway car, in the saloon of a cruise-boat, in the coffee-house or the dining hall, in short, in any of the resorts of men, and you will, in almost every case, be told that such a theme is out of place.

You may speak of anything else — politics, money, business, pleasure, nonsense. These things are always in place, everywhere; Jesus is never in place anywhere. We have seen in our streets, times without number, the public thoroughfares interrupted by German bands, ballad-singers and puppet-shows, and they have never been molested, reprov'd or told to move on. But let a man stand in such places to speak of Jesus and he will be insulted or told to move on and not interfere with traffic. In plain language, there is room everywhere in this world for the devil, but no room for the Christ of God. The world's motto as to Christ is, "Oh! breathe not His Name."

But, thank God, if we see around us much that answers to the palace of the high priest, we can also see here and there, that which corresponds with the house of Simon the leper. There are, blessed be God, those who love the name of Jesus and who count Him worthy

of the alabaster box. There are those who are not ashamed of His precious cross — those who find their absorbing object in Him and who count it their chief joy and highest honor to spend and be spent for Him in any little way. It is not with them a question of work, of religious machinery, of running here and there, of doing this or that: No, it is Christ, it is being near Him and being occupied with Him; it is sitting at His feet and pouring the precious ointment of the heart's true devotion upon Him.

Reader, be well assured that this is the true secret of power both in service and testimony. A proper appreciation of a crucified Christ is the living spring of all that is acceptable to God, whether in the life and conduct of an individual Christian or in all that goes on in our public assemblies. Genuine attachment to Christ and occupation with Him must characterize us personally and collectively, else our life and history will prove of little worth in the judgment of heaven, however it may be in the judgment of earth. We know of nothing which imparts such moral power to the individual walk and character as intense devotion to the Person of Christ. It is not merely being a man of great faith, a man of prayer, a deeply taught student of Scripture, a scholar, a gifted preacher or a powerful writer. No; it is being a lover of Christ.

So as to the Assembly; what is the true secret of power? Is it gift, eloquence, fine music or an imposing ceremonial? No; it is the enjoyment of a present Christ. Where He is, all is light, life and power. Where He is not, all is darkness, death and desolation. An assembly where Jesus is not, is a tomb, though there be all the fascination of oratory, all the attraction of fine music and all the influence of an impressive ritual. All these things may exist in perfection, and yet the devoted lover of Jesus may have to cry out, "Alas! they have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him." But, on the other hand, where the presence of Jesus is realized — where His voice is heard and His very touch felt by the soul — there is power and blessing, though to man's view, all may seem the most thorough weakness.

Let Christians remember these things, let them ponder them, let them see to it that they realize the Lord's presence in their public assemblies, and if they cannot say with full confidence that the Lord

is there, let them humble themselves and wait upon Him, for there must be a cause. He has said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in the midst" (Matt.18: 20). But let us never forget that, in order to reach the divine result, there must be the divine condition met.

Matthew 26

A HEART FOR CHRIST

In this solemn chapter we have a great many hearts revealed. The heart of the chief priests, the heart of the elders, the heart of the scribes, the heart of Peter, the heart of Judas. But there is one heart in particular, unlike all the others, and that is the heart of the woman who brought the alabaster box of very precious ointment to anoint the body of Jesus. This woman had a heart for Christ. She may have been a very great sinner, a very ignorant sinner, but her eyes had been opened to see a beauty in Jesus which led her to judge that nothing was too costly to be spent on Him. In a word, she had a heart for Christ.

Passing over the chief priests, the elders and the scribes, let us look at the heart of this woman in contrast with the heart of Judas and the heart of Peter.

Judas was a covetous man. He loved money — a very common love in every age. He had preached the gospel. He had walked in company with the Lord Jesus during the days of His public ministry. He had heard His words, seen His ways, experienced His kindness. But, sadly, though an apostle, though a companion of Jesus, though a preacher of the gospel, he had no heart for Christ. He had a heart for money. His heart was ever moved by the thought of gain. When money was in question, he was all alive. The deepest depths of his being were stirred by money. “The bag” was his nearest and dearest object. Satan knew this. He knew the special lust of Judas. He was fully aware of the price at which he could be bought. He understood his man, how to tempt him and how to use him. Solemn thought!

Be it observed that the very position of Judas made him all the more fit for Satan. His acquaintance with the ways of Christ made him a fit person to betray Him into the hands of His enemies. Head knowledge of sacred things, if the heart be not touched, renders a man more awfully callous, profane and wicked. The chief priests and scribes in Matthew 2 had a head knowledge of the letter of

Scripture, but no heart for Christ. They could at once hand down the prophetic roll and find the place where it was written, "Thou Bethlehem in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judas; for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule My people Israel" (v. 6). All this was very well, very true and very beautiful, but they had no heart for this "Governor," no eyes to see Him. They did not want Him. They had Scripture at their fingertips. They would have felt ashamed, no doubt, had they not been able to answer Herod's question. It would have been a disgrace to men in their position to exhibit ignorance, but they had no heart for Christ. Hence they laid their Scriptural knowledge at the feet of an ungodly king who was about to use it, if he could, for the purpose of slaying the true Heir to the throne. So much for head-knowledge without heart-love.

It is not that we would make little of Scriptural knowledge. Far from it. The true knowledge of Scripture must lead the heart to Jesus. But there is such a thing as knowing the letter of Scripture so as to be able to repeat chapter after chapter, verse after verse, yes, so as to be a sort of walking concordance, and, all the while the heart be cold and callous toward Christ. This knowledge will only throw one more into the hands of Satan, as in the case of the chief priests and scribes. Herod would not have asked ignorant men for information. The devil never takes up ignorant or stupid men to act against the truth of God. No; he finds fitter agents to do his work. The learned, the intellectual, the deep-thinking are used, provided they have no heart for Christ.

What saved "the wise men from the east?" Why could not Herod — why could not Satan — enlist them into his service? Oh! reader mark the reply. *They had a heart for Christ.* Blessed safeguard! Doubtless, they were ignorant of Scripture. They would have made but a poor hand of searching for a passage in the prophets, but they were looking for Jesus — earnestly, honestly, diligently looking for Jesus! Herod would eagerly have made use of them if he could, but they were not to be used by him. They found their way to Jesus. They did not know much about the prophet who had spoken of the "Governor," but they found their way to the "Governor" Himself. They found Him in the Person of the Babe in

the manger at Bethlehem. Instead of being tools in the hands of Herod, they were worshippers at the feet of Jesus.

Now, it is not that we would commend ignorance of Scripture. By no means! People are sure to err greatly who know not the Scriptures. It was to the praise of Timothy that the apostle could say to him, "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation," but then he adds, "Through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3: 15). The true knowledge of Scripture will always conduct us to the feet of Jesus, but mere head-knowledge of Scripture, without heart-love for Christ, will only render us the more effective agents in the hands of Satan.

Thus it was in the case of the hard-hearted, money-loving Judas. He had knowledge without a spark of affection for Christ, and his very familiarity with that blessed One made him a suitable instrument for the devil. His nearness to Jesus enabled him to be a traitor. The devil knew that thirty pieces of silver could purchase his service in the horrible work of betraying his Master.

Reader, think of this! Here was an apostle — a preacher of the gospel, a high professor. Yet underneath the cloak of profession lay "a heart exercised in covetous practices" — a heart which had a wide place for "thirty pieces of silver," but not a corner for Jesus. What a case! What a picture! What a warning! Oh! all you heartless professors, think of Judas! Think of his course! Think of his character! Think of his end! He preached the gospel, but he never knew it, never believed it, never felt it. He had painted sunbeams on canvas, but he never felt their influence. He had plenty of heart for money, but no heart for Christ. As "the son of perdition" "he hanged himself" and "went to his own place." Professing Christians, beware of head-knowledge, lip profession, official piety, mechanical religion. Beware of these things and seek to have a heart for Christ.

In Peter we have another warning, though of a different kind. He really loved Jesus, but he feared the cross. He shrank from confessing His name in the midst of the enemy's ranks. He boasted of what he would do when he should have been self-emptying. He was fast asleep when he ought to have been on his knees. Instead of

praying he was sleeping. Then, instead of being still, he was drawing his sword. "He followed Jesus afar off" and then "warmed himself at the high priest's fire." Finally, he cursed and swore that he did not know this gracious Master. All this was terrible! Who could suppose that the Peter of Matthew 16: 16 is the Peter of Matthew 26? Yet so it is. Man in his best estate is only like an autumn leaf. "There is none abiding." The highest position, the loudest profession, may all end in following Jesus afar off, and in basely denying His name.

It is almost certain that Peter would have spurned the thought of selling Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Yet he was afraid to confess Him before a servant girl. He might not have betrayed Him to His enemies, but he denied Him before them. He may not have loved money, but he failed to manifest a heart for Christ.

Christian reader, remember Peter's fall and beware of self-confidence. Cultivate a prayerful spirit. Keep close to Jesus. Keep away from the influence of this world's favor. "Keep thyself pure." Beware of dropping into a sleepy, tepid condition of soul. Be earnest and watchful. Be occupied with Christ. This is the true safeguard. Do not be satisfied with the mere avoidance of open sin. Do not rest in mere blamelessness of conduct and character. Cherish lively, warm affections toward Christ. One who "follows Jesus afar off" may deny Him before long. Let us think of this. Let us profit by the case of Peter. He himself afterwards tells us to "be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist, steadfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5: 8-9). These are weighty words, coming as they do, from the Holy Spirit through the pen of one who had suffered so from lack of "vigilance."

Blessed be the grace that could say to Peter before his fall, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Mark, the Lord did not say, "I have prayed for thee that thou mayest not fall." No; but "that thy faith fail not" when you have fallen. Precious, matchless grace! This was Peter's resource. He was a debtor to grace from first to last. As a lost sinner, he was a debtor to "the precious blood of Christ"; as a stumbling saint, he was a debtor to the all-prevailing advocacy of Christ. Thus it was with Peter. The advocacy of Christ was the

basis of his happy restoration. Of this advocacy Judas knew nothing. It is only those who are washed in the blood that partake of the advocacy. Judas knew nothing of either. Hence "he went and hanged himself," whereas Peter went forth as a restored soul to "strengthen his brethren." *There is no one so fit to strengthen his brethren as one who has himself experienced the restoring grace of Christ.* Peter was able to stand before the congregation of Israel and say, "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just," the very thing he had done himself. This shows how entirely his conscience was purged by the blood and his heart restored by the advocacy of Christ.

Now, one word as to the woman with the alabaster box. She stands forth in bright and beautiful contrast with all. While the chief priests, elders and scribes were plotting against Christ "in the palace of the high priest who was called Caiaphas," she was anointing His body "in the house of Simon the leper." While Judas was covenanting with the chief priests to sell Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, she was pouring the precious contents of her alabaster box upon His Person. Touching contrast! She was wholly absorbed with her object, and her object was Christ. Those who knew not His worth and beauty might pronounce her sacrifice a waste. Those who could sell Him for thirty pieces of silver might talk of "giving to the poor," but she heeded them not. Their surmisings and murmurings were nothing to her. She had found her all in Christ. They might murmur, but she could worship and adore. Jesus was more to her than all the poor in the world. She felt that nothing was "waste" that was spent on Him. He might only be worth thirty pieces of silver to one who had a heart for money. He was worth ten thousand words to her, because she had a heart for Christ. Happy woman! May we imitate her! May we ever find our place at the feet of Jesus, loving, adoring, admiring and worshipping His blessed Person. May we spend and be spent in His service, even though heartless professors should deem our service a foolish "waste."

The time is rapidly approaching when we shall not repent of anything done for His name's sake. If there could be room for a single regret, it will be that we so faintly and feebly served His cause in the world. If, on "the morning without clouds," a single

blush could mantle the cheek, it will be that we did not, when down here, dedicate ourselves more undividedly to His service.

Reader, let us ponder these things. And may the Lord grant us *a heart for Christ!*

Matthew 28:19

BAPTISM

Scripture gives us the simple fact that believers ought to be baptized. It says nothing as to whether it should be in public or in private. It does not tell us that it should be “In a place accessible to the public.” It is left entirely open. Who witnessed the baptism of the eunuch? Where was Paul baptized? or Lydia? or the jailer? Where in the New Testament are we taught to contemplate the public, either in baptism or the Lord's supper? No doubt “the unlearned or unbeliever” may come into the place where Christians are assembled, but testimony to the world is not the object when Christians come together for communion or worship. Matthew 10: 32 does not refer specially to the act of baptism. Our whole life should be a testimony for Christ. The Christian himself is “the epistle of Christ, known and read of all men.”

We believe that Matthew 28: 19 furnishes the proper formula for Christian baptism. We are not aware of any subsequent revelation on the subject. “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Here we have the full revelation of the Godhead, the true foundation of Christian doctrine. We see no reason for departing from the form of words prescribed by our Lord Jesus Christ. Is not His commandment more binding upon us than the example of any or all of His servants?

It is much to be desired that Christians see eye to eye on every subject, but this can hardly be expected, and most assuredly we should not allow our happy fellowship with the members of Christ's body to be hindered in the smallest degree by difference of judgment on the question of baptism. So long as a man is true to Christ — His name, His cause, His truth, His glory — I can love him with all my heart, though I may deem him mistaken as to his view of baptism. May the Lord bind us all more closely to Himself and to one another by the precious ministry of the Holy Spirit!

I am glad you have called my attention to my little book, “*Thou and Thy House.*” I am aware of the use which has been made

of it in a recent tract on the subject of "Baptism." With the theory of that tract I have no sympathy whatever; still less with its monstrous statements. I believe the course of some of our friends in urging on this question of baptism will, unless God in His mercy interpose, lead to most disastrous results. I complain not of any who conscientiously hold this or that view on the subject, but I do complain of those who, instead of preaching and teaching Jesus Christ, are disturbing the minds of God's people by pressing infant baptism upon them. For my own part — seeing the question has been forced upon me — I can only say I have for 32 years been asking in vain for a single line of Scripture for baptizing any except believers or those who professed to believe. Reasonings I have had — inferences, conclusions and deductions — but of direct Scripture authority not one tittle. There is not a word about baptism from beginning to end of my book, "Thou and Thy House."

Mark 1:38, Isaiah 61, Luke 4

Evangelization — A word to the Evangelist.

We trust it may not be deemed out of place if we venture to offer a word of counsel and encouragement to all who have been and are engaged in the blessed work of preaching *the gospel of the grace of God*. We are, in some measure, aware of the difficulties and discouragements which attend upon the path of every evangelist, whatever may be his sphere of labour or measure of gift; and it is our heart's desire to hold up the hands and cheer the hearts of all who may be in danger of falling under the depressing power of these things. We increasingly feel the immense importance of an earnest, fervent gospel testimony everywhere; and we dread exceedingly any falling off therein. We are imperatively called to "do the work of an evangelist," and not be moved from that work by any arguments or considerations whatsoever.

Let none imagine that, in writing thus, we mean to detract, in the smallest degree, from the value of teaching, lecturing, or exhortation. Nothing is further from our thoughts. "These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." We mean not to compare the work of the evangelist with that of the teacher, or to exalt the former at the expense of the latter. Each has its own proper place, its own distinctive interest and importance.

But is there not a danger, on the other hand, of the evangelist abandoning his own precious work in order to give himself to the work of teaching and lecturing? Is there not a danger of the evangelist becoming merged in the teacher? We fear there is; and it is under the influence of this very fear that we pen these few lines. We observe, with deep concern, some who were once known amongst us as earnest and eminently successful evangelists, now almost wholly abandoning their work and becoming teachers and lecturers.

This is most deplorable. *We really want evangelists*. A true evangelist is almost as great a rarity as a true pastor. Alas! how rare are both! The two are closely connected. The evangelist gathers the

sheep; the pastor feeds and cares for them. The work of each lies very near the heart of Christ — the Divine Evangelist and Pastor; but it is with the former we have now more immediately to do — to encourage him in his work, and to warn him against the temptation to turn aside from it. We cannot afford to lose a single ambassador just now, or to have a single preacher silent.

We are perfectly aware of the fact that there is in some quarters a strong tendency to throw cold water upon the work of evangelization. There is a sad lack of sympathy with the preacher of the gospel; and, as a necessary consequence, of active co-operation with him in his work. Further, there is a mode of speaking of gospel preaching which argues but little sympathy with the heart of Him who wept over impenitent sinners, and who could say, at the very opening of His blessed ministry, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor" (Isa. 61; Luke 4). And again, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth" (Mark 1: 38).

Our blessed Lord was an indefatigable preacher of the gospel, and all who are filled with His mind and spirit will take a lively interest in the work of all those who are seeking in their feeble measure to do the same. This interest will be evinced, not only by earnest prayer for the divine blessing upon the work, but also by diligent and persevering efforts to get immortal souls under the sound of the gospel.

This is the way to help the evangelist, and this way lies open to every member of the Church of God — man, woman, or child. All can thus help forward the glorious work of evangelization. If each member of the assembly were to work diligently and prayerfully in this way, how different would it be with the Lord's dear servants who are seeking to make known the unsearchable riches of Christ.

But, alas! how often is it otherwise. How often do we hear even those who are of some repute for intelligence and spirituality, when referring to meetings for gospel testimony, say, "Oh, I am not going there; it is only the gospel." Think of that! "Only the gospel." If they would put the idea into other words, they might say, "It is

only the heart of God — only the precious blood of Christ — only the glorious record of the Holy Ghost."

This would be putting the thing plainly. Nothing is more sad than to hear professing Christians speak in this way. It proves too clearly that their souls are very far away from the heart of Jesus. We have invariably found that those who think and speak slightly of the work of the evangelist are persons of very little spirituality; and on the other hand, the most devoted, the most true hearted, the best taught saints of God, are always sure to take a profound interest in that work. How could it be otherwise? Does not the voice of Holy Scripture bear the clearest testimony to the fact of the interest of the Trinity in the work of the gospel? Most assuredly it does.

Who first preached the gospel? Who was the first herald of salvation? Who first announced the good news of the bruised Seed of the woman? The Lord God Himself, in the garden of Eden. This is a telling fact in connection with our theme. And further, let us ask, who was the most earnest, laborious, and faithful preacher that ever trod this earth? The Son of God. And who has been preaching the gospel for the last eighteen centuries? The Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven.

Thus then we have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost all actually engaged in the work of evangelization; and if this be so, who are we to dare to speak slightly of such a work? Nay, rather may our whole moral being be stirred by the power of the Spirit of God so that we may be able to add our fervent and deep Amen to those precious words of inspiration, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Isa. 52: 7; Rom. 10: 15)

But it may be that these lines shall be scanned by some one who has been engaged in the work of preaching the gospel, and is beginning to feel rather discouraged. It may be that he has been called to preach in the same place for years, and he feels burdened by the thought of having to address the same audience, on the same subject, week after week, month after month, year after year. He may feel at a loss for something new, something fresh, some variety. He may sigh for some new sphere, where the subjects which are

familiar to him will be new to the people. Or, if this cannot be, he may feel led to substitute lectures and expositions for the fervid, pointed, earnest preaching of the gospel.

If we have in any measure set forth the reader's feelings on this subject, we think it will greatly help him in his work to bear in mind that the one grand theme of the true evangelist is Christ. The power to handle that theme is the Holy Ghost. The one to whom that theme is to be unfolded is the poor lost sinner. Now, Christ is ever new; the power of the Holy Ghost is ever fresh; the soul's condition and destiny ever intensely interesting.

Furthermore, it is well for the evangelist to bear in mind, on every fresh occasion of rising to preach, that his unconverted hearers are totally ignorant of the gospel, and hence he should preach as though it were the first time they had ever heard the message, and the first time he had ever delivered it. For, be it remembered, the preaching of the gospel, in the divine acceptation of the phrase, is not a mere barren statement of evangelical doctrine — a certain form of words enunciated over and over again in wearisome routine. Far, very far from it. The gospel is really the large loving heart of God welling up and flowing forth toward the poor lost sinner in streams of life and salvation. It is the presentation of the atoning death and glorious resurrection of the Son of God; and all this in the present energy, glow, and freshness of the Holy Ghost, from the exhaustless mine of Holy Scripture.

Moreover, the one absorbing object of the preacher is to win souls for Christ, to the glory of God. For this he labours and pleads; for this he prays, weeps, and agonises; for this he thunders, appeals, and grapples with the heart and conscience of his hearer. His object is not to teach doctrines, though doctrines may be taught; his object is not to expound Scripture, though Scripture may be expounded. These things lie within the range of the teacher or lecturer; but let it never be forgotten, the preacher's object is to bring the Saviour and the sinner together — to win souls to Christ. May God by His Spirit keep these things ever before our hearts, so that we may have a deeper interest in the glorious work of evangelization!

We would, in conclusion, merely add a word of exhortation in reference to the Lord's Day evening. We would, in all affection, say to our beloved and honoured fellow-labourers, Seek to give that one hour to the great business of the soul's salvation. There are 168 hours in the week, and, surely, it is the least we may devote one of these to this momentous work. It so happens that during that interesting hour we can get the ear of our fellow-sinner. Oh, let us use it to pour in the sweet story of God's free love and of Christ's full salvation.

Mark 4: 35-41.

Christ in the Vessel.

"Man's extremity is God's opportunity." This is a very familiar saying. It often passes among us; and, no doubt, we fully believe it; but yet, when we find ourselves brought to our extremity, we are often very little prepared to count on God's opportunity. It is one thing to utter or hearken to a truth, and another thing to realize the power of that truth. It is one thing, when sailing over a calm sea, to speak of God's ability to keep us in the storm, and it is another thing altogether to prove that ability when the storm is actually raging around us. And yet God is ever the same. In the storm and in the calm, in sickness and in health, in pressure and in ease, in poverty and in abundance, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever" — the same grand reality for faith to lean upon, cling to and draw upon, at all times and under all circumstances.

But alas, we are unbelieving! Here lies the source of weakness and failure. We are perplexed and agitated, when we ought to be calm and confiding; we are casting about, when we ought to be counting on God; we are "beckoning to our partners," when we ought to be looking unto Jesus. thus it is we lose immensely, and dishonour the Lord in our ways. Doubtless there are few things for which we have to be more deeply humbled than our tendency to distrust the Lord when difficulties and trials present themselves; and assuredly we grieve the heart of Jesus by thus distrusting Him, for distrust must always wound a loving heart. Look, for example, at the scene between Joseph and his brethren in Genesis 50.

"And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him."

It was a sad return for the love and tender care which Joseph had exercised towards them. How could they suppose that one who had so freely and fully forgiven them, and spared their lives when they were entirely in his power, would, after so many years of kindness, turn upon them in anger and revenge? It was indeed a grievous wrong, and it was no marvel that "Joseph wept when they spake unto him." What an answer to all their unworthy fear and dark suspicion! A flood of tears! Such is love! "And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore, fear ye not: *I will nourish you, and your little ones.* And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them. "

Thus was it with the disciples on the occasion to which our paper refers. Let us meditate a little on the passage.

"And the same day, when the even was come, Jesus saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship; and there were also with Him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow."

Here, then, we have an interesting and instructive scene. The poor disciples are brought to their extremity. They are at their wits' end. A violent storm — the ship full of water — the Master asleep. This was a trying moment indeed, and assuredly we, if we look at ourselves, need not marvel at the fear and agitation of the disciples. It is not likely that we should have done better had we been there. Still, we cannot but see wherein they failed. The narrative has been penned for our learning, and we are bound to study it, and seek to learn the lesson which it reads out to us .

There is nothing more absurd and irrational than unbelief when we come to look at it calmly. In the scene before us this absurdity is very apparent; for what could be more absurd than to suppose that the vessel could possibly sink with the Son of God on board? And yet this was what they feared. It may be said they did not just think of the Son of God at that moment. True, they thought

of the storm, the waves, the filling vessel, and, judging after the manner of men, it seemed a hopeless case. Thus it is the unbelieving heart ever reasons. It looks only at the circumstances, and leaves God out. Faith, on the contrary, looks only at God, and leaves circumstances out.

What a difference! Faith delights in man's extremity, simply because it is God's opportunity. It delights in being "shut up" to God — in having the platform thoroughly cleared of the creature, in order that God may display His glory — in the multiplying of "empty vessels," in order that God may fill them. Such is faith. It would, we may surely say, have enabled the disciples to lie down and sleep beside their Master in the midst of the storm. Unbelief, on the other hand, rendered them uneasy; they could not rest themselves, and they actually aroused the blessed Lord out of His sleep by their unbelieving apprehensions. He, weary with incessant toil, was snatching a few moments repose while the vessel was crossing the sea. He knew what fatigue was; He had come down into all our circumstances. He made Himself acquainted with all our feelings and all our infirmities, being in all points tempted like as we are, sin excepted.

He was found as a man in every respect, and as such He slept on a pillow, rocked by the waves of the sea. The storm and the billows beat upon the vessel, although the Creator was on board, in the person of that weary, sleeping Workman.

Profound mystery! The One who made the sea, and could hold the winds in His almighty grasp, lay sleeping in the hinder part of the ship, and allowed the sea and the wind to treat Him as unceremoniously as though He were an ordinary man. Such was the reality of the human nature of our blessed Lord. He was weary — He slept, being tossed on the bosom of that sea which His hands had made. O pause and meditate on this wondrous sight. Look closely, think upon it. We cannot expatiate upon the scene; we can only muse and worship.

But, as we have said, unbelief roused the blessed Lord out of His sleep. "They awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, *carest Thou not* that we perish?" What a question! "*Carest Thou not?*"

How it must have wounded the sensitive heart of the Lord! How could they ever think that He was indifferent to their trouble and danger? How completely must they have lost sight of His love, to say nothing of His power, when they could bring themselves to say, "Carest Thou not?"

And yet, have we not in all this a mirror in which to see ourselves reflected? Assuredly we have. How often, in moments of pressure and trial, do our hearts conceive, if our lips do not utter the question, "Carest Thou not?" It may be we are laid on a bed of sickness and pain, and we know that one word from the God of all power and might could chase away the malady and raise us up; and yet the word is withheld. Or perhaps we are in need of temporal supplies, and we know that the silver and gold, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, belong to God — yea, that the treasures of the universe are under His hand — and yet day after day rolls on, and our need is not supplied. In a word, we are passing through deep waters, in some way or another; the storm rages, wave after wave rolls over our tiny vessel, we are brought to our extremity, we are at our wits' end, and our hearts often feel ready to send up the terrible question, "Carest Thou not?" The thought of this is deeply humbling. To think of our grieving the loving heart of Jesus by our unbelief and suspicion should fill us with the deepest contrition.

And then the absurdity of unbelief! How can that One who gave His life for us — who left His glory and came down into this world of toil and misery and died a shameful death to deliver us from eternal wrath — how can such a One ever fail to care for us? But yet we are ready to doubt, or we grow impatient under the trial of our faith, forgetting that the very trial from which we so shrink and under which we so wince is far more precious than gold, for the former is an imperishable reality, whereas the latter must perish in the using. The more genuine faith is tried, the brighter it shines; and hence the trial, however severe, is sure to issue in praise and honour and glory to Him who not only implants the faith, but also passes it through the furnace and sedulously watches it therein.

But the poor disciples failed in the moment of trial. Their confidence gave way, they roused their Master from His slumber with that most unworthy question, "Carest Thou not that we perish?"

Alas, what creatures we are! We are ready to forget ten thousand mercies in the presence of a single difficulty. David could say, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul"; and how did it turn out? Saul fell on mount Gilboa, and David was established on the throne of Israel. Elijah fled for his life at the threat of Jezebel; and what was the issue? Jezebel was dashed to pieces on the pavement, and Elijah was taken to Heaven in a chariot of fire. So here, the disciples thought they were going to be lost, with the Son of God on board; and what was the result? The storm was hushed into silence, and the sea became as glass, by that Voice which of old had called worlds into existence. "And He arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."

What a combination of grace and majesty is here! Instead of rebuking them for having disturbed His repose, He rebukes those elements which had terrified them. It was thus He replied to their question, "Carest Thou not?" Blessed Master! Who would not trust Thee? Who would not adore Thee for Thy patient grace and unupbraiding love?

There is something perfectly beautiful in the way in which our blessed Lord rises, without an effort, from the repose of perfect humanity into the activity of essential deity. As man, wearied with His work, He slept on a pillow; as God, He rises, and, with His almighty voice, hushes the storm and calms the sea.

Such was Jesus — very God and very man — and such He is now, ever ready to meet His people's need, to hush their anxieties and remove their fears. Oh that we trusted Him more simply! We have little idea of how much we lose by not leaning more on the arm of Jesus, day by day. We are so easily terrified. Every breath of wind, every wave, every cloud, agitates and depresses us. Instead of calmly lying down and reposing beside our Lord, we are full of terror and perplexity. Instead of using the storm as an occasion for trusting Him, we make it an occasion for doubting Him. No sooner does some trifling trouble arise than we think we are going to perish, although He assures us that He has numbered the very hairs of our head. Well may He say to us as He said to His disciples, "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?"

It would indeed seem at times as though we had no faith. But oh, His tender love! He is ever near to shield and succour us, even though our unbelieving hearts are so ready to doubt His Word. He does not deal with us according to our poor thoughts of Him, but according to His own perfect love toward us. This is the solace and stay of our souls in passing across life's stormy sea homeward to our eternal rest. Christ is in the vessel. Let this ever suffice. Let us calmly rely on Him. May there ever be, at the very centre of our hearts, that deep repose which springs from real trust in Jesus! and then, though the storm rage and the sea run mountains high, we shall not be led to say, "Carest Thou not that we perish?" Is it possible we can perish with the Master on board? or can we ever think so with Christ in our hearts? May the Holy Spirit teach us to make a fuller, freer, bolder use of Christ! We really want this just now, and shall want it more and more. It must be Christ Himself, laid hold of and enjoyed in the heart by faith. Thus may it be to His praise and our abiding peace and joy!

We may just notice, in conclusion, the way in which the disciples were affected by the scene on which we have been dwelling. Instead of the calm worship of those whose faith had been answered, they manifest the amazement of those whose fears had been rebuked. "They feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" Surely they ought to have known Him better. Yes, and so should we.

Mark 8: 1-9

The Christian's Mission and how to fulfil it.

[This little book is sent forth to the Church of God "To all that, in every place, call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. both theirs and ours" with earnest prayer that it may be used of the Holy Spirit to awaken in the hearts of all who may read it a true sense of the Christian's mission, and a fixed purpose to seek, by the grace of God, to fulfil it.

We need to be reminded, in days like the present, that every child of God, every member of the body of Christ, whatever be his position or sphere of action, has a mission to fulfil — a work to do for Christ. He may not be called to be an evangelist, a pastor, or a teacher: but he is called to live Christ to represent Him — to be a channel of communication between His loving heart and every form of need, in this poor dark, cold, selfish world. This is the Christian's mission: may every Christian seek to fulfil it!]

In those days the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way; for divers of them came from far. And His disciples answered Him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? And He asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground; and He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to His disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes; and He blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. So they did eat, and were filled; and they took up of the broken meat that was left, seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand, and He sent them away" (Mark 8: 1-9).

The foregoing passage presents a very striking and beautiful illustration of one special feature of the Christian's mission in this

world, which the reader will do well to ponder. It is of immense importance, and of universal application. It concerns every child of God. We have each one to remember, that we are sent into this world to be a channel of communication between the heart of Christ and every form of need that may cross our path from day to day.

This is an interesting and lovely feature of the Christian's mission. True, it is only one of the many features, but it is one of exceeding preciousness and beauty. It is pre-eminently practical too, as we shall see.

Of course, of necessity, it assumes that I am a Christian. If I do not know that I have eternal life, if I am at all doubtful as to my eternal salvation, if I do not know Christ as my own precious Saviour and Lord — the portion, the object, and the resting-place of my heart — to occupy myself with the Christian's mission is simply to deceive myself, and blind my eyes to my true condition. A known and enjoyed salvation, and a known and enjoyed Saviour and Lord, are absolutely essential conditions for it.

Having said thus much, to guard the reader against self-deception, as also to guard our subject against any misapprehension, we shall look, for a few moments, at the lovely passage which stands at the head of this paper. May the blessed Spirit open and apply it to our hearts!

"In those days, the multitude being *very great*, and having *nothing to eat*." Here was the state of the case — great need, and no apparent resources to meet it. But Jesus was there — blessed be His holy name! — in all the love of His heart, and the almighty power of His hand. He was there who, of old, had fed three millions of people, in a vast howling wilderness, for forty years. Yes, He was here, and, of course, He could at once, and directly, have met the need without calling His poor unbelieving and self-occupied disciples into the scene at all. He could have summoned angelic messengers from Heaven to wait upon those hungry thousands.

But He did neither the one nor the other, because it was His gracious purpose to use His disciples as channels of communication between Himself and that vast hungry multitude. Not merely as

instruments of His *power*, which angels might be, but the very expression of His *heart*.

And let us note *how* He did this. Had He merely intended to use them as instruments of His power, it would have sufficed to put the ways and means into their hands. But no; He wanted to make them channels through which the tender compassion of His heart might flow out. And how was this to be done? Thus: "He called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat; and if I send them away fasting to their own houses they will faint by the way; for divers of them came from far."

Here, then, we have the true secret of preparation of our high and holy mission. Our blessed Lord first gathers His disciples round Himself, and seeks to fill their hearts with His own feelings and thoughts ere He fills their hands with the loaves and fishes. It is as if He had said, "I have compassion, and I want you to have it also. I want you to enter into all my thoughts and feelings, to think as I do, and feel as I do. I want you to look with mine eyes at this hungry multitude, in order that you may be in a moral condition to be My channels."

This is uncommonly fine. A person may say, "I long to be a channel, but it seems quite too high, quite beyond me. How could I ever attain to such a height?" The answer is, Get near enough to Christ to think as He thinks, to feel as He feels. Drink into His spirit. This, be assured of it, is the true, the only way to be a channel of communication. If I say, "I must try and be a channel," I shall make a fool of myself. But if I drink at the fountain of Christ's heart, I shall be filled to overflowing, my whole moral being will be permeated by His spirit, so that I shall be in a fit condition to be used by Him, and I shall be sure to make a right use of — that is, to use for Him — whatever ways and means He may put into my hands. If I get my hands full of means, before my heart is full of Christ, I shall not use the means for Him, I shall use them for my own glory, and not for the glory of God.

Brethren, Let us ponder this. Let us consider our mission, and the true secret of fulfilling it. It is a grand point to have the heart

impressed with the fact, that we are called to be channels through which the heart of Christ may flow out to His own, and to a needy world. It is wonderful, it seems too good to be true; but, blessed be God, it is as true as it is wonderful. Let us only seek to take it in — to believe it, to make it our own. Let us not content ourselves with admiring it as a beautiful theory, but seek to have it wrought into our souls by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit.

But mark how slow the disciples were in responding to the desire of the heart of Christ respecting them. It was His gracious purpose to use them as His channels, to bestow upon them this immense privilege; but they, like ourselves, were little able to appreciate it, simply because they failed to enter into His thoughts, and to apprehend the glory of His Person. "His disciples answered Him, From whence *can a man* satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?" On another occasion they said, "We have here but five loaves and two fishes."

Did they not know, or had they forgotten, that they were in the immediate presence of the Creator and Sustainer of the universe? True, He was there in the lowly form of Jesus of Nazareth. His divine glory was hidden from nature's view behind the veil of humanity. But they ought to have known better who and what He was, and how to avail themselves of His glorious presence, and of His unsearchable riches. Surely, had their hearts at all apprehended the glory of His Person, they could never have asked such a question as, "Whence can *a man* satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?" Moses, of old, had asked "Whence should I have flesh to give to all this people?" God is shut out by the poor unbelieving heart. Did Jehovah ask Moses to provide flesh? Surely not. No mere man could do it. Neither could a mere man feed four thousand in a desert place.

But God was there. Yes, it was God, speaking through human lips, who had said, "I have compassion on the multitude." It was God who took account of all the circumstances of each individual in that vast multitude of hungry fainting people. He knew the exact distance each one had travelled, and the length of time each one had been fasting. He took account of the sure consequences of their being dismissed without food. It was God who gave utterance to

those touching words, "I cannot send them away fasting, lest they faint by the way, for divers of them came from far."

Yes, God was there, in all the tenderness of a love, which could take account of the most minute details of a creature's weakness, and a creature's necessity. There, too, in His almighty power and exhaustless resources and there to enable His poor disciples to be the depositaries of His thoughts, the vessels of His goodness, the channels of His grace. And what did they want, in order to be able to fulfil their mission? Did they want to be, or to do, anything? No; they simply want to see Him, and to use Him. They wanted to exercise that simple faith which counts on God for everything, and finds all its springs in Him.

Thus it was with the disciples, and thus it is with us. If we want to act as the channels of the grace of Christ, we must have to do with Him in the deep secret of our own souls. We must learn of Him; we must feed upon Him; we must know the meaning of communion with His heart; we must be near enough to Him to know the secrets of His mind, and carry out the purposes of His love. If we would reflect Him, we must gaze upon Him. If we would reproduce Him, we must feed upon Him, we must have Him dwelling in our hearts by faith. We may depend upon it, that what is really in our hearts will come out in our lives. We may have a quantity of truth in our heads, and flippantly flowing from our lips, but if we really desire to be channels of communication between His heart and the needy ones in the scene through which we are passing, we must habitually drink into His love. It cannot possibly be in any other way. "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 8: 38).

Here lies the grand secret of the whole matter: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." If the rivers are to flow, we must drink. It cannot be otherwise. If every member of the Church of God were in the power of this great principle, what a very different state of things we should witness! And where lies the hindrance? We are not straitened in our adorable Lord and Saviour. It is His desire to use us, just as He used His disciples on the occasion before us. He gathered them round Himself, and graciously sought to pour into their hearts the compassion of His own heart, in order that they

might feel with Him, as the moral qualification for acting *for Him*. We may always feel assured that where the heart is full of Christ, the power to act will not be lacking.

But, alas! as it was with the disciples, so it is with us. They failed in appreciating and using the power that was in their midst. They said, "Whence can a man?" when they ought to have said, "We have Christ." They practically ignored Him, and so do we. We make excuses for our poverty, our indolence, our coldness, our indifference, by the plea that we have not got this, and that, and the other; whereas, what we really want is a heart full of Christ — full of His thoughts, full of His love, full of His kindness, full of His tender consideration for others, full of His beautiful self-forgetfulness. We complain of our want of ways and means, when what we really want is the right condition of soul — the true moral attitude of the heart, and this can only spring from close intimacy with Christ, communion with his mind, and drinking into His spirit.

We would very earnestly press this subject upon the Church of God. We long to see every member of the body of Christ acting as a channel through which His precious grace may flow out in living streams to all around, shedding freshness and verdure in its course — and not a stagnant pool, so strikingly illustrative of a Christian out of communion.

[Note. — we should ever remember. that we are not to be *expectants* from the scene around us, but *contributors*. A true contributor never complains of want of love. He walks in love and manifests love and his language is, "I have all and abound." Oh, that it were thus with us all!]

Mark 12: 41-44

THE TWO MITES

“And Jesus sat over against the treasury and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury; and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.”

How little did these people know whose eye was watching them as they cast in their offerings! How little did they think of being scanned by One whose eye could penetrate the deepest depths of their hearts and read the motives that actuated them in what they were doing. It may be the showy pharisee was there, displaying his wealth and making a pompous exhibition of his religiousness. Perhaps, too, the cold formalist was there, dropping in heartless routine, his stereotyped coin into the treasury. Jesus saw it all, weighed it all, judged it all.

It is well to think on this on every occasion in the which we are called to contribute to the Lord's cause. Well to remember, as the box or the basket is placed in my hand, that “Jesus is sitting over against the treasury.” His holy eye rests, not upon the purse, but upon the heart. He weighs not the amount, but the motive. If the heart is right, the amount will be right, according to His judgment. Where the heart beats to His Person, the hand will be open to His cause. All who really love Christ will count it their high and happy privilege to deny themselves in order to contribute to His cause. It is most marvelous that He should condescend to ask us so to do. Yet He does so and it should be our deep joy to respond “according as God has prospered us,” ever remembering that He loves a cheerful giver because that is precisely what He is Himself, blessed be His holy Name!

However, the point on which we specially want to dwell in Mark 12 is the act of the poor widow. Amid the crowd of contributors who pressed forward to cast their offerings into the treasury, there was one who particularly engaged the attention of our

blessed Lord. “There came a certain poor widow and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.”

Now, that was a very small amount indeed if looked at from a monetary point of view. But think of the offerer. She was a “widow” — a “poor widow,” the very impersonation of all that is desolate, helpless and lonely. A widow always gives us the idea of one deprived of every earthly stay and natural prop. “She that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers, night and day.”

True, there are many so-called widows who are not of this stamp at all — many who look anything but lonely and desolate. But these are quite abnormal. They are entirely outside the sphere of true widowhood. The Holy Spirit has furnished us with a striking photograph of this class in 1 Timothy 5: 11-13.

But the poor widow at the treasury belonged to the class of true widows. She was one according to the mind of Christ. “And He called unto Him His disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.”

Doubtless, had these been the days of the public press, the princely offerings of the wealthy would have been paraded in the columns of some newspaper with flattering allusion to their large amount, while the poor widow and her offering would have been passed over in contemptuous silence.

But our adorable Lord thought differently. The poor widow's two mites outweighed in His balance all the offerings put together. It is a comparatively easy thing to give tens, hundreds and thousands from our accumulated treasures, but it is not easy to deny self of a single luxury or comfort, to say nothing of a positive necessity. But she gave all her living to the house of her God. It was this which threw her into such moral kindredness of spirit with the blessed Lord Himself. He could say, “The zeal of Thy house has eaten Me up.”

And she could say, “The zeal of Thy house has eaten up my living.” Thus she was very near to Him. What a privilege!

Reader, did you ever notice the shape in which she had her living? Why does the Spirit take such care to say “Two mites, which make a farthing?” Why not be content to say, “She threw in a farthing?” Ah! this would never do. It would not have bought out the real point of exquisite beauty, the true touch of wholehearted devotedness. *If she had had it all in one piece, she must have either given all or nothing.* Having it in two, she had the option of keeping half for her own living. And truly most of us would judge it extraordinary devotedness to give to the Lord's cause half of all we possessed in the world. But this poor widow had a whole heart for God. This was the point. There was no reserve whatever. Self and its interests were wholly lost sight of and she flung her whole living into that which to her heart represented the cause of her God. May God grant us something of this spirit!

Luke 4:18, Matthew 11:28

RELIEF FOR A BURDENED HEART

(A REPLY TO AN ANXIOUS ENQUIRER)

Your letter has interested us exceedingly. Few things lie nearer to the heart than the case of anxious and burdened spirits. The work of emancipating and soothing such is becoming more and more charming to us. Words cannot convey how intensely we long to be used as God's instruments in this most delightful work. We are fully persuaded that it is a work which lies very near the heart of Christ. How could we question this while hearkening to such words as these, "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" (Luke 4: 18). And again "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11: 28). How precious is the thought of God sending His Son and anointing Him with the Holy Spirit, to preach glad tidings to the poor, to bring healing to the brokenhearted, sight to the blind, deliverance to the captive, liberty for the oppressed, rest for the weary! What unspeakable comfort for one who may find himself in any of these conditions!

Now dear friend, it seems very plain that you are a weary, heavy laden one, and as such, you are the very object for the gracious ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. You are one of those for whom He was sent and for whom He was anointed by the Holy Spirit. We have not the slightest doubt but that the root of the matter is in you. The very anxieties to which you give expression are, in our judgment, the evidence of a spiritual work in your soul. Not that we want you to build your peace upon this. God forbid! If all the angels in heaven and all the men upon earth were to give expression to their confidence in your Christianity, it might be a comfort and an encouragement to you, but could never form the ground of your peace in the presence of a holy, sin-hating God. It matters little, comparatively, what men think about you: the question is, what does God think about you? He has found you out. He knows the worst

about you; yet He loves you and gave His Son to die for you. Here is the only ground of a sinner's peace. God Himself has met your case. He has been glorified about your sins in the death of His Son. It does not matter the least what you are. You say you are sometimes at a loss to know in what light to regard yourself, whether as wholly unconverted or a backslider. The fact is, what you really want is to get to the end of yourself altogether. When you get there, you will find God in all the fullness of His grace as manifested in Christ. Surely to get to the end of oneself and find Christ, is the true way to find peace.

It seems to us that one special malady from which you are suffering is intense self-occupation. This is the case with thousands. It is quite true that the Spirit of God will exercise us about our condition and cause us to judge it, but then it is only for the purpose of leading us to the very bottom of it all, so we may find settled repose in the fullness and sufficiency of Christ. This kind of exercise is very good. We delight in seeing a soul under deep spiritual work — the deeper the better. We are of opinion that in spiritual farming, the deeper the furrow the stronger the root. We do not attach much value to a superficial work in the conscience. Although it is quite true that we are not saved by a process of exercise of heart or conscience, still we have frequently found that persons who easily and rapidly glided into a certain feeling of peace, were in danger of gliding as rapidly out of it and becoming as miserable as they had once been happy. Sin must be seen in its sinfulness, and the sooner it is thus seen the better, so that having it really judged in the conscience, we may lay hold of a full and precious Christ as God's answer to it all. When this is the case, the heart enjoys a more solid, abiding peace and is not subject to those variations of which so many complain.

But there is a kind of self-occupation into which Satan leads the awakened sinner for the purpose of keeping him from Christ. This must be carefully guarded against. We apprehend he has entangled your feet in this snare. The style and tone of your letter lead us to this conclusion. We most fully enter into your case. Indeed you possess our entire sympathy. We deeply respect the feeling which leads you to absent yourself from the Lord's Table in

your present state of soul. We consider it vastly superior to the lightness, flippancy and heartless formality with which so many approach that sacred institution. Far be it from us to pen a single line which would have the effect of emboldening you to approach the Lord's Supper in an unhappy and untruthful condition of heart and conscience. But then we want you so to apprehend the gospel of the grace of God — the full forgiveness of your sins however magnified and multiplied, your complete justification through the death and resurrection of Christ. We want you so to see the application of all this to your own soul that you may be able, like the poor man in Acts 3, to rise from your crippled condition and enter into the temple, leaping and walking and praising God. Be assured of it, dearly beloved, this is your privilege. There is nothing to hinder your enjoyment this moment, except the unbelief and legality of your own spirit. The enemy would keep you occupied with yourself to keep you from Christ. Watch against this. It is the most hopeless, gloomy labor to be seeking for anything in yourself. Look off unto Jesus. You will find all you want in Him. May the power of the Holy Spirit fill your whole soul with the fullness and preciousness of Christ so you may get into and continue in that holy and happy liberty which is the proper portion of every child of God.

You will further bear with us when we tell you that we discern in your letter a great deal of the legal element. This is an evil which is hateful to the Spirit of God and subversive of your own peace and comfort. You want to get into and breathe the genial atmosphere of free grace — that grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. You have very unworthy thoughts of God's perfect, eternal and unchangeable love. You seem to measure God by the standard of your own thoughts. You are reasoning from what you are to God, instead of believing what God is to you. This is a serious mistake, the mistake of many. We are all, more or less, prone to this grievous error. Very few live in the actual enjoyment of salvation by grace. There is the continual weighing of self in a legal balance. The principle of law is so deeply embedded in the heart, that nothing but the mighty power of the Spirit of God can deliver us from it and lead us into the practical understanding of that brief but most comprehensive statement of the apostle: "Ye are not under law, but under grace" (Rom. 6).

We hold it to be utterly impossible for a soul to enjoy settled peace so long as it is in any measure under the influence of this law-principle. There may be occasional gleams of sunshine, such as you describe in your own experience, but there never can be abiding gospel-peace as long as a single trace of the legal element is allowed to hold sway over the conscience. Abiding peace can only flow from a deep, thorough, practical sense of free grace, and that free grace acts towards the sinner on the settled ground of accomplished atonement.

Legality will always direct the eye inward upon self — yes, ever and only upon self. It will lead us to measure our standing before God by our own progress in personal holiness, our efforts, our services, our doings, our ways, our feelings, our something or other. All this produces spiritual darkness, gloomy uncertainty, mental bondage, intense soul-torture, depression, irritability, sourness of temper. And these things again react most prejudicially upon our whole moral being. They fling back their demoralizing influence upon the life and character. The hymn of joyous praise can only be occasionally sung. The supper feast — that most precious memorial of accomplished redemption — is abandoned, or if not abandoned, is gone through without freshness, anointing, power, elevation, or depth of spiritual tone. In this way, Christ is dishonored, the Holy Spirit is grieved, the testimony is marred, and the standard of practical Christianity greatly lowered. Moreover, the enemy, finding us in this condition of soul, cuts out ample work for us by acting in various ways upon our lusts and passions, which only gather strength from the very fact of our being under law, for as the apostle says, “The strength of sin is the law.” Thus the soul's history is summed up in two words, namely “lust and law,” and one is tossed like a ball from one to the other until free grace comes in and gives full deliverance from both. Grace gives you power over sin, but law gives sin power over you. Grace keeps you in the place of continual victory; law keeps you in the place of continual defeat.

May the Lord lead you and all His people into a clearer apprehension of grace, so that your peace may flow as a river, and the fruits of righteousness abound to the praise of His name!

We are not yet done with your letter, dear friend. We think we discern another feature in your case which tends to produce the spiritual depression of which you complain. If we mistake not, you are afflicted with an unhealthy, gloomy conscience. This is a sore evil, a heavy burden, a very great trial. We deeply feel for anyone laboring under this grievous malady, for it not only affects oneself, but all with whom one comes in contact. There is a wide difference indeed between a scrupulous or exacting conscience and a tender conscience. The former is governed by its own fears; the latter by the Word of God. The former induces feebleness and uncertainty in all one's ways; the latter, a holy stability and consistency. We can hardly conceive a more troublesome companion than a morbid, gloomy conscience. It is always creating difficulties for its possessor and placing stumbling-blocks in his way. But a tender conscience is invaluable. It resents only what ought to be resented. Its action is true and healthy. It does not morbidly seek out the cause of trouble and defilement, but being duly acted upon by the Word of God as applied by the Holy Spirit, it yields a true response and thus discharges with vigor its divinely appointed functions.

Think beloved, of all these things and seek to watch against them, and above all, believe against them. Get done with self-occupation, rise above your legal fears and cast away from you the workings of a morbid conscience. Be assured of it, these are three features in your case. They also are features of many a case — a self-occupied heart, a legal mind, a morbid conscience. Terrible evils! May the power of the Holy Spirit give you full deliverance from these three efficient agents of the devil! May He break every chain and give you to taste the true sweetness of spiritual liberty and communion of heart with a reconciled God and Father.

Do not any longer harass yourself with the questions, “Am I a converted person or am I a backslider?” You are in yourself a poor lost, unworthy, good-for-nothing creature. Yet God commends His love toward you in that He gave His only begotten Son to bear your curse and burden on the tree. Cast yourself on His boundless love, “a sea where none can sink.” See that all is done. The debt is paid. Satan is silenced. The law is magnified. Sin is put away. God is satisfied, yea, glorified. What more would you have? For what are

you waiting? You may say to us, "I know all this." You do say in your letter that you "can hardly expect to hear anything more than you have already read." Well, we want you to make all this your own by simple, childlike faith. We want to drive you out of every legal lurking place into the full blaze of divine and everlasting love. Cast away from you, we beseech you, dear friend, all your legal reasonings and seek to exercise a believing mind that just takes God at His word and takes possession, without a question, of all that He gives. We do not want to heal your wound slightly; to cry "peace, peace, when there is no peace." This would be cruelty rather than kindness. But we desire that you should "know the things which are freely given to you of God," and which are as clearly revealed in the Word as they are freely given through grace. We long to see you as happy as the gospel of the grace of God is fitted to make you. Then you will be able to sing hymns of praise and take your seat at the table of the Lord in happy, holy, elevated communion and worship.

May the good Lord meet you in your present need! May He disperse, by the bright and blessed beams of His love, the dark cloud that has settled down upon your spirit, and fill you with all joy and peace in believing. To Him we do most affectionately commend you, praying Him to make use of what we have written in blessing to your precious soul, and His name shall have all the praise throughout the everlasting ages.

Luke 9:23

SELF-DENIAL

“If only we exercise a little self denial every day, we shall get on to heaven very comfortably.” What a volume of wholesome practical truth in this brief utterance! The path of self-denial is the Christian's true path. “If any man,” says Christ, “will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Luke 9: 23). It is not, “let him deny certain things belonging to himself.” No, he must “deny himself,” and this is a “daily” thing. Each morning, as we rise and enter afresh upon the pathway of daily life, we have the same grand and all-important work before us, namely, to deny self.

This hateful self will meet us at every step, for, although we know through grace that “our old man is crucified” — is dead and buried out of God's sight — still this is only as regards our standing in Christ, according to God's view of us. We know that self has to be denied, judged and subjugated every day, every hour, every moment. The principle of our standing must be worked out in practice. God sees us perfect in Christ. We are not in the flesh, but the flesh is in us, and it must be denied and kept by the power of the Spirit.

Be it remembered, it is not merely in its grossness that self must be denied, but in its refinement — not merely in its low habits, but in its cultivated tastes — not merely in its roughness and rudeness, but in its most polished and elegant forms. This is not always seen. It too often happens that, like Saul, we spare that which we consider “the best” and bring the edge of the sword to bear only upon “the vile and refuse.” This will never do. It is self that must be denied. Yes, self in all its length and breadth — not merely some branches, but the great parent stem — not merely some accessories of nature, but nature itself. It is a comparatively easy matter to deny certain things pertaining to self, while self is pampered and gratified all the time. I may deny my appetite to feed my religious pride. I may starve myself to minister to my love of money. I may wear shabby clothes while I pride myself in sumptuous furniture and

splendid equipment. Hence, the need of being reminded that we must deny self.

Who can sum up all that is contained in this weighty word, self-denial? Self acts everywhere. In the closet, in the family, in the shop, in the railway car, in the street — everywhere, at all times and under all circumstances. It has its tastes and its habits, its prejudices, its likes and dislikes. It must be denied in all these. We may frequently detect ourselves liking our own image. This must be denied with uncommon decision.

Then again in matters of religion, we like those who suit us, who agree and sympathize with us, who admire our opinions or mode of propounding them. All this must be brought under the sharp edge of the knife of self-denial. If not, we may find ourselves despising some dear and honored Christian simply because of something which does not suit us. On the other hand, we may praise to the skies some hollow, worthless character, just because of some feature which we like. Indeed, of all the ten thousand shapes which self assumes, there is not one more hateful than that of religion. Clad in this garb it will make itself the center of a clique, confine its affections within that narrow enclosure, and call that Christian communion. From this contracted circle, it will diligently expel everyone who happens to have a single disagreeable point or angle. It will obstinately refuse to accommodate itself to the scruples and infirmities of others. As to these it will not yield a single hair's breadth, while at the same time, it will surrender any amount of truth to hold fellowship with its own image. All this is terrible and should be most diligently guarded against.

If my reader will study carefully 1 Corinthians 8: 10, he will find a most precious lesson on the subject of self-denial. The heading of this entire section might be thus worded, "*Any length in self-denial; not an inch in surrendering truth.*" This should ever be the Christian's motto. If it be merely a question of self, surrender all; if it be a question of truth, surrender nothing. "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Cor. 8: 13). Noble resolution! May we have grace to carry it out!

Again, “Though I be free from all, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.... I am made all things to all, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9: 19-22). “Let no man seek his own” — the very thing we are so ready to seek. “But every man another's wealth” — the very last thing we feel disposed to do.

It is important and very needful to observe that when the apostle declares that he was “made all things to all,” it was entirely a matter of self-denial and not of self-indulgence. He neither indulged himself nor surrendered a single iota of the truth of God, but made himself servant to all for their good and God's glory. This is our model. May the Lord endow us with grace to imitate it! We are called to surrender not only our points and angles, prejudices and preferences, but also our personal rights for the profit of others. This is the Christian's daily business, and it is as he is enabled to discharge it that he will walk in the footsteps of Jesus and “get on comfortably to heaven.”

Luke 10: 25-35

THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL

We desire to dwell for a little upon two grand questions which are suggested and answered in our Lord's interview with the lawyer, namely, What is written in the law? What is revealed in the gospel? These questions have only to be named to secure the attention and awaken the interest of every intelligent and thoughtful reader. It is surely most needful to understand the object, nature and range of the law; and in no way can these things be so clearly seen as when examined in contrast with the glorious gospel of God's free grace in Christ. Let us then proceed to enquire,

What Is Written In The Law?

This question may be very simply answered. The law reveals what man ought to do. This is what is written in the law. We often hear it said that "The law is the transcript of the mind of God." This definition is altogether defective. What idea should we have of God were we to regard "the ten words" uttered on the top of Mount Sinai, mid thunders and lightnings, blackness, darkness and tempest, as the transcript of His mind? How should we know God if "the ministration of death and condemnation, written and engraven in stones," is the transcript of His mind? May we not, with great justice, inquire of the framers of the above most objectionable definition, "Is there nothing in the mind of God except death and condemnation? Is there nothing in the mind of God except thou shalt and thou shalt not? If there be more than these, then it is a mistake to affirm that "The law is the transcript of the mind of God." If it be said that "The law declares the mind of God as to what man ought to do," we have no objection to offer, for that is what we hold the law to be. But then, let the reader remember that the declaration of what man ought to do and the revelation of what God is, are two totally different things. The former is the law, the latter is the gospel. Both are perfect — divinely perfect — but they stand in vivid contrast; the one is perfect to condemn, the other is perfect to save.

Let us see how this point is unfolded in the scripture before us. "And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, what is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And He said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live."

It in no wise interferes with the teaching of this passage to say that the lawyer stood up with the wicked intention of tempting Christ, or that he could flippantly and unfeelingly repeat what was written in the law. What we have to see is this, that the great law-question, "What must I do?" is here proposed and answered. If a man is to get life by keeping the commandments, he must keep them. There is no mystery about this. It is so plain that the question is, "How readest thou?" A man has only to read Exodus 20 to know his duty toward God and his duty toward his neighbor.

But, then, dear reader, the solemn inquiry is, "Have I done my duty? Have I loved God with all my heart and my neighbor as myself?" Alas! Alas! I have not; far, very far from it. I have proved times without number that I loved many things which are quite contrary to God; that I have indulged in lusts and pleasures which God condemns; that my will is most thoroughly opposed to God's will; that I hate the things which He loves, and love the things which He hates. In a word, it is perfectly manifest that I have not loved God with all my heart, that I have not given Him a single affection of my heart. And as to my neighbor, have I loved him as myself? Have I, at all times and under all circumstances, as carefully sought to promote my neighbor's interests as though they were my own? Have I rejoiced as unfeignedly in his prosperity as in my own? I dare not answer in the affirmative. I have only to bow my head and confess that I have utterly and shamefully failed in my duty both toward God and toward my neighbor. I own it most fully to be my duty to love God with all my heart and my neighbor as myself, but I own as fully that I have done neither the one nor the other.

What then can the law do for me? Curse me and slay me on the spot! Is there no mercy? Not in the law! There is no mercy at

Mount Sinai. If a man stands before that fiery mount, the tremendous alternative is duty or damnation. There is no middle ground. "This do, and thou shalt live" is the solemn, conclusive and emphatic language of the law. "The man that doeth these things shall live in them," but on the other hand, "cursed is everyone (without a single exception) that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3: 10). "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses" (Heb. 10: 28).

The law makes no provision for imperfect obedience, however sincere. It makes no allowance for infirmity. Its one brief, pointed inquiry is, "Have you continued in all things?" If you say No (and who can say otherwise?) it can only curse you. Why? *Because it is perfect.* Were it to pass over a single transgression, it would not be a perfect law. Its very perfection insures the condemnation of the transgressor. "As many as are of works of law (that is, as many as work on the principle, stand on the ground, occupy the platform of works of law) are under the curse," and cannot possibly be anything else. This establishes the point unanswerably. The law can only prove to be a ministration of death and condemnation to the sinner, simply because he is a sinner and "the law is holy, and just, and good." It is no use for a man to say, "I am not looking to the law for life or justification, but merely as a rule and for sanctification." As a rule for what? For the sanctification of what? If you say, "for my old nature," the answer is, so far from being "a rule of life," it is "a ministration of death;" and so far from sanctifying the flesh, it condemns it, root and branch. If, on the other hand, you say it is for the new nature, then is your mistake equally obvious, since the apostle expressly declares that "the law is not made for a righteous man" (1 Tim. 1: 9).

This is plain enough for anyone who is content to take the Holy Scriptures as his guide. The law can neither be the ground of life nor the rule of life to a fallen creature; neither can it be the ground of righteousness nor the power of sanctification. "By deeds of law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3: 20). This one passage is conclusive both as to justification and sanctification. No flesh can be justified in

God's sight by the law; and as to sanctification, how can I ever become holy by means of that which only shows me my ungodliness? If I measure a short board by a true measure I must prove it short. A true measure cannot make a short board the proper length, it can only show what it is. Just so with the law and the sinner. Again, "The law worketh wrath" (Rom. 4: 15). How is this? Because it is pure and I am impure.

The law and the sinner are complete opposites — wholly irreconcilable. I must get a new nature, stand upon new ground, be in the new creation, before I can delight in the law of God. "I delight in the law of God *after the inward man*" (Rom. 7: 22). But how do I get this "inward man," this new nature? How do I get into the new creation? Not by works of law of any shape or description, but by faith of Jesus Christ. I become united to Christ in the power of a new and endless life, upon which the law has no claim. I died in Christ. Hence the law has no further demand on me. If a man is in prison for murder and dies there, the law is done with him, inasmuch as the life in which the crime was committed is gone. Thus it is with the sinner who believes in Jesus. God sees him to be dead. His old man is crucified. The sentence of the law has been put into execution upon him in the Person of Christ. Had it been executed upon himself, it would have been death eternal, but having been executed upon Christ, His death is of infinite, divine and eternal effectiveness. Moreover, having the power of eternal life in Himself, He rose, as a Conqueror from the tomb after having met every claim. And wonderful to declare, the believer, having died in Him, now lives in Him forever. Christ is his life; Christ is his righteousness; Christ is his rule of life; Christ is his model; Christ is his hope; Christ is his all and in all (Rom. 6, 7; Gal. 2: 20-21; Gal. 3, Gal. 4; Eph. 2: 4-6; Col. 2: 10-15).

Some may feel disposed to inquire, "If the law cannot yield life, furnish righteousness or promote sanctification, then for what end was it given?" The apostle anticipates and answers this question. "Wherefore then the law? It was added because of transgression, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made" (Gal. 3: 19). We also read, "Moreover, the law entered (or came in by the way, between the promise and the accomplishment) that the offense might

abound” (Rom. 5: 20). These two passages declare in simplest terms the object of the law. It is not said, “the law entered in order that we might get life, righteousness or sanctification by it,” but quite the opposite. It was “because of transgression” and “that the offense might abound.” Where is it said in Scripture that the law was given that we might get life, righteousness or sanctification by it? Nowhere. But it is expressly declared that “the law was added because of transgression” and that “it came in by the way that the offense might abound.” It is not possible to conceive two objects more diverse.

The legal system speaks of life, righteousness and sanctification by law; the Scripture, on the contrary, speaks of “offense,” “transgression” and “wrath.” Why? Because we are sinners and the law is holy. It demands strength and we are weak; it demands life in order to keep it, and we are dead; it demands perfection in all things, and we are perfect in nothing; it is holy and just and good, and we are unholy, unjust and bad. Thus it stands between us and the law; and it matters not in the least, regarding the principle of the law, whether we are regenerate or unregenerate, believers or unbelievers, saints or sinners. The law knows nothing of any such distinctions. It is addressed to man in the flesh, in his old-Adam condition, in his old-creation standing. It tells him what he ought to do for God, and inasmuch as he has not done that, it curses him: it cannot do anything else. It shows him no mercy, but leaves him in the place of death and condemnation.

Thus much as to “what is written in the law.” Let us now proceed to inquire in the second place,

What Is In The Gospel?

This is unfolded with uncommon beauty and power in the touching parable of “the Good Samaritan.” The lawyer, like all legalists, “willing to justify himself,” sought to ascertain who was his neighbor. In reply, our blessed Lord draws a picture in which is most vividly presented the true condition of every sinner, be he lawyer or else. “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment and wounded him and departed, leaving him half dead.” What a picture

of man's career and man's condition! "A certain man" — the writer or the reader of these lines — "went down." How true! Reader, is it not so? Has not your course ever been a downward one? Have you ever, when left to yourself, taken a step upward, a step in the right direction? There is no use in generalizing, in making statements about mankind, the whole human race, Adam's posterity and the like. What we want is to bring the matter home to ourselves and say, each for himself, "I am the 'certain man' of this beautiful parable; it is myself that appears in the foreground of this masterly picture; my course has been a downward one; I have gone down from the innocency of childhood to the folly of youth, and from the folly of youth to the matured wickedness of manhood, and here I am, stripped of every shred in which I might wrap myself; wounded in every region of my moral being; and having the painful consciousness that death has already begun its terrible work in me."

Such is the career, such the condition of every sinner — his career, downward — his condition, death. What is to be done? Can he keep the law? Alas! he is not able to move. Can the "priest" do anything for him? Nothing! He has no sacrifice and no ability to rise and get one. Can the "Levite" not help him? No! He is so polluted with his wounds and bruises that neither Levite nor priest could touch him. In a word, neither law nor ordinances can meet his case. He is utterly ruined. He has destroyed himself. The law has flung him overboard as a defiled, good-for-nothing, condemned thing. It is useless talking to him about the law or asking him will he take it as a means of justification, a rule of life or the power of sanctification. It has cursed, condemned and set him aside altogether, and he has only to cry out from the profound and awful depths of his moral ruin, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Now, it is when a man is really brought to this point that he is in a position to see the moral grandeur of the gospel. It is when he has discovered his own guilt, misery and ruin, and also his entire inability to meet the just and holy claims of the law, or profit in any wise by the appliances of the legal system in its most attractive forms, that he is prepared to appreciate the ample provisions of the grace of God.

These facts are most strikingly illustrated in the scene before us. When the poor man had gone down from Jerusalem to Jericho, from the city of God to the city of the curse (Joshua 6: 26; 1 Kings 16: 33-34); when he lay stripped, wounded and half-dead; when both priest and Levite had turned from him and gone their way; it was just then that he was in a position to prove the grace of the Good Samaritan who assuredly is none other than the blessed Lord Jesus Himself, blessed forever be His precious name! He appears in the form of a Samaritan only to enhance the grace that breathes forth upon our souls in this lovely scene. "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." Hence, had the Jew in this parable had sufficient strength, he would not, we may safely affirm, have permitted the stranger to touch him. But he was so far gone, so powerless, so under the power of death, that the gracious Samaritan had it all his own way. And what a tender way it was!

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence and gave them to the host and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee."

Here is what is revealed in the gospel. Man has ruined himself. He has gone down from God. He has fallen under the power of the enemy. He is the victim of Satan, the slave of sin, the subject of death. His case is hopeless, so far as he is concerned. But, blessed be God, the true Samaritan has come down into all the ruin. The Son of God left His Father's bosom, His eternal dwelling-place, came down into this world to remedy our ruin, to bear our guilt, to endure the wrath of God in our place. All this He did, beloved reader, as the expression of His own tender compassion and love. "He had compassion" and came to bind up our wounds, to pour "the wine and oil" of His own most precious grace into our souls, to heal, restore and bless us, to put us into His own position according to the power which had brought Him into ours, to make ample provision for all our need until that bright and happy moment when we shall be ushered into His presence to go no more out forever.

The page of inspiration does not present a more touching picture than that which the Master's pen has drawn for us in "The Good Samaritan." It is perfectly beautiful and beautifully perfect. It is divine. Every expression is filled with exquisite moral loveliness. "He came where he was" — not half-way or nine-tenths of the way, but all the way. "And when he saw him," what then? Did he turn away in disgust at his appearance and despair of his condition? Ah! no; "He had compassion on him." His tender heart yearned over him. He cared not what he was or who he was. Jew or Gentile, it mattered not; the streams of tender compassion came gushing up from the deep fountains of a heart that found its own delight in ministering to every form of human need. Was this "compassion" a mere movement of sentimentality — a momentary feeling uttering itself in empty words and then passing away? No; it was a real, living, acting thing, expressing itself in the most unmistakable manner. "He went to him." For what? To meet his every need and not to leave him until he had placed him in a position of security, rest and blessing.

Nor was this all. Not only did this gracious stranger fully meet the wounded one's present need, but before leaving, he spoke these touching words, "Take care of him." How this must have melted the poor man's heart. Such kindness! And all from a stranger, from one with whom he would naturally have "no friendly dealings."

Finally, as if to complete the picture, he says, "when I come again." He awakens in the heart by these last words, "the blessed hope" of seeing him again. What a lovely picture! And yet it is all a divine reality. It is the simple story of our blessed Jesus who, in His tender compassion, looked upon us in our low and utterly hopeless condition, left His eternal dwelling-place of light and love, took upon Himself the likeness of sinful flesh, was made of a woman, made under the law, lived a spotless life, and fulfilled a perfect ministry down here for 33 years, and finally died on the cross as a perfect atonement for sin so that God might be just and the Justifier of any poor, ungodly, convicted sinner that simply trusts in Jesus.

Yes, dear reader, whoever you are, high or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, Jesus has done all this; and He is now at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. The One who was nailed to

the cross for us, is now on the throne. Eternal Justice has wreathed His sacred brow with the wreath of victory, and that, be it remembered, on our behalf. Nor is this all. He has said, "I will come again." Precious words! Would *you* be glad to see Him? Do you know Him as the Good Samaritan? Have you felt His loving hand binding up your spiritual wounds? Have you known the healing virtues of His oil, and the restoring, invigorating, and cheering influence of His wine! Have you heard Him speak the thrilling words, "Take care of him?" If so, then, surely, you will be glad to see His face: you will cherish in your heart's tender affections the blessed hope of seeing Him as He is and of being like Him and with Him forever. The Lord grant it may be so with you, beloved reader, and then you will be able to appreciate the immense difference between the law and the gospel — between what we ought to do for God and what God has done for us — between what we are to Him and what He is to us — between "do and live" and "live and do" — between "the righteousness of the law" and "the righteousness of faith."

May the blessing of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit rest upon the reader of these lines, now, henceforth and forevermore!

DEAD TO THE LAW

"For I through law, am dead to law, that I might live to God" (Gal. 2: 19). This is a weighty word and much needed just now. The spiritual apprehension of the truth set forth will preserve the soul from two errors which are very common in the professing Church — legality on the one hand and licentiousness on the other. Were we to compare these two evils, were we compelled to choose between them, we would undoubtedly prefer the former. We would much rather see a man under the authority of the law of Moses than one living in lawlessness and self-indulgence. Of course, we know that neither is right and that Christianity gives us something quite different, but we have much more respect for a man who, seeing nothing beyond Moses and regarding the law of Moses as the only divine standard by which his conduct is to be regulated, bows down in a spirit of reverence to its authority, than for one who seeks to get rid of that law so he may please himself. Thank God, the truth of the

gospel gives us the divine remedy for both cases. But how? Does it teach us that the law is dead? No! What then? It teaches that the *believer* is dead. "I through law am dead to law." And to what end? That I may please myself? That I may seek my own profit and pleasure? By no means, but "that I may live to God."

Here lies the grand and all-important truth — a truth lying at the very base of the entire Christian system, and without which we can have no just sense of what Christianity is at all. So in Romans 7 we read, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also have become dead to the law (not the law is dead) by the body of Christ, in order that ye may be to another (not to yourselves, but) even to Him that was raised from the dead, that ye might bring forth fruit unto God" (v. 4). Again, "But now ye are delivered from the law, being dead to that wherein ye were held, that ye might serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter" (v. 6).* Mark, it is that we may serve, not that we may please ourselves. We have been delivered from the intolerable yoke of Moses that we may wear the "easy yoke of Christ," not that we may give a loose run to nature.

{*The marginal reading of verse 6 is doubtless the correct one. It is well to note this, as also the difference between the way in which the apostle uses the illustration. It is the husband who dies, but in the application, it is the believer, not the law. Not seeing this had led many into the error of teaching that the law is dead, whereas in 1 Timothy 1: 8, the apostle expressly declares, not that the law is dead, but the very reverse; "We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully." And how is it to be used lawfully? "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless." It is of the utmost importance that the reader should be clear as to this.}

There is something shocking to a serious mind in the thought of men appealing to certain principles of the gospel to establish a plea for the indulgence of the flesh. They want to fling aside the authority of Moses, not that they may enjoy the authority of Christ, but merely to indulge self. But it is vain. It cannot be done with any shadow of truth, for it is never said in Scripture that the law is dead or abrogated, but it is said — and urged repeatedly — that the believer is dead to the law and dead to sin so he may taste the

sweetness of living unto God, of having his fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

We earnestly commend this weighty subject to the attention of the reader. He will find it fully unfolded in Romans 4 and Romans 5, Galatians 3 and Galatians 4. A right understanding of it will solve a thousand difficulties and answer a thousand questions, and deliver the soul from a vast mass of error and confusion. May God give His own Word power over the heart and conscience!

GRACE AND HOLINESS

Thank God we are under grace. But does this blessed fact weaken in any way the truth that “Holiness becometh God's house forever?” Has it ceased to be true that “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints; and to be held in reverence of all those who are about Him?” Is the standard of holiness lower for the Church of God now than it was for Israel of old? Has it ceased to be true that “our God is a consuming fire?” Is evil to be tolerated because “we are not under law, but under grace?” Why were many of the Corinthians weak and sickly? Why did many of them die? Why were Ananias and Sapphira struck dead in a moment? Did that solemn judgment touch the truth that the Church was under grace? Assuredly not. But neither did grace hinder the action of judgment. God can no more tolerate evil in His assembly now, than He could in the days of Achan.

You say, “We must not draw comparisons between God's dealings with His earthly people and His dealings with His Church.” What is the meaning of the following words in 1 Corinthians 10? “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.... Now all these things happened unto

them for examples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”

Is not this drawing a comparison between God's dealings with His earthly people and His Church now? Yes indeed; and well will it be for us all to ponder and be admonished by the comparison. It would be sad indeed if we were to plead from the pure and precious grace in which we stand to lower the standard of holiness. We are called to purge out the old leaven on the blessed ground that “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.” Is not this “drawing a comparison?” The assembly at Corinth was commanded — woe be unto them if they had refused — to put away from among them the wicked person, to deliver him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh.

True, they were not called to stone him or to burn him; and here we have a contrast rather than a comparison. But they had to put him out from among them if they would have the divine presence in their midst. “Thy testimonies are very sure; holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, *forever*.” Can you not praise Him for the holiness as well as the grace? Can you not, as the standard of holiness rises before you, add your doxology, “Blessed be His name forever and ever! Amen and amen?” We trust you can.

We must never forget that, while we stand in grace, we are to walk in holiness; and as regards the assembly, if we refuse to judge bad doctrine and bad morals, we are not on the ground of the Assembly of God at all. People say we must not judge; God says we must. “Do not ye judge them that are *within*? But them that are *without* God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” If the assembly at Corinth had refused to judge that wicked person, it would have forfeited all title to be regarded as the assembly of God, and all who feared the Lord would have had to leave it. It is a very solemn matter indeed to take the ground of the Assembly of God. All who do so have to bear in mind that it is not at all a question of whom we can receive or what we can tolerate, but what is worthy of God? We hear a great deal now-a-days about the “broad” and the “narrow;” *we have just to be as broad and as narrow as the Word of God.*

ISOLATION

It is one of our great difficulties at the present moment — indeed it has ever been a difficulty — *to combine a narrow path with a wide heart*. There is very much on all sides tending to produce isolation. We cannot deny it. Links of human friendship seem so fragile; so many things crop up to shake confidence; so many things which one cannot possibly sanction, that the path becomes more and more isolated.

All this is unquestionably true. But we must be very careful as to how we meet this condition of things. We have little idea how much depends on the spirit in which we carry ourselves in the midst of scenes and circumstances which, all must admit, are uniquely trying.

For example, I may retreat in upon myself and become bitter, gloomy, severe, repulsive, withered up, having no heart for the Lord's people, for His service, for the holy and happy exercises of the assembly. I may become barren of good works, having no sympathy with the poor, the sick, the sorrowful. I may live in the narrow circle in which I have withdrawn, thinking only of myself and my personal and family interests.

What can be more miserable than this? It is the most deplorable selfishness, but we do not see it because we are blinded by our inordinate occupation with other people's failures.

Now it is a very easy matter to find flaws and faults in our brethren and friends. But the question is, How are we to meet these things? Is it by retreating in upon ourselves? Never! To do this is to render ourselves as miserable in ourselves as we are worthless, and worse than worthless, to others. There are few things more pitiable than what we call "a disappointed man." He is always finding fault with others. He has never discovered the real root of the matter or the true secret of dealing with it. He has retired, but within himself. He is isolated, but his isolation is utterly false. He is miserable; and he will make all who come under his influence — all who are weak and foolish enough to listen to him — as miserable as himself. He has completely broken down in his practical career; he has

succumbed to the difficulties of his time and proved himself wholly unequal to meet the stern realities of actual life. Then, instead of seeing and confessing this, he retires into his own narrow circle and finds fault with everyone except himself.

How truly delightful and refreshing to turn from this dismal picture to the only perfect Man who ever trod this earth! His path was indeed an isolated one — none more so. He had no sympathy with the scene around Him. “The world knew Him not.” “He came unto His own [Israel], and His own received Him not.” “He looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but He found none.” Even His own beloved disciples failed to sympathize with, or understand Him. They slept on the mount of transfiguration in the presence of His glory and they slept in the Garden of Gethsemane in the presence of His agony. They roused Him out of His sleep with their unbelieving fears and were continually intruding upon Him with their ignorant questions and foolish notions.

How did He meet all this? In perfect grace, patience and tenderness. He answered their questions; He corrected their notions; He hushed their fears; He solved their difficulties; He met their need; He made allowance for their infirmities; He gave them credit for devotedness in the moment of desertion; He looked at them through His own loving eyes and loved them, notwithstanding all. “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.”

Christian reader, let us seek to drink into our blessed Master's spirit and walk in His footsteps. Then our isolation will be of the right kind, and though our path may be narrow, the heart will be large.

A WORKMAN'S MOTTO

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15: 58).

Here we have an uncommonly fine motto for the Christian workman, and every Christian ought to be a workman. It presents a

most valuable balance for the heart. We have immovable stability linked with unceasing activity.

This is of the utmost importance. There are some of us who are such sticklers for what we call *principle* that we seem almost afraid to embark in any scheme of large-hearted Christian activity. On the other hand, some of us are so bent on what we call *service* that in order to reach desired ends and realize noticeable results, we do not hesitate to overstep the boundary line of sound principle.

Now, our motto supplies a divine antidote for both these evils. It furnishes a solid basis on which we are to stand with steadfast purpose and immovable decision. We are not to be moved the breadth of a hair from the narrow path of divine truth, though tempted to do so by the most forcible argument of a plausible expediency. "To obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams."

Noble words! May they be engraved in characters deep and broad on every workman's heart. They are absolutely invaluable, and particularly so in this our day when there is such willfulness in our mode of working, such erratic schemes of service, such self-pleasing, such a strong tendency to do that which is right in our own eyes, such a practical ignoring of the supreme authority of Holy Scripture.

It fills the thoughtful observer of the present condition of things with the very gravest apprehensions as he sees the positive and deliberate throwing aside of the Word of God, even by those who professedly admit it to be the Word of God. We are not speaking of the insolence of open and avowed infidelity, but of the heartless indifference of respectable orthodoxy. There are millions who profess to believe the Bible is the Word of God, who, nevertheless, do not have the smallest idea of submitting themselves absolutely to its authority. The human will is dominant. Human reason bears sway. Expediency commands the heart. The holy principles of divine revelation are swept away like autumn leaves or the dust of the threshing-floor before the vehement blast of popular opinion.

How immensely valuable and important in view of all this, is the first part of our workman's motto! "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and immovable." The "therefore" throws the soul back upon the solid foundation laid in the previous part of the chapter in which the apostle unfolds the most sublime and precious truth that can possibly engage the Christian's heart — truth which lifts the soul completely above the dark and chilling mists of the old creation and plants it on the solid rock of resurrection. It is on this rock we are exhorted to be steadfast and immovable. It is not an obstinate adherence to our own notions — to some favorite dogma or theory which we have adopted — or to any special school of doctrine. It is not anything of this kind, but a firm grasp and faithful confession of the whole truth of God of which a risen Christ is the everlasting Center.

But we have to remember the other side of our motto. The Christian workman has something more to do than to stand firmly on the ground of truth. He has to cultivate the lovely activities of grace. He is called to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord." *The basis of sound principle must never be abandoned, but the work of the Lord must be diligently carried on.* There are some who are so afraid of doing mischief that they do nothing; and others, who rather than not be doing something, will do wrong. Our motto corrects both. It teaches us to set our faces as a flint where truth is involved; while on the other hand, it leads us to go forth in largeness of heart and throw all our energies into the work of the Lord.

Let the Christian reader specially note the expression, "The work of the Lord." We are not to imagine for a moment that all which engages the energies of professing Christians is entitled to be designated "the work of the Lord." It is far from it! We see a mass of things undertaken as service for the Lord with which a spiritual person could not possibly connect the holy name of Christ. We desire to have the conscience exercised as to the work in which we embark. We deeply feel how needful it is in this day of willfulness, laxity and wild liberalism, to own the authority of Christ in all that we put our hands to, in the way of work or service. Blessed be His name, He permits us to connect Him with the most trivial and commonplace activities of daily life. We can even eat and drink in

His holy name and to His glory. The sphere of service is wide enough; it is only limited by that weighty clause, "The work of the Lord." The Christian workman must not engage in any work which does not place itself under that most holy and all-important heading. He must, before he enters upon any service, ask himself this great practical question, "Can this honestly be called the work of the Lord?"

Luke 11: 7

“HE FROM WITHIN”

The Word of God judges the human heart with perfect accuracy and discloses all its most secret springs of thought and action. Indeed, this is one special way in which we may know that it is the Word of God. The poor Samaritan woman could say, “Come, see a Man that told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” She judged that a Man who could lay bare before her the deep secrets of her heart and of her life, must needs be the long expected Messiah, and she judged rightly. In like manner, we may say, “Come, see a book that told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Word of God?” No one can read the heart but God. No book can disclose the human heart but God's book. Inasmuch as the Bible perfectly discloses the human heart, we may know, even had we no other mode of judging, that the Bible is the Word of God.

Such an argument may be utterly condemned by an infidel, a skeptic or a rationalist who must, therefore, be met on other grounds. But it is impossible for any upright mind to ponder the simple fact that the Bible perfectly unfolds man's very nature, his thoughts, his feelings, his desires, his affections, his imaginations, the most secret chambers of his moral being, and not be convinced that the Bible is the very Word of God which is “quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4: 12).

Nor is it merely in the Word of God as a whole that we observe this intense power of “discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart,” but also in detached passages, in brief sentences, in a verse or clause of a verse. Look for instance at the three words which appear at the head of this article. What a revelation of the selfishness of the human heart do these words contain! What an expression of the narrow enclosure within which it lives! What a brief, pointed, concise commentary upon man's reluctance to be intruded upon when he has made arrangements for his personal

ease! Who can read them and not see in them a perfect mirror in which the very pulsations of his own heart are reflected?

We do not like to be intruded upon when we have retired from the scene around us into the narrow circle of our personal or domestic enjoyment. When we have drawn the curtains, made ready the fire, opened the desk or the book, we do not like to have to respond to a call from without. It is at such times we can enter into the words, "He from within." They really contain a volume of profound moral truth. They graphically and vividly set forth an attitude of heart in which we are all far too frequently to be found. We are all too ready when a call comes, to send forth our answer "from within." We are too prone to say, "Dear me! this is a most inconvenient moment for that person to call, just when I am so particularly engaged." All this is precisely the attitude of heart set forth in the selfish words, "He from within."

And what answer is sure to be returned from the one who speaks "from within?" Just what might be expected. "Trouble me not." The man who has retired into the narrow circle of his own personal ease and enjoyment, closed his door and drawn his curtains around him, does not like to be "troubled" by anyone. Such an one is sure to say, even though appealed to as a "friend," "I cannot rise." And why could he not "rise?" Because "the door was shut and his children were with him in bed." His reasons for not rising were all selfish, and when he did rise it was only from a selfish desire to avoid further trouble. *Insistence* prevailed over a selfishness which was insensitive to the appeals of friendship.

How unlike all this was the blessed Lord Jesus Christ! His door was never shut. He never answered "from within." He ever had a ready response to every needy applicant. He had not time to eat bread or take rest, so occupied was He with human need. He could say, "I forget to eat My meat," so entirely was He given up to the service of others. He never murmured on account of the ceaseless intrusion of needy humanity. He kept no record of all He had to do, nor did He ever complain of it. "He went about doing good." His food and His drink were to do the will of Him who sent Him and to finish His work. To Him the poor and the needy, the heavy-laden and the heart-broken, the outcast and the wretched, the homeless and

the stranger, the widow and the orphan, the diseased and the desolate, might all flock in the full assurance of finding in Him a fountain ever flowing and sending forth in all directions the abundant streams of living sympathy toward every possible form of human need. The door of His heart was always wide open. He never said to any son of want or child of sorrow, "I cannot rise and give thee." He was ready to "arise and go" with every needy applicant and His gracious word ever was "Give."

Such was Jesus when down here, and He is still "the very same, whose glory fills all heaven above." His door stands open so the vilest, the guiltiest and the neediest of sinners are welcome. They can have their crimson and scarlet sins washed away in His atoning blood. They can have pardon and peace, life and righteousness, heaven and its eternal weight of glory, all as the free gift of grace divine. And while on their way from grace to glory, they can have all the love of His heart and the strength of His shoulder — that heart which told forth its affection on the cross and that shoulder which shall bear up the pillars of divine government forever.

Now, Christian reader, permit the word of exhortation. Remember that Christ is your life and that Christianity is nothing less than the living exhibition of Christ in your daily walk. Christianity is not a set of opinions to be defended or a set of ordinances to be observed. It is far more than these. It expresses itself thus, "To me to live is Christ." This is Christianity. May we know and manifest its power! May we be more occupied with Him who is our life! Then we too shall keep the door of the heart open to the sorrows, the miseries, the wants and the woes of fallen and suffering humanity. We shall be ready to "rise and give" to every case of real need. If we cannot give "three loaves" or the price of them, we shall at least give the look of love, the word of kindness, the tear of sympathy, the words of fervent intercession. And in no case shall we allow ourselves to get into the attitude of intense selfishness expressed in the words, "he from within." "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

Luke 12

Now and Then; or, Time and Eternity.

The Substance of a Lecture on Luke 12.

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." 2 Cor. 4:18.

The principles of truth laid down in Luke 12 are of the most solemn and searching character. Their practical bearing is such as to render them, in a day like the present, of the very last importance. Worldly-mindedness and carnality cannot live in the light of the truth here set forth. They are withered up by the roots. If one were asked to give a brief and comprehensive title to this most precious section of inspiration, it might be entitled "Time in the light of Eternity." The Lord evidently designed to set His disciples in the light of that world where everything is the direct opposite of that which obtains here — to bring their hearts under the holy influence of unseen things, and their lives under the power and authority of heavenly principles. Such being the faithful purpose of the Divine Teacher, He lays the solid foundation for His superstructure of doctrine with these searching words, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy." There must be no undercurrent in the soul. The deep springs of thought must be laid bare. We must allow the pure beams of heaven's light to penetrate the most profound depths of our moral being. We must not have any discrepancy between the hidden judgement of the soul and the style of our phraseology: between the bent of the life, and the profession of the lips. In a word, we specially need the grace of "an honest and a good heart," in order to profit by this wondrous compendium of practical truth.

We are too apt to give an indifferent hearing or a cold assent to *home truth*. We do not like it. We prefer interesting speculations about the mere letter of scripture, points of doctrine, or questions of prophecy, because we can indulge these in immediate connection with all sorts of worldly-mindedness, covetous practices, and self-

indulgence. But ponderous principles of truth, bearing down upon the conscience in all their magnitude and flesh-cutting power, who can bear, save those who, through grace, are seeking to purge themselves from "the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy?" This leaven is of a most specious character, takes various shapes, and is, therefore, most dangerous. Indeed, wherever it exists, there is a most positive and insurmountable barrier placed before the soul in its progress in experimental knowledge and practical holiness. If I do not expose my *whole soul* to the action of divine truth; if I am closing up some corner or crevice from the light thereof; if I am cherishing some secret reserve; if I am dishonestly seeking to accommodate the truth to my own standard of practice, or parry its keen edge from my conscience — then, assuredly, I am defiled by the leaven of hypocrisy; and my growth in likeness to Christ is a moral impossibility. Hence, therefore, it is imperative upon every disciple of Christ to search, and see that nothing of this abominable leaven is allowed in the secret chambers of his heart. Let us, by the grace of God, put and keep it far away, so that we may be able, on all occasions, to say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

{The meaning which is generally attached to hypocrisy is a false profession of religion. It assuredly means this; but it means much more. A tacit assent to principles which do not govern the conduct deserves the appellation of hypocrisy. Looking at the subject in this point of view, we may all find occasion of deep humiliation before the Lord. How often do we hearken to truth, and give an apparently full assent thereto, and yet there is no exhibition of the power of it in the life; it does not govern the conduct. If this be not morally connected with the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, it is, at least, a serious evil, and entirely hostile to our progress in the divine life. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."}

But not only is hypocrisy utterly subversive of spiritual progress, it also entirely fails in attaining the object which it proposes to itself; "for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known." Every man will find his level; and every thought will be brought to light. What the truth would do *now*, the judgement-seat will do *then*. Every grade and shade of hypocrisy will be unmasked by the light which shall shine forth from the

judgement seat of Christ. Nothing will be allowed to escape. all will be reality *then*, though there is so much fallacy *now*. Moreover, everything will get its proper name *then*, though it be misnamed *now*. Worldly-mindedness is called prudence; a grasping, covetous spirit is called foresight; and self-indulgence and personal aggrandisement are called judicious management and laudable diligence in business. Thus it is *now*; but *then* it will be quite the reverse. All things will be seen in their true colours, and called by their true names, before the judgement-seat. Wherefore, it is the wisdom of the disciple to act in the light of that day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed. As to this, he is placed on a vantage ground, for, says the apostle, "we must all (saints and sinners — though not at the same time, nor on the same ground) be manifested (*phanerothernai*) before the judgement-seat of Christ." Should this disturb the disciple's mind? Assuredly not, if his heart be so purged of the leaven of hypocrisy and his soul so thoroughly grounded, by the teaching of God the Holy Ghost, in the great foundation truth set forth in this very chapter (2 Cor. 5), namely, that Christ is his life, and Christ his righteousness; that he can say, "we are manifested (*pephanerometha*, — an inflection of the same word as is used at verse 10), unto God, and I trust also are manifested in your consciences."

But if he be deficient in this peace of conscience and transparent honesty of heart, there is no doubt but that the thought of the judgement-seat will disturb his spirit. Hence we see that in the Lord's teaching, in Luke 12, He sets the consciences of His disciples directly in the light of the judgement-seat. "And I say unto you, *my friends*, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him." "The fear of man bringeth a snare," and is closely connected with "the leaven of the Pharisees." But "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and causes a man always so to carry himself — so to think, speak, and act — as in the full blaze of the light of Christ's judgement seat. This would impart immense dignity and elevation to the character, while it would effectually nip, in the earliest bud, the spirit of haughty independence, by keeping the soul under the searching power of

divine light, the effect of which is to make everything and everyone manifest.

There is nothing that so tends to rob the disciple of Christ of the proper dignity of his discipleship, as walking before the eyes or the thoughts of men. So long as we are doing so, we cannot be unshackled followers of our heavenly Master. Moreover, the evil of walking before men is morally allied with the evil of seeking to hide our ways from God. Both partake of "the leaven of the Pharisees," and both will find their proper place before the judgement-seat. Why should we fear men? Why should we regard their opinions? If their opinions will not bear to be tried in His presence, who has power to cast into hell, they are worth nothing; for it is with Him we have to do "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgement." Man may have a judgement-seat *now*, but he will not have it *then*. He may set up his tribunal in time, but he will have no tribunal in eternity. Why, therefore, should we shape our way in reference to a tribunal so frail and evanescent? Oh! let us challenge our hearts as to this, God grant us grace to act more, in reference to then — to carry ourselves here with our eye on hereafter — to look; at time in the light of eternity.

The poor unbelieving heart may, however, inquire, "If I thus rise above human thoughts and human opinions, how shall I get on in a scene where those very thoughts and opinions prevail?" This is a very natural question: but it meets its full and satisfactory answer from the Master's lips; yea, it would even seem as though He had graciously anticipated this rising element of unbelief, when, having carried His disciples above the hazy mists of time, and set them in the clear, searching, powerful light of eternity, He added, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." (Ver. 6, 7) Here the heart is taught not only to *fear* God, but also to *confide* in Him — it is not only warned, but also tranquillised. "Fear," and "fear not," may seem a paradox to flesh and blood; but to faith it is no paradox. The man who fears God most will fear circumstances least. The man of faith is, at once, the most dependent and independent man in the world — dependent

upon God, independent upon circumstances. The latter is the consequence of the former; real dependence produces real independence.

And mark the ground of the believer's peace. The One who has power to cast into hell, the only One whom he is to fear, has actually taken the trouble to count the hairs of his head. He surely has not taken the trouble for the purpose of letting him perish here or hereafter. By no means. The minuteness of our Father's care should silence every doubt that might arise in our hearts. There is nothing too small, and there can be nothing too great for Him. The countless orbs that move through infinite space, and a falling sparrow, are alike to Him. His infinite mind can take in, with equal facility, the course of everlasting ages, and the hairs of our head. This is the stable foundation on which Christ founds His "fear not," and "take no thought." We frequently fail in the practical application of this divine principle. We may admire it as a principle; but it is only in the application of it that its real beauty is seen or felt. If we do not put it in practice, we are but painting sunbeams on canvas, while we famish beneath the chilling influences of our own unbelief.

Now, we find in this scripture before us, that bold and uncompromising testimony for Christ is connected with this holy elevation above men's thoughts, and this calm reliance upon our Father's minute and tender care. If my heart is lifted above the influence of the fear of man, and sweetly tranquillised by the assurance that God takes account of the hairs of my head, then I am in a condition of soul to confess Christ before men. (See ver. 8-10) Nor need I be careful as to the result of this confession, for so long as God wants me here, He will maintain me here. "And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say; for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." The only proper ground of testimony for Christ is to be fully delivered from human influence, and established in unqualified confidence in God. So far as I am influenced by, or a debtor to, men, so far am I disqualified for being a servant of Christ; but I can only be effectually delivered from human influence by a lively faith in God. When God fills the heart, there is no room for

the creature; and we may be perfectly sure of this, that no man has ever taken the trouble to count the hairs of our head; we have not even taken that trouble ourselves; but God has, and therefore I can trust God more than anyone. God is perfectly sufficient for every exigency, great or small, and we only want to trust Him to know that He is.

True, He may and does use men as instruments; but if we lean on men instead of God — if we lean on instruments instead of on the hand that uses them — we bring down a curse upon us, for it is written, “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.” (Jer. 17:5) The Lord used the ravens to feed Elijah; but Elijah never thought of trusting in the ravens. Thus it should be ever. Faith leans on God, counts on Him, clings to Him, trusts in Him, waits for Him, ever leaves a clear stage for Him to act on, does not obstruct His glorious path by any creature-confidence, allows Him to display Himself in all the glorious reality of what He is, leaves everything to Him; and, moreover, if it gets into deep and rough waters, it will always be seen upon the crest of the loftiest billow, and from thence gazing in perfect repose upon God and His powerful actings. Such is faith — that precious principle — the only thing in this world that gives God and man their respective places.

While the Lord Jesus was in the act of pouring forth these unearthly principles, a true child of earth intrudes upon Him with a question about property. “And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.” How marvellously little did he know of the true character of that heavenly Man who stood before him! He knew nothing of the profound mystery of His being, or the object of His heavenly mission. He surely had not come from the bosom of the Father to settle lawsuits about property, nor to arbitrate between two covetous men. The spirit of covetousness was manifestly in the whole affair. Both defendant and plaintiff were governed by covetousness. One wanted to grasp, and the other wanted to keep; what was this but covetousness? “And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?” It was not a question of which was right or which was wrong, as to the property. According to Christ's pure and

heavenly doctrine, they were both wrong. In the light of eternity, a few acres of land were little worth; and as to Christ Himself, He was only teaching principles entirely hostile to all questions of earthly possession; but, in His own person and character, He set an example of the very opposite. He did not go to law about the inheritance. He was "Heir of all things." The land of Israel, the throne of David, and all creation belonged to Him; but man would not own Him, or give Him possession. "The husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir, come let us kill him, and seize upon the inheritance." To this the Heir submitted in perfect patience, but — eternal homage to His glorious name! — by submitting unto death He crushed the enemy's power, and brought "many sons to glory."

Thus we see, in the doctrine and practice of the Heavenly Man, the true exhibition of the principles of the kingdom of God. He would not arbitrate, but yet He taught truth which would entirely do away with the need of arbitration. If the principles of the kingdom of God were dominant, there would be no need for courts of law; for inasmuch as people would not be wronged of their rights, they could have no wrongs to be righted. This would be admitted by all. But then the Christian, being in the kingdom, is bound to be governed by the principles of the kingdom, and to carry them out at all cost; for, in the exact proportion that he fails to exhibit those principles, he is robbing his own soul of blessing, and marring his testimony.

Hence, then, a person going to law is not governed in so doing by the principles of the kingdom of God, but by the principles of the kingdom of Satan, who is the prince of this world. It is not a question as to his being a Christian, but simply a question as to the principle by which he is governed in the act of going to law, under any circumstances. [How often, alas! does it happen, that people go to law to be righted of their wrongs, and, in the end, find themselves wronged of their rights!] I say nothing of the moral instincts of the divine nature, which would surely lead one to apprehend with accuracy the gross inconsistency of a man who professes to be saved by *grace* going to *law* with a fellow-man — of one who, while he owns that if he had his *right* from the hand of God, he would be burning in hell, nevertheless insists upon exacting his rights from his fellow-man — of one who has been forgiven ten thousand talents,

but yet seizes his fellow by the throat for a paltry hundred pence. Upon these things I shall not dwell. I merely look at the question of going to law in the light of the kingdom, in the light of eternity; and if it be true that in the kingdom of God there is no need for courts of law, then I press it solemnly upon my reader's conscience, in the presence of God, that he, as a subject of that kingdom, is totally wrong in going to Law. True, it will lead to loss and suffering; but who is "worthy of the kingdom of God" who is not prepared to "suffer for it?" Let those who are governed by the things of time go to law; but the Christian is, or ought to be, governed by the things of *eternity*. People go to law *Now'*, but it will not be so *then*; and the Christian is to act *now* as if it were *then*. He belongs to the kingdom; and it is just because the kingdom of God is not dominant, but the King rejected, that the subjects of the kingdom are called to suffer. Righteousness "suffers" *now*; it will "reign" in the millennium; and it will "dwell" in the new heavens and the new earth. Now, in going to law, the Christian anticipates the millennial age. He is going before his Master in the assertion of his rights. He is called to suffer patiently all sorts of wrongs and injuries. To resent them is to deny the truth of that kingdom to which he professes to belong. I press this principle upon my reader's conscience. I earnestly implore his serious attention thereto. Let it have its full weight upon his conscience. Let him not trifle with its truth. There is nothing which tends so to hinder the freshness and power, growth and prosperity of the kingdom of God in the heart, as the refusal to carry out the principles of that kingdom in the conduct. [The Christian should be governed by the principles of the kingdom in everything. If he is engaged in business, he should conduct his business as a child of God, and a servant of Christ. He should not have a Christian character on Lords day, and a commercial character on Monday. I should have the Lord with me in my shop, my warehouse, and my counting-house. It is my privilege to depend upon God in my business; but, in order to depend upon Him, my business must be of such a nature, and conducted upon such a principle, as He can own. If I say, I must do business as others do business," I abandon true Christian ground, and get into the current of the world's thoughts. If, for example, I resort to placards, newspaper advertisements, and all such means of puffing and pushing, I am evidently not working in simple dependence upon God, but rather depending upon the world's

principle. But some will say, "How am I to get on in business?" I reply by putting another question, namely, "What is your object? Is it food and raiment. or to hoard up?" If the former God has promised it so that you are in the way of His appointment, you have only to depend upon Him. Faith always puts the soul on a totally different ground from that occupied by the world, no matter what our calling may be. Take, for example, David in the valley of Elah. Why did he not fight like other men? Because he was on the ground of faith. So also Hezekiah. Why did he put on sackcloth when other men put on armour? Because he was on the ground of simple dependence upon God. Just so in the case of a man in trade; he must carry on his trade as a Christian, else he will mar the testimony, and rob his own soul of blessing.]

But some may say, that it is bringing us down from the high ground of the church, as set forth in Paul's Epistles, to press thus the principles of the kingdom. By no means. We belong to the church, but we are in the kingdom; and while we must never confound the two, it is perfectly plain that the ethics — the moral habits and ways — of the church can never be below those of the kingdom. If it be contrary to the spirit and principles of the kingdom to assert my rights and go to law, it must, if possible, be still more contrary to the spirit and principles of the church. This cannot be questioned. The higher my position, the higher should be my code of ethics, and tone of character. I fully believe, and desire firmly to hold, experimentally to enter into, and practically to exhibit, the truth of the church as the body and bride of Christ — the possessor of a heavenly standing, and the expectant of heavenly glory, by virtue of her oneness with Christ; but I cannot see how my being a member of that highly-privileged body can make my practice lower than if I were merely a subject or member of the kingdom. What is the difference, as regards present conduct and character, between belonging to the body of a rejected Head, and belonging to the kingdom of a rejected King? Assuredly it cannot be to lower the tone in the former case. The higher and more intimate my relationship to the rejected One, the more intense should be my separation from that which rejects Him, and the more complete should be my assimilation to His character, and the more precise and

accurate my walk in His footsteps, in the midst of that scene from which He is rejected.

But the simple fact is, WE WANT CONSCIENCE. Yes, beloved reader, a tender, exercised, honest conscience, which will truly and accurately respond to the appeals of God's pure and holy word, is, I verily believe, the grand desideratum — the pressing want of the present moment. It is not so much principles we want, as the grace, the energy, the holy decision, that will carry them out, cost what it may. We admit the truth of principles, which most plainly cut at the very things which we ourselves are either directly or indirectly doing. We admit the principle of grace, and yet we live by the strict maintenance of righteousness. For example, how often does it happen that persons are preaching, teaching, and professing to enjoy grace, while at the very moment they are insisting upon their rights in reference to their tenants; and, either directly themselves, or indirectly by means of their agents, dispossessing poor people, unroofing their houses, and sending them out, in destitution and misery, upon a cold, heartless world! This is a plain, palpable case, of which, alas! there have been too many painful illustrations in the world within the last ten years.

And why put cases? Because one finds such melancholy deficiency in sensibility of conscience, at the present day, that unless the thing is brought home plainly to oneself it will not be understood. Like David, our indignation is wrought up to the highest pitch by a picture of moral turpitude, so long as we do not see *self* in that picture. It needs some Nathan to sound in our ears, "Thou art the man," in order to prostrate us in the dust, with a smitten conscience, and true self-aborrence. Thus, at the present day, eloquent sermons are preached, eloquent lectures delivered, and elaborate treatises written about the principles of grace, and yet the courts of law are frequented, attorneys, lawyers, sheriffs, agents, and sub-agents, are called into requisition, with all their terrible machinery, in order to assert our rights; but we feel it not, because we are not present to witness the distress, and hear the groans and execrations of houseless mothers and children. Need we wonder, therefore, that true practical Christianity is at a low ebb amongst us? Is it any marvel that leanness, barrenness, drought, and poverty,

coldness and deadness, darkness, ignorance, and spiritual depression should be found amongst us? What else could be expected, when the principles of the kingdom of God are openly violated?

But is it unrighteous to seek to get our own, and to make use of the machinery within our reach, in order to do so? Surely not. What is here maintained is, that no matter how well defined and clearly established the right may be, the assertion thereof is diametrically opposed to the kingdom of God. The servant in Matthew 18 was called "a wicked servant," and "delivered to the tormentors," not because he acted unrighteously in enforcing the payment of a lawful debt, but because he did not act in grace and remit that debt. Let this fact be solemnly weighed. A man who fails to act in grace will lose the sense of grace; a man who fails to carry out the principles of the kingdom of God will lose the enjoyment of those principles in his own soul. This is the moral of the wicked servant. Well, therefore, might the Lord Jesus sound in His disciples' ears this warning voice, "Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

But how difficult to define this "covetousness!" How hard to bring it home to the conscience! It is, as some one has said of worldliness, "shaded off gradually from white to jet black," so that it is only as we are imbued with the spirit and mind of heaven, and thoroughly schooled in the principles of eternity, that we shall be able to detect its working. And not only so, but our hearts must, in this also, be purged from the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. The Pharisees were covetous, and could only turn Christ's doctrine into ridicule (see Luke 16:14); and so will it be with all those who are tainted by their leaven. They will not see the just application of truth, either as to covetousness or anything else. They will seek to define it in such a way as will suit themselves. They will interpret, modify, pare down accommodate, until they have fully succeeded in getting their conscience from under the edge of God's truth; and thus they get into the power and under the influence of the enemy. I must either be governed by the pure truth of the word, or by the impure principles of the world, which, as we very well know, are forged in Satan's workshop, and brought into the world to be used in doing his work.

In the parable of the rich man, which the Lord here puts forth, in illustration of covetousness, we see a character which the world respects and admires. But in this, as in everything else brought forward in this searching chapter, we see the difference between *now* and *then*, — between “time and eternity.” All depends upon the light in which you look at men and things. If you merely look at them *now*; it may be all very well to get on in trade, and enlarge one's concerns, and make provision for the future. The man who does this is counted wise *now*; but he will be a “fool” *then*. Title-deeds, debentures, bank receipts, insurance policies, are current coin *now*, but they will be rejected *then*; they are genuine *now*, they will be spurious *then*. Thus it is; and, my reader, let us remember, that we must make God's *then* to be our *now*; we must look at the things of time in the light of eternity; the things of earth in the light of heaven. This is true wisdom which does not confine the heart to that system of things which obtains “under the sun,” but conducts it into the light, and leaves it under the power of “that [unseen] world” where the principles of the kingdom of God bear sway. What should we think of courts of law, banks, and insurance offices, if we look at them in the light of eternity. [It should be a serious question with a child of God, ere he avails himself of an assurance company, whether in the matter of fire or life, “Am I, hereby, distrusting God? or, am I seeking by human agency to counteract divine visitations? There is something sadly anomalous in a Christian's insuring his life. He professes to be dead, and that Christ is his life: why then talk of insuring his life? But many will say, “We cannot bring Christianity into such things.” I ask, Where are we to leave it? Is Christianity a convenient sort of garment, which we put on on Lord's day, and at the close of that day take it off, fold it carefully up, and lay it on the shelf till the following Lord's day? It is too often thus. People have two characters; and what is this but the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy? Insurance offices are all very well for the men of this world, who should certainly avail themselves of them, inasmuch as everything around and within is so uncertain. but to the child of God, all is sure. God has insured his life for ever; and, hence, he should regard insurance offices as so many depots of unbelief.] These things do very well for men who are only governed by *now*; but the disciple of Christ is to be governed by *then*. This makes all the difference; and truly it is a serious difference.

"The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully." What sin is there in being a successful agriculturist or merchant? If God bless a man's labour, should he not rejoice? Truly so; but mark the moral progress of a covetous heart. "He thought *within himself*." He did not think in the presence of God; he did not think under the mighty influences of the eternal world. No; "he thought within himself" — within the narrow compass of his selfish heart. Such was his range; and, therefore, we need not marvel at his practical conclusion. "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?" What! Was there no way of using his resources with a view to God's future? Alas! no. Man has a future, or thinks he has, on which he counts, and for which he makes provision; but self is the only object which figures in that future, — self whether in my own person, or that of my wife or child, which is, morally, the same thing.

The grand object in God's future is Christ; and true wisdom will lead us to fix our eye on Him and make Him our undivided object for time and eternity, *now* and *then*. But this, in the judgement of a worldly man, is nonsense. Yes, heaven's wisdom is nonsense in the judgement of earth. Harken to the wisdom of earth, and the wisdom of those who are under the influence of earthly maxims and habits. "And he said, This will I do; I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and *there* will I bestow *all* my fruits and my goods." Thus we have what he "thought," what he "said," and what he "did;" and there is a melancholy consistency between his thoughts, his words, and his acts. "*There*," in my self-built storehouse, "will I bestow *all*." Miserable treasure-house to contain the "all" of an immortal soul! God was not an item in the catalogue. God was neither his treasury nor his treasure. This is plain; and it is always thus with a mere man of the world. "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Thus we see that a worldly man's provision is *only* "for many years." Make the best of it, it cannot go beyond that narrow limit. It cannot, even in his own thought about it, reach into that boundless eternity, which stretches beyond this contracted span of time. And this provision he offers to his never-dying soul, as the basis of its "ease and merriment." Miserable fatuity! Senseless calculation!

How different is the address which a believer may present to his soul! He, too, may say to his soul, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry; eat of the fatness of God's storehouse, and drink of the river of His pleasures, and of the wine of His kingdom; and be glad in His accomplished salvation; for thou hast much goods, yea, unsearchable riches, untold wealth, laid up, not merely for many years, but for eternity. Christ's finished work is the ground of thine eternal peace, and His coming glory the sure and certain object of thy hope." This is a different character of address, my reader. This shows the difference between *now* and *then*. It is a fatal mistake not to make Christ the Crucified, Christ the Risen, Christ the Glorified, the Alpha and Omega of all our calculations. To paint a future, and not to place Christ in the foreground, is extravagance of the wildest character; for the moment God enters the scene, the picture is hopelessly marred.

"But God said unto him, Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee: THEN whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" And, then, mark the moral of all this. "So is he," no matter who, saint or sinner, "that layeth up *treasure for himself*, and is not rich towards God." The man who hoards up is virtually making a god of his hoard. His mind is tranquillised as to the future when he thinks of his hoard, for if he had not that hoard he would be uneasy. It is sufficient to put a natural man entirely out of his reason to give him nought but God to depend upon. Anything but that for him. Give him old pieces of parchment in the shape of title deeds, in which some clever lawyer will finally pick a hole, and prove worthless. He will lean on them, yea, die in peace, if he can leave such to his heirs. Give him an insurance policy — anything, in short, but God for the natural heart. ALL IS REALITY SAVE THE ONLY REALITY, in the judgement of nature. This proves what nature's true condition is. It cannot trust God. It *talks* about Him, but it cannot *trust* Him. The very basis of man's moral constitution is distrust of God; and one of the fairest fruits of regeneration is the capacity to confide in God for everything. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." None else can.

However, my main object in this paper is to deal with Christian consciences. I ask the Christian reader, therefore, in plain terms, is it

in keeping with Christ's doctrine, as set forth in the Gospel, for His disciples to lay up for themselves treasure on the earth? It would seem almost an absurdity to put such a question in the face of Luke 12 and parallel scriptures. "Lay not up for yourselves treasure on the earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal." This is plain enough, and only wants an honest conscience to apply it, in order to produce its proper results. It is directly contrary to the doctrine of the kingdom of God, and perfectly incompatible with true discipleship, to lay up "treasure," in any shape or form, "on the earth." In this, as in the matter of going to law, we have only to remember that we are in the kingdom of God, in order to know how we should act. The principles of that kingdom are eternal and binding upon every disciple of Christ.

"And he said unto his disciples, Therefore, I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment." Observe, "take NO thought." This needs no interpretation or accommodation. Persons may say it means "anxious thought," but there is nothing about "anxious" in the passage. It is simply said, "no thought;" and that, too, in reference to all that man can really want, namely, food and raiment, in both of which the ravens and the lilies are set before us as an example; for the former are fed, and the latter are clothed, without thought. If the Lord Jesus meant "anxious thought," He would have said so. Nor is this merely true in reference to those who are only in the kingdom; it is also true as to the members of the church. "Be careful for nothing," says the Spirit by the apostle. Why? Because God is caring for you. There is no use in two thinking about the same thing, when One can do everything, and the other can do nothing. "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall garrison (*phrouresei*) your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus." This is the solid foundation of peace of heart, which so few really enjoy. Many have gotten peace of conscience through faith in the sufficiency of Christ's work, who do not enjoy peace of heart through faith in the sufficiency of God's care. And

often times we go to pray about our difficulties and trials, and we rise from our knees as troubled as we knelt down. We profess to put our affairs into the hands of God, but we have no notion of *leaving them* there; and, consequently, we do not enjoy peace of heart. Thus it was with Jacob, in Genesis 32. He asked God to deliver him from the hand of Esau; but, no sooner did he rise from his knees than he set forth the real ground of his soul's dependence, by saying, "I will appease him by a present." It is clear he had much more confidence in the "present" than in God. This is a common error amongst the children of God. We profess to be looking to the Eternal Fountain; but the eye of the soul is askance upon some creature stream. Thus God is practically shut out; our souls are not delivered, and we have not got peace of heart.

The apostle then goes on, in Philippians 4:8, to give a catalogue of those things about which we ought to think; and we find that *self*, or its affairs, is not once alluded to. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are venerable (*semna*) whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things And the God of peace shall be with you." Thus, when I know and believe that God is thinking about me, I have "*the peace of God*;" and when I am thinking about Him and the things belonging to Him, I have "*the God of peace.*" This, as might be expected, harmonises precisely with Christ's doctrine in Luke 12. After relieving the minds of His disciples in reference to present supplies and future treasure, He says, "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you." That is, I am not to seek the kingdom with the latent thought in my mind that my wants will be supplied in consequence. That would not be true discipleship. A true disciple never thinks of aught but the Master and His kingdom; and the Master will assuredly think of him and his wants. Thus it stands, my beloved reader, between a faithful servant and an All-powerful and All-gracious Master. That servant may therefore be free, perfectly free, from care.

But there is another ground on which we are exhorted to be free from care, and that is, the utter worthlessness of that care. "Which of

you, with taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?" We gain nothing by our care; and by indulging therein we only unfit ourselves for seeking the kingdom of God, and place a barrier, by our unbelief, in the way of His acting for us. It is always true in reference to us, "He could there do no mighty work, because of their unbelief." Unbelief is the great hindrance to the display of God's mighty works on our behalf. If we take our affairs into our own hands, it is clear that we do not want God. Thus we are left to the depressing influence of our own perplexing thoughts, and, finally, we take refuge in some human resource, and make shipwreck of faith.

It is important to understand that we are either leaning on God, or on circumstances. It will not do, by any means, to say that we are leaning on God. *and* circumstances. It must be God *only*, or not at all. It is all very well to talk of faith when our hearts are, in reality, leaning on the creature, in some shape or form. We should sift and try our ways closely as to this; for, inasmuch as absolute dependence upon God is one of the special characteristics of the divine life, and one of the fundamental principles of the kingdom, it surely becomes us to look well to it, that we are not presenting any barrier to our progress in that heavenly quality. True, it is most trying to flesh and blood to have no settled thing to lean upon. The heart will quiver as we stand upon the shore of circumstances, and look forth upon that unknown ocean — unknown to all but faith, and where nought but simple faith can live for an hour. We may feel disposed, like Lot, to cry out, "Is it not a little one? and my soul shall live." The heart longs for some shred of the creature, some plank from the raft of circumstances, anything but absolute dependence upon God. But oh! let God only be known, and He must be trusted; let Him be trusted, and He must be known.

Still the poor heart will yearn after something settled, something tangible. If it be a question of maintenance, it will earnestly desire some settled income, a certain sum in the funds, a certain amount of landed property, or a fixed jointure or annuity of some kind or other. Then, if it be a question of public testimony or ministry of any kind, it will be the same thing. If a man is going to preach or lecture, he

will like to have something to lean upon; if not a written sermon, at least, some notes, or some kind of previous preparation; anything but unqualified, self-emptied dependence upon God. Hence it is that worldliness prevails to such a fearful extent amongst Christians. Faith alone can overcome the world, and purify the heart. It brings the soul from under the influence of time, and keeps it habitually in the light of eternity. It is occupied not with *now*, but with *then*; not with *here*, but *hereafter*; not with earth, but with heaven. Thus it overcomes the world, and purifies the heart. It hears and believes Christ's word, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Now, if "the kingdom" fills my soul's vision, I have no room for aught beside. I can let go present shadows in the prospect of future realities. I can give up an evanescent *now*, in the prospect of an eternal *then*.

Wherefore, the Lord immediately adds, "Sell that ye have, and give alms: provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fadeth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will the heart be also." If I have treasure on earth, no matter in what shape, my *heart* will be there also, and I shall be a downright worldly man. How shall I most effectually empty my heart of the world? By getting it filled with Christ. He is the true treasure which neither the world's "bags," nor its "storehouses," can contain. The world has its "barns" and its "bags," in which it hoards its "goods;" but its barns will fall, and its bags will wax old; and then, what will become of the treasure? Truly, "they build too low that build beneath the skies."

Yet, people will build and hoard up, if not for themselves, at least for their children; or, in other words, their second selves. If I hoard for my children, I am hoarding for myself; and not only so, but in numberless cases, the hoard, in place of proving a blessing, proves a positive curse to the child, by taking him off the proper ground appointed for him, as well as for all, in God's moral government, namely, "working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have [not to hoard up for himself, or for his second self, but] to give to him that needeth." This is God's appointed ground, for every man; and, therefore, if I hoard for my child, I am taking both myself and him off the divine ground, and

the consequence will be a forfeiture of blessing. Do I taste the surpassing sweetness of obedience to, and dependence upon God, and shall I deprive my child thereof? Shall I rob him, virtually, and so far as in me lies, of God, and give him, as a substitute, a few "old bags," an insurance policy, or some musty parchments? Would this be acting a father's part? Surely not. It would be selling *then* for *now*. It would be like the profane and sensual Esau, selling the birthright for a morsel of meat; it would be giving up God's future for man's present.

But why need I hoard up for my children? If I can trust God for myself, why not trust Him for them likewise? Cannot the One who has fed and clothed me, feed and clothe them also? Is His hand shortened, or His treasury exhausted? Shall I make them idlers, or give them money instead of God? Ah! my reader, let us bear in mind this simple fact, that if we *cannot* trust God for our little ones, we *do not* trust Him for ourselves. The moment I begin to hoard up a sixpence, I have, in principle, departed from the life of faith. I may call my hoard by all the fair names that were ever invented by worldly minds or unbelieving hearts; but the unvarnished truth of the matter is this. MY HOARD IS MY GOD. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Let not the truth be misunderstood or misinterpreted. I am bound, by the powerful obligations of the word and example of God, to provide for my own; for, "if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim. 5:8.) This is plain enough. And, moreover, I am bound to fit my children, so far as God's principles admit, and my province extends, for any service to which He may be graciously pleased to call them. But I am nowhere instructed in the word of God to give my children a hoard in place of an honest occupation, with simple dependence upon a heavenly Father. As a matter of actual fact, few children ever thank their fathers for inherited wealth; whereas they will ever remember, with gratitude and veneration, having been led, by parental care and management, into a godly course of action for themselves.

I do not, however, forget a passage which has often been used, or rather abused, to defend the worldly, unbelieving practice of

hoarding up. I allude to 2 Corinthians 12:14. "Behold the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." How glad people are when they get a semblance of scripture authority for their worldliness! In this passage it is but a semblance of authority; for the apostle is certainly not teaching Christians to hoard up — he is not teaching heavenly men to lay up treasure upon the earth, for any object. He simply refers to a common practice *in the world* and to a common feeling *in nature*, in order to illustrate his own mode of dealing with the Corinthians, who were his children in the faith. He had not burdened them, and he would not burden them, for he was the parent. Now, if the saints of God are satisfied to go back to the world and its maxims, to nature and its ways, then let them hoard up with all diligence — let them "heap treasure together for the last days;" but let them remember that the moth, the canker-worm, and the rust, will be the end of it all. Oh! for a heart to value those immortal "bags" in which faith lays up its "unfading treasure," those heavenly storehouses where faith "bestows all its fruits and its goods." Then shall we pursue a holy and an elevated path through this present evil world — then, too, shall we be lifted upon faith's vigorous pinion above the dark atmosphere which enwraps this Christ-rejecting, God-hating world, and which is impregnated and polluted by those two elements, namely, *hatred of God, and love of gold*.

I shall only add, ere closing this paper, that the Lord Jesus — the Adorable, the Divine, the Heavenly Teacher, having sought to raise, by His unearthly principles, the thoughts and affections of His disciples to their proper centre and level, gives them two things to do; and these two things may be expressed in the words of the Holy Ghost, "to serve the living and true God; and wait for his Son from heaven." The entire of the teaching of Luke 12 from verse 35 to the end, may be ranged under the above comprehensive heads, to which I call the Christian reader's prayerful attention. We have no one else to serve but "the living God;" and nothing to wait for — nothing worth waiting for, but "his Son." May the Holy Ghost clothe His own word with heavenly power, so that it may come home to the heart and conscience, and tell upon the life of every child of God,

that the name of the Lord Christ may be magnified, and His truth vindicated in the conduct of those that belong to Him. May the grace of an honest heart, and a tender, upright, well-adjusted conscience, be largely ministered to each and all of us, so that we may be like a well-tuned instrument, yielding a true tone when touched by the Master's hand, and harmonising with His heavenly voice.

Finally, if this paper should fall into the hands of one who has not yet found rest of conscience in the perfected atonement of the Son of God, I would say to such a one, you will surely lay this paper down, and say, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" You may be disposed to ask, "What would the world come to, if such principles were universally dominant?" I reply, it would cease to be governed by Satan, and would be "the kingdom of God." But let me ask you, my friend, "To which kingdom do you belong? Which is it — *now* or *then* — with you? Are you living for time or eternity, earth or heaven, Satan or Christ?" Do, I affectionately implore of you, be thoroughly honest with yourself in the presence of God. Remember, "there is *nothing* covered that shall not be revealed." The judgement-seat will bring *all* to light. Therefore, I say, be honest with yourself, and now ask your heart, "Where am I? How do I stand? What is the ground of my peace? What are my prospects for eternity?" Do not imagine that God wants *you* to buy heaven with a surrender of earth. No; He points you to Christ, who, by bearing sin in His own body on the cross, has opened the way for the believing sinner to come into the presence of God in the power of divine righteousness. You are not asked to do or to be anything; but the gospel tells you what Jesus is, and what He has done; and if you believe this in your heart, and confess it with your mouth, you shall be saved. Christ — God's Eternal Son — God manifest in the flesh — co-equal with the Father, being conceived by the Holy Ghost, was born of a woman, took upon Him a body prepared by the power of the Highest — and thus became a REAL MAN — very God and very man — He, having lived a life of perfect obedience, died upon the cross, being made sin and a curse, and having exhausted the cup of Jehovah's righteous wrath, endured the sting of death, spoiled the grave of its victory, and destroyed him that had the power of death, He went up into heaven, and took His seat at the right hand of God. Such is the infinite merit of His perfect sacrifice, that all who believe are

justified from ALL THINGS — yea, are accepted in Him — stand in His acceptableness before God, and can never come into condemnation, but have passed from death into life. This is the gospel — the glad tidings of salvation, which God the Holy Ghost came down from heaven to preach to every creature. My reader, let me exhort you, in this concluding line, to “behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” BELIEVE AND LIVE

C.H.M.

Luke 15:1-7

The Lord Our Shepherd.

It is ever soothing to the spirit to ponder the character of the Lord Jesus as our Shepherd, in whatever aspect of that character we view Him; whether as "the *good* Shepherd," laying down His life for the sheep; or "the *great* Shepherd," coming up out of the grave, having, in the greatness of His strength, deprived death of its deadly sting, and the grave of its victory; or lastly, as "the *chief* Shepherd," when, surrounded by all His subordinate shepherds, who, from love to His adorable person, and, through the grace of His Spirit, have watched over and cared for the flock, He shall wreath the brow of each with a diadem of glory. In any or all of these stages of our Divine Shepherd's history, it is happy and edifying to consider Him. Indeed, there is something in our Lord's character as Shepherd, which is peculiarly adapted to our present condition. Through grace we have been constituted "the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand;" and, as such, it is a shepherd we specially need. As *sinners*, ruined and guilty, we need Him as the "Lamb of God;" His atoning blood meets us at that point in our history, and satisfies our utmost need. As *worshippers*, we need Him as our "great High Priest," whose robes, the varied expression of His attributes and qualifications, most blessedly prove to our souls how effectually He fills that office. As *disciples*, we need Him in His character as Teacher, "in whom are hid *all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." But, as *sheep*, exposed to countless dangers in our passage through this dark wilderness, in this "gloomy and dark day," we truly stand in need of the friendly voice of our Shepherd, whose rod and staff give security and stability to our footsteps as we journey onward to the heavenly fold.

Now, in these verses that I have read for you, we find the shepherd presented to us in a deeply interesting stage of his gracious work; he is here seen *in search of the sheep*. The parable derives peculiar force from the fact that it was put forth, together with the parables of the *lost* piece of silver, and the *lost* son, as an argument in favour of God's gracious acting towards sinners. God, in the person of the Lord Jesus, had come so very near to *the sinner*, that

legalism and Pharisaism, as represented by the scribes and Pharisees, took offence at it. "This man *receiveth sinners*, and eateth with them." Here was the offence of which Divine grace stood charged at the bar of man's legal, proud, self-righteous heart. But it was the very glory of God — God manifest in the flesh — God come down to earth thus to receive sinners. It was for that He came down into a ruined world. He left not the throne of His Father to come down here to search for righteous people; for wherefore should He search for them? Who would think of going to look for anything but that which was "*lost*?" Surely the very presence of Christ in the world proved that he had come *in search of something*, and, moreover, that that something must have been "*lost*." "The Son of man came to *seek* and to *save* that which was *lost*." The soul should greatly rejoice in the fact that it was as a *lost* thing that it drew forth the grace and pity of the shepherd's heart. We may inquire what it was that could have drawn the heart of Jesus towards such as we are; yes, we may inquire, but eternity alone will unfold to us the answer to the inquiry. We might ask the shepherd in this parable why he thought more about the one solitary *lost* sheep than he did about the ninety and nine which were not lost at all. What would have been his answer? "The *lost* one is my object, it is valuable to me, and I *must* find it." So it was with the merchantman, who surely is no other than Jesus: he alone could see, in that which lay buried in the bowels of the earth, an object which was worth everything to him; Jesus alone could see, in a helpless sinner, an object for which He thought it worth stooping from His Father's bright throne to save: —

"He saw me ruined in the fall,

Yet loved me, notwithstanding all;

He saved me from my lost estate;

His loving kindness, oh, how great!"

We may well wonder at the mystery of Christ's love to the Church; it will be a subject of wonder to angels and saints for ever. But while we can never solve the profound mystery, nor fathom the depths of redeeming love, how sweet to the poor sin-harassed soul to know itself as the object of such love! Yes; it is at once soothing and

elevating; moreover, it is the only true basis of real holiness and devotedness of heart to God. "We love Him *because* He *first* loved us." God must have the first place in redemption, seeing the whole plan had its origin in His eternal mind; it emanated from Him. The poor, silly, straying sheep could never devise a way for its return to the fold from which it had gone forth. How could it, when the very same disposition which had led it at first to wander would make it a wanderer to the end? How could the disposition which at first led the creature to revolt from under the hand of his God ever engender a spirit of subjection, or a spirit of confidence afterwards? Impossible. Hence the force of the words, "*Go after* that which is *lost*."

In these few words we have the grand action of redemption, and the attitude of God therein. God, in redemption, is emphatically and pre-eminently *the* seeker, and not the *sought*. This we are taught in Genesis 3. The words, "Where art thou?" fully show us God "*going* after that which was *lost*." Man had fled away from the face of God; he had indeed "gone astray," — he had sought to find a hiding-place, not in, *but from* God, behind the trees of the garden: and when the blessed God came down to visit man, He found Himself quite alone, as far as man was concerned; and, moreover, He had, thus *alone*, to begin again, not merely to create but to redeem. In creation, it was Omnipotence acting upon unresisting matter; but in redemption, it was boundless love and grace dealing with a rebel heart and a wined creation. Hence the grand inference involving a truth at once most simple and sublime, namely, GOD IS SEEN AS MUCH MOVING ALONE IN REDEMPTION AS HE IS IN CREATION. Man was not in the scene when God called worlds into existence; he was not there when the finger of Omnipotence set yonder sun in the heavens to run its great annual course; he was not there when a bound was set to the angry billows, that they might not pass the Divine decree. No; man was not there, nor could be: he was then in the dust of the earth, and could take no part in the grand transactions that were being developed; and yet, such is the wild infatuation of the human heart, that, although redemption must be admitted to be a more difficult (if it be allowable to speak of anything as difficult in reference to God), a more god-like work than creation, yet he will vainly and presumptuously intrude into that scene where God is, in solitary dignity, carrying out the vast plan of

redemption — a plan in which He alone could act. "No man can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, for the redemption of his soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever." Redemption is too precious a work for God to give into the hands of anyone; He himself must have *all* the joy, all the glory of saving poor self-destroyed sinners. Just so is it in these verses which we are looking at. The shepherd is *alone* in the pursuit.

The sheep knew nothing about the loving anxiety of the shepherd's heart; nothing of the motives that had led him forth in this self-denying search. No, these things were unknown to the sheep. The shepherd did not seek the co-operation of the sheep in his search, such would have been useless. The sheep was wandering away from the fold, and would have wandered on till overtaken by the wolf, had not the tender heart of the shepherd led him to seek it amid the wild labyrinths of the desert. And oh, what unwearied grace breathes in the words "*until he find it!*" Jesus, our gracious Shepherd, would not allow Himself to be baffled in the work which He had undertaken. He came fully prepared to meet all the obstacles that stood in His way; He was fully aware of all that lay before Him ere He could lay His hand upon the *lost* one. He knew that He had to encounter all the malignant opposition of Satan, who would dispute every step of the way with Him. He knew what enmity existed in the heart of the very creature He had come to seek and to save; and, above all, He had fully before His mind the cup of ineffable bitterness, which was prepared for Him at the cross, even the hiding of God's countenance; the three darkest hours that had ever passed over the soul of an intelligent being, more terrible to His divinely sensitive soul than all the sorrow and trial He had encountered at the hand of man or Satan.

Did He, then, shrink from encountering Satan? Nay, He, as "the stronger man," penetrated into the very heart of the strong man's palace, and spoiled him of "all his armour wherein he trusted." "By death, He destroyed him that had the power of death." Did he grow weary of man's ceaseless and deadly enmity, or was He driven back by it? No; He moved onward in all the Divine fortitude of love, bursting through maze after maze of human opposition, until at last, when man had poured forth all the deadly Satanic

poison that was in his heart, and had nailed the heavenly Shepherd to the cursed tree, He graciously breathed the prayer, "Father, forgive them," and poured forth the *blood*, by virtue of which the prayer could be and was answered.

Further, did death drive Him back from His purpose of mercy? No, "He met its deadly sting;" it was to Him indeed a terrible sting, yet He bore it, and, by bearing it, robbed it of all its power to sting the soul that believes on Him. Did the grave "the horrible pit and the miry clay" — deter His soul? No; he went down into the very heart of the grave, into the innermost parts of the kingdom of death, and there shook it to its very centre; and, as if the realms of death had already felt the rumblings of the tremendous earthquake by which they were about to be shaken, the grave opened its mouth to set free from its grasp its long-held prey, just as the Prince of Life was about to descend into it. In a word, nothing could stop the Divine Shepherd in His search for "that which was lost, *until He found it.*" This is truly Divine. God, in creation, could not be hindered in the accomplishment of His great designs, but compelled matter to yield to the power of His voice; and then, when Satan had marred creation, and God was called upon in the vindication of His name to ascend the loftier heights of redemption, we may follow Him in His wondrous upward path from height to height, until we hear those soul-stirring words, "*I have found my sheep which was lost.*" Blessed announcement! "*I have found.*" It is the full triumph of redeeming love over all the power of Satan.

And mark here two important features of our shepherd's love, namely, *uncomplaining* and *unupbraiding*. We hear not a syllable about all his trouble in searching for the sheep, the time, the distance, or the labour involved. Not a word. On the contrary, the impression left on the mind by those verses is, that the shepherd considered himself amply repaid for all his trouble when he had the stray one once more within his grasp. So it is with our "Good Shepherd," "who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame." What joy? The joy of being able to say "I have found." There was no such joy in creation; all that God could say in creation was, "I have made;" it was reserved for the more glorious and sublime scheme of redemption to admit the

higher note, "*I have found.*" The former was said, as it were, at *this* side of the grave; the latter, at the *other* side. Creation left man within the reach of Satan's arrows, which can wound in all places on this side of the grave; redemption brings us beyond the grave, and, as a consequence, beyond the reach of Satan's arrows.

Again, the love expressed in these verses is an unupbraiding love. The shepherd does not reproach the sheep, nor begin in anger to *drive* it home. Ah, no! the heart — the tender, compassionate, sympathizing heart of Jesus is seen here — the heart of Him who, standing amid the mighty wreck of human things, and contemplating the sad and wide-spread desolation which Satan has caused in God's creation, could shed a tear of deep pity for the misery which He alone, by and in resurrection, could alleviate.

And where, I would ask, do we find the loveliest exhibition of this unupbraiding love? At the first meeting between the Lord and His apostles after the resurrection; yes, there we see it indeed. Instead of reproaching them for what they no doubt felt to have been a base desertion of their dear Lord in the hour of His deepest anguish, His words are, "Peace be unto you." Oh! what a thorough confounding of Satan is here! what a calm conviction that Satan was the grand cause of all the mischief, breathes through those words! Incomparable grace! May it bind our souls, beloved friends, to Him who is the great fountain and channel thereof.

But what does the shepherd do with the sheep? Does he rest satisfied with merely having found it? No; there was something far beyond this: to find it was but the first step as regards the application of the shepherd's love and care to the sheep; it was but the beginning of the wondrous journey of this once lost but now found sheep. The sheep, as we read, was away in the wilderness; the shepherd found it, and it would be an important question as to how it was to be conducted home; nor does the shepherd leave this question long unsettled; for he no sooner finds the sheep than he puts it in the most secure place, "*he layeth it on his shoulders.*" How? complaining of the weight, or the trouble? Oh, no: he layeth it on his shoulders *rejoicing.*" How little the sheep knew of the deep emotions of joy which were filling the soul of the shepherd. It would probably augment his trouble by kicking, plunging, and struggling to tumble

off its place of security and rest; but no matter for that, the shepherd had hold of it, and therein he rejoiced. A loving heart and a powerful shoulder could surmount all obstacles. And how simple and sweet is the application of this to our adorable Shepherd! "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end," is the testimony of the Spirit about Him. The love of Christ was not a love that could be exhausted, or in the least degree cooled or lessened by personal experience of the unloveliness of the object; He knew what He could and would make of His Church, even "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing," and, He stopped not short of the grand consummation of the Church's beauty and glory "in the dispensation of the fulness of times." This is the true principle of love. If we were in the habit of dwelling on what Christians *will* be, and not what they *are*, *i.e.*, in themselves, our love would be of a purer and more permanent character.

But what security we have expressed in the words, "He layeth it on his shoulders!" This is the place of the weakest believer in Jesus. He is on the shoulders of Him who had power to burst asunder the gates of brass — Him who has vanquished Satan, death, and hell, and who, consequently, cannot meet with any opposing power equal to His own. Hence His own comforting words, "No man is able to pluck them out of my hand." Surely we may say, in the triumphant language of the apostle, "Who shall separate us?"

Finally, observe the words, "*Then he cometh home.*" Here we have the highest point in this truly interesting and evangelical narrative. There could be no calling together of the friends and neighbours *in the wilderness*. No; the wilderness is the place for drawing forth Divine love in seeking, and Divine power in saving the lost; the wilderness must be the scene of the shepherd's anxiety and toil, because it is a place of danger to the sheep. There is something particularly beautiful in this little narrative; so natural, yet so Divine. The shepherd could not bear to let the sheep off his shoulders *until he got home*; he knew there was no one in the desert that could have any fellowship with him in his joy; there were wolves there, but that was all. He had to wait until he found himself and his precious charge within the quiet walls of his happy home, and then came the outburst of real joy. There was neither enemy nor

evil current, nothing to interrupt the hallowed scene in which the heart of the shepherd rejoiced, in fellowship with his friends, over the sheep, for the salvation of which he had toiled so hard.

Luke 15:11-32, Deut. 21:18-21

Law and grace Exemplified.

In looking through the various laws and ordinances of the Old Testament, we cannot fail to observe the intense spirit of holiness which they breathe; the most trifling ordinance, apparently, was calculated to impress Israel with a sense of holiness. God's presence in their midst was ever to be the spring of holiness and separation to His people. Hence we read, in this passage of the book of Deuteronomy, "So shalt thou put away evil from among you." And again, in the ordinance of the manslayer, we read, "Defile not, therefore, the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel." (Num. 35: 34.) *God's dwelling place must be holy*; and "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." There can be no alteration in this. Dispensations may change, but God, blessed be His name, can never cease to be "the holy, holy, holy Lord God of Israel;" nor can He ever cease in His effort to make His people like what He is Himself. Whether He speak from amid the thunders of Mount Sinai, or in all the gentleness and grace of the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat in the heavens, His object is still the same, — viz., to make and keep His people holy.

Very different, however, is the mode of acting in the law, from that which we find in the gospel. In the law, God was calling upon man to be what He desired him to be; He set before him a high and holy standard, no doubt, but yet a standard to which man could not attain. Even though he might aspire most ardently after what the law set before him, yet, from the very fact of what he was, he could not attain to it. All his efforts were based upon the unholiness of a nature which was perfectly irrecoverable. The law was like a mirror, let down from heaven, to show to all who would only look honestly into it, that they were, both negatively and positively, the very thing which the law condemned and set aside. The law said, "Do this," and "Thou shalt not do that," and man's only response, uttered from the very depth of his nature, was, "Oh wretched man that I am!" In short, the law, like a plumb-line, measured the human character, and showed out all its crookedness and imperfection. It was not, by any

means, its province to make the sinner better. No; its province was to reveal his sins, and put him under the curse. "The law entered, that the offence might abound." And again, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." This is very plain. Have anything to do with law, and it will prove you to be a poor helpless sinner, and put you under the curse. It can really do nothing else, so long as God and man, holiness and sin, continue to be what they are. We may seek to confound law and grace, in our ignorance of the true genius of each; but it will prove, in the end, to be most thoroughly vain. As well might we seek to cause light and darkness to mingle, as to make law and grace combine. No; they are as distinct as any two things can be. The law can only point out to man the error of his ways - the evil of his nature. It does not make him straight, but only tells him he is crooked; it does not make him clean, but only tells him he is defiled. Nor was the law designed, as is often imagined, to lead sinners to Christ. This idea is founded upon an erroneous quotation of Galatians 3: 24. It is not said, "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ," but "the law was our schoolmaster unto (or until) Christ." The words, "to bring us" are in italics, and do not appear in the original. This is important, as helping my reader to understand the nature, object, and scope of the law. How could the law bring a man to Christ? All it did for him was to shut him up under the curse; his finding his way to Christ was the result of quite another ministry altogether. The law acted the part of a schoolmaster from the time it was given until Christ came, by keeping souls under a restraint from which nothing could deliver, save the spirit of liberty imparted through the gospel of Christ.

However, by a simple comparison of the two Scriptures which stand at the head of this paper, we shall have a very striking proof of the difference between the law and the gospel. The case presented in each, is that of a son who was disposed to do his own will and enjoy his own way. This is no uncommon case, The prodigal desired to have his portion, and to be away from under the eye of his father. But, ah I how soon he was called to learn his folly! "When he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want." Just so; how else could it be? He had left the only place in which all his need could be supplied, even the father's house. He had made his portion and the father's to be separate things, and

hence he was compelled to learn that the former was capable of being exhausted. We can get to the bottom of all human circumstances and resources. There never was a cup of human or earthly happiness — be it ever so deep — ever so abundant in desirable ingredients — which could not be drained to the bottom. There never was a well of human, or earthly refreshment, of which it could not be said, "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again." Not so, however, with the cup which redeeming love puts into our hand — not so with the wells of salvation from which the Gospel invites us to draw. These are exhaustless, eternal, divine. As the countless ages of eternity roll along, God's cup shall be full, and his wells shall send forth their streams in immortal freshness and purity. My reader, how sweet — how ineffably sweet — to partake of these!

But the prodigal "began to be in want." And what then? Did he think of the father? No. So long as he had any other resource, he would not think of returning home. "He went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine." This was terrible. Thus does Satan crush the spirits of his votaries. Every one who is not walking in communion with God and subjection to the Gospel of Christ, is thus engaged in the service of Satan. There is no middle ground. Reader, who are you serving? Are you serving Christ or Satan? If the latter, oh *remember the end*. Remember, too, the Father's love — the Father's house. Remember that "God willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his evil ways and live." This you may learn from the prodigal. The moment his necessities led him to think of returning home, that home was open wide to receive him. And, observe, it was simply *his need* that caused him to say, "I will arise and go to my father." It was not any longing desire for the father's company, but merely for the father's bread. Many are vainly looking within for some rising emotions of affectionate desire after God, not knowing that our very necessities — our very miseries — our very sins render us suited objects for the exercise of Divine grace. Grace suits *the miserable*, because the miserable can magnify grace.

And here we have arrived at a point, at which we may appreciate the contrast between our Scriptures. How would the law

have dealt with our prodigal? The answer is simple. "Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place. And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men of the city shall stone him with stones, that he die; so shalt thou put away evil from among you; and all Israel shall hear and fear." The law could speak of nought but judgment and death. Mercy was not within its range, nor at all in accordance with its spirit. "The soul that sinneth it shall die," was its stern language. And again, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

But how does grace deal with its object? Oh, for hearts to adore our God, who is the fountain of grace!

"But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." In short, the mode of treatment is the very opposite. The law said, "Lay hold on him" — the Gospel said, "Embrace him;" the law said, "Stone him" — the Gospel said, "Kiss him;" and yet, be it remembered, we meet the same God in both. The God of Israel speaks both in Deuteronomy and in Luke; and, moreover, we must remember what has already been stated, viz., that we trace the same object in both, which is, to give full deliverance from the power of evil. The stone of judgment and the embrace of love were both designed to put away evil; but, ah! how much more fully was the latter in sympathy with the Divine mind, than the former! Judgment is truly God's strange work. It was far more congenial to Him to be on the neck of the poor returning prodigal than to be within the enclosure of Mount Sinai. True, the prodigal had nothing to commend him — he had proved himself to be all that the law condemned, — he had been "a glutton and a drunkard" — the rags of the far country were upon him, and, were the law but to take its course, instead of the affectionate embrace of love, he would have to meet the stern grasp of justice; and instead of the father's kiss, he would have had to meet the stone of judgment from the men of his city, in the presence of the elders. Hence we see the contrast between law and grace — it is most striking.

But here, let us ask, how could all this be? How can we reconcile the marvellous difference in the principles of acting here set before us? Whither must we turn for a solution of this apparent contradiction? How can God embrace a poor sinner? How can He shield such from the full action of justice and the law? In other words, how can He be "just and the justifier?" How can He pardon the sinner steeped to the lips in iniquity, and yet not "clear the guilty?" How can He, who "cannot look upon sin," but with abhorrence, and "in whose sight the heavens are not clean," sit down at the table with a poor wretched prodigal? Where, my reader, shall we find an answer to these questions? In *the cross of Calvary*. Yes: there we have a precious — a divine reply to all. The Man nailed to the tree settles everything. Jesus bore sin's tremendous curse upon the cross — He exposed His own bosom to the stroke of justice — He drained to the dregs the cup of Jehovah's righteous wrath — "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree" — "He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Was not this a vindication of the law? Did ever the words, "So shalt thou put evil away," fall with such impressive solemnity upon the ear, as when the blessed Son of God cried out, from amid the horrors of Golgotha, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Oh! never, never. All the stones that were ever cast at offending sinners — all the penalties that were ever inflicted - yea, we shall proceed further, and say, that the eternal punishment of the wicked in the lake of fire, could not afford such a solemn proof of God's hatred of sin, as the scene on the cross. There it was that men and angels might behold God's thoughts of sin, and God's thoughts of sinners. His hatred of the former, and His love for the latter. The very same act which shows out the condemnation of sin, shows out the salvation of the sinner. Hence the Cross, while it most fully vindicates the holiness and justice of God, opens up a channel through which the copious streams of redeeming love can flow down to the guilty sinner. "Mercy and truth met together; righteousness and peace kissed each other," when the Son of God offered up Himself as a sacrifice for sin.

And, if it be asked, What proof have we of this? What solid ground of assurance have we of the full forgiveness and perfect acceptance of the believer? The answer is, *Resurrection*. Jesus is

now at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens; and there, moreover, on behalf of the believer. "He was delivered for our offences," and, could we go no further than this, we might despair; but it is added, "He was raised again for our justification." Here we have full peace — full emancipation — full victory. When God raised Jesus from the dead, He declared Himself as "the God of peace." Justice was satisfied, and the sinner's Surety was set down at God's right hand; and all who, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, believe in His death and resurrection, are looked at in Him, and seen to be as free from every charge of sin as He is. Most marvellous grace! Who could have conceived such a thing? Who could have thought that He, who is "the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person," should come down and put Himself in the sinner's place, and bear all the wrath, curse, and judgment due to sin, in order that the sinner might be set down in the very presence of the holiness of God, without "spot or wrinkle or any such thing," so that God might be able to say of him, "Thou art all fair; there is no spot in thee?" My reader, was ever love like this? Truly, we have here, love in its fountain — love in its channel - and love in its application. The Father is the eternal fountain, the Son is the channel, and the Holy Ghost is the power of application. What divine completeness! What perfect peace! What a solid resting-place for the sinner! Who can raise a question? God has received His prodigal — has clothed and adorned him — killed the fatted calf for him — and, above all, has given utterance to the words, "*It is meet that we should make merry and be glad*" — words which ought to dispel every shadow of fear and doubt from the heart. If God can say, in virtue of the finished work of Christ, "It is meet," who can say it is not meet? Satan may accuse, but God's reply is, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" In short, the soul that believes in Jesus is lifted into a perfectly cloudless region, where, it may be truly said, "there is neither enemy, nor evil occurrent;" and in that region we can see no one so exquisitely happy in the divine results of redemption as the blessed God Himself. If the prodigal could possibly have retained a feeling of doubt or reserve, what could have so effectually banished it as the father's joy in getting him back again? Neither doubt nor fear can live in the light of our Father's countenance. If we believe that God rejoices in receiving back a sinner, we cannot harbour suspicion or hesitancy. It is not merely

that God *can* receive us, but it is His joy to do so. Hence we not only know that "grace *reigns* through righteousness," but that all heaven rejoices in one repenting sinner. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift?

And now, one word, in conclusion, as to the way in which God secures holiness through grace. Is sin made light of? Is it tolerated? Does the blessed God, when He receives a returning prodigal to His bosom, in sovereign grace, without one upbraiding look or expression, lead us to suppose that sin has become a whit less odious or abominable? By no means. We have already seen how the Cross has added force and solemnity to every one of the divine statutes against sin. God has proved, by the bruising of His beloved Son, that His hatred of sin was only to be equalled by His love for the sinner. *A crucified Christ*, declares God's hatred of sin; *a risen Christ*, declares the triumph of His love for the sinner. The death of Christ vindicates the law; His resurrection emancipates the soul of the believer, while both these together, form the basis of all practical holiness, as we learn in Romans 6. "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" "We are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life." "That the body of sin might be destroyed, that we should no longer serve sin." When the father received the prodigal, he did so in a way altogether worthy of himself, and of the honour of his house. He could not receive him otherwise. He could not allow him to continue in the rags of the far country, nor in the habits thereof either. The husks and the rioting had all to be laid aside. His dress and habits were now to correspond with his new position. *Fellowship with the father* henceforth became his grand characteristic. He was not put under a dry code of rules as a servant, as he himself had sought to be. No; the manner of his reception, the principle on which he was to be dealt with, and the position to be assigned to him, were all in his father's power, and, being in his power, we can easily see what his *will* was. He should either be received with a kiss or not at all; he should either be seated at the table, or not enter the house at all; he should either get the place of a son or nothing. In short, it was the father's grace that arranged all for the prodigal, and happy was it for him to have it so.

But, oh! how could the prodigal think lightly of sin in the light of such extraordinary grace? Impossible. He was most effectually delivered from the power of sin by the grace which reigned in his reception, and in his position. It was truly such as to set sin before him in the most fearful colours. "Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." Yes, God forbid. It cannot, it must not be, my reader. Grace has set us free — free not only from the penalty of sin, but free from its power — free from its present dominion. Blessed freedom! The law gave sin power over the sinner; grace gives him power over it. The law revealed to the sinner his weakness; grace makes him acquainted with the strength of Christ, the law put the sinner under the curse, no matter who or what he was; grace introduces him into all the ineffable blessedness of the Father's house — the Father's bosom. The law elicited only the cry, "O, wretched man that I am!" grace enables him to sing triumphantly, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory." These are important differences, and such as may well lead us into deep thankfulness for the truth that "we are not under the law, but under grace."

If anything were needed to prove that nothing but grace can form the basis of holy service, the spirit and bearing of the elder brother in our beautiful parable would most fully prove it. He thought he had ever been a very faithful servant, and his heart rebelled against the high position assigned to his younger brother. But, alas! he understood not the father's heart. It was not the cold service of formalism or legalism that was needed, but the service of love — the service of one who felt he had been forgiven much — or rather those deep affections which flow from the sense of redeeming love. All practical Christianity is comprehended in that word of the apostle, viz., "We love Him because He first loved us." God grant that we may all enter more into the sacred power of these simple, but most precious truths!

Luke 23: 39-43.

The Three Crosses.

Turn aside with us for a few moments and meditate upon those three crosses. If we mistake not, we will find a very wide field of truth opened before us in the brief but comprehensive record given at the head of this article.

1. First of all, we must gaze at the centre cross, or rather at Him who was nailed thereon — Jesus of Nazareth — that blessed One who had spent His life in labours of love, healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, feeding the hungry, drying the widow's tears, meeting every form of human need, ever ready to drop the tear of true sympathy with every child of sorrow; whose meat and drink it was to do the will of God, and to do good to man; a holy, spotless, perfectly gracious man; the only pure, untainted sheaf of human fruit ever seen in this world; "a man approved of God," who had perfectly glorified God on this earth and perfectly manifested Him in all His ways.

Such, then, was the One who occupied the centre cross; and when we come to inquire what it was that placed Him there, we learn a threefold lesson; or rather, we should say, three profound truths are unfolded to our hearts.

In the first place, we are taught, as nothing else can teach us, what man's heart is toward God. Nothing has ever displayed this — nothing could display it — as the cross has. If we want a perfect standard by which to measure the world, to measure the human heart, to measure sin, we must look at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot stop short of the cross, and we cannot go beyond it, if we want to know what the world is, inasmuch as it was there that the world fully uttered itself — there fallen humanity fully let itself out. When the human voice cried out, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" that voice was the utterance of the human heart, declaring, as nothing else could declare, its true condition in the sight of God. When man nailed the Son of God to the cross, he reached the full height of his guilt, and the depth of moral turpitude. When man

preferred a robber and murderer to Christ, he proved that he would rather have robbery and murder than light and love. The cross demonstrates this tremendous fact; and the demonstration is so clear as to leave not the shadow of a question.

It is well to seize this point. It is certainly not seen with sufficient clearness. We are very prone to judge of the world according to its treatment of ourselves. We speak of its hollowness, its faithlessness, its baseness, its deceitfulness, and such like; but we are too apt to make *self* the measure in all this, and hence we fall short of the real mark. In order to reach a just conclusion, we must judge by a perfect standard, and this can only be found in the cross. The cross is the only perfect measure of man, of the world, of sin. If we really want to know what the world is, we must remember that it preferred to robber to Christ, and crucified between two thieves the only perfect man that ever lived.

Such is the world in which we live. Such is its character — such its moral condition — such its true state as proved by its own deliberately planned and determinedly perpetrated act. And therefore we need not marvel at aught that we hear or see of the world's wickedness, seeing that in crucifying the Lord of glory, it gave the strongest proof that could be given of wickedness and guilt. It will perhaps be said, in reply, the world is changed. It is not now what it was in the days of Herod and Pontius Pilate. The world of the nineteenth century is very different from the world of the first. It has made progress in every way. Civilisation has flung its fair mantle over the scene; and, as respects a large portion of the world, Christianity has shed its purifying and enlightening influence upon the masses; so that it would be *very* unwarrantable to measure the world that is by the terrible act of the world that *was*.

Reader, do you really believe that the world is changed? Is it really improved in the deep springs of its moral being — is it altered at its heart's core? We readily admit all that a free gospel and an open Bible have, by the rich mercy of God, achieved here and there. We think, with grateful hearts and worshipping spirits, of thousands and hundreds of thousands of precious souls converted to God. We bless the Lord, with all our hearts, for multitudes who have lived and died in the faith of Christ; and for multitudes who, at this very

moment, are giving most convincing evidence of their genuine attachment to the name, the person, and the cause of Christ.

But, after allowing the broadest margin in which to insert all these glorious results, we return, with firm decision, to our conviction that the world is the world still, and if it had the opportunity, the act that was perpetrated in Jerusalem in the year 33, would be perpetrated in Christendom now. (1873)

This may seem severe and sweeping; but is it true? Is the Name of Jesus one whit more agreeable to the world to-day, than it was when its great religious leaders cried out, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Only try it. Go and breathe that peerless and precious Name amid the brilliant circles that throng the drawing-rooms of the polite, the fashionable, the wealthy, and the noble of this our own day. Name Him in the steamboat saloon, in the railway carriage, or in the public hall, and see if you will not very speedily be told that such a subject is out of place. Any other name, any other subject will be tolerated. You may talk folly and nonsense in the ear of the world, and you will never be told it is out of place; but talk of Jesus, and you will very soon be silenced. How often have we seen our leading thoroughfares literally blocked up by crowds of people looking at a puppet show, or listening to a ballad singer or a German band, and no policeman tells them to move on. Let a servant of Christ stand to preach in our thoroughfares and he will be summoned before the magistrates. There is room in our public streets for the devil, but there is no room for Jesus Christ. "Not this man, but Barabbas."

Can any one deny these things? Have they not been witnessed again and again? And what do they prove? They prove, beyond all question, the fallacy of the notion that the world is improved. They prove that the world of the nineteenth century is the world of the first. It has, in some places, changed its dress, but not its real *animus*. It has doffed the robes of paganism, and donned the cloak of Christianity; but underneath that cloak may be seen all the hideous features of paganism's spirit. Compare Romans 1: 29-31 with 2 Timothy 3 and there you will find the very traits and lineaments of nature in darkest heathenism, reproduced in

connection with "the form of godliness" — the grossest forms of moral pravity covered with the robe of Christian profession.

No; it is a fatal mistake to imagine that the world is improving. It is stained with the murder of the Son of God; and it proves its consent to the deed in every stage of its history, in every phase of its condition. The world is under judgement. Its sentence is passed; the awful day of its execution is rapidly approaching. The world is simply a deep, dark, rapid stream rushing onward to the lake of fire. Nothing but the sword of judgement can ever settle the heavy question pending between the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and that world which murdered His Son.

Thus it is, if Scripture is to be our guide. Judgement is coming. It is at the very door. Eighteen hundred years ago, the inspired apostle penned the solemn sentence, that "God is *ready* to judge." If He was ready then, surely He is ready now. And why tarryes He? In long-suffering mercy, not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance. Precious words! Words of exquisite tenderness and matchless grace! Words that tell out the large, loving, gracious heart of our God, and His intense desire for man's salvation.

But judgement is coming. The awful day of vengeance is at hand; and, meanwhile, the voice of Jesus, sounding through the lips of His dear ambassadors, may be heard on every side calling men to flee out of the terrible vortex, and make their escape to the stronghold of God's salvation.

2. But this leads us, in the second place, to look at the cross as the expression of God's heart toward man. If on the cross of our adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we read, in characters deep, broad, and unmistakable, the true state of man's heart Godward; in the selfsame cross, we may read, with no less clearness surely, the state of God's heart toward man. The cross is the divinely perfect measure of both.

The very spear that pierced Thy side,

Drew forth the blood to save.

We behold, at the cross, the marvellous meeting of enmity and love — sin and grace. Man displayed at Calvary, the very height of his enmity against God. God, blessed for ever be His name, displayed the height of His love. Hatred and love met; but love proved victorious. God and sin met; God triumphed, sin was put away, and now, at the resurrection side of the cross, the eternal Spirit announces the glad tidings, that grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. At the cross, the battle was fought and the victory won; and now the liberal hand of sovereign grace is scattering far and wide the spoils of victory.

Do you really desire to know what the heart of God is toward man? If so, go and gaze on that centre cross to which Jesus Christ was nailed, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. True it is, as we have already seen, man did, with wicked hands, crucify and slay the blessed One. This is the dark side of this question. But there is a bright side also, for God is seen in it. No doubt, man fully let himself out at the cross; but God was above him. Yes, above all the powers of earth and hell which were there ranged in their terrible array.

As it was, in the case of Joseph and his brethren; they told out the enmity of their hearts in flinging him into the pit, and selling him to the Ishmaelites. Here was the dark side. But then, mark these words of Joseph: "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life."

Here was the bright side. But to whom were these wondrous words of grace addressed? To broken hearts and penitent spirits, and convicted consciences. To men who had learnt to say, "We are verily guilty." It is only such that can at all enter into the line of truth which is now before us. Those who have taken their true place, who have accepted the judgement of God against themselves, who truly own that the cross is the measure of their guilt — they can appreciate the cross as the expression of God's heart of love toward them; they can enter into the glorious truth that the selfsame cross which demonstrates man's hatred of God sets forth also God's love to man. The two things ever go together. It is when we see and own

our guilt, as proved in the cross, that we learn the purifying and peace — speaking power of that precious blood which cleanseth us from all sin.

Yes; beloved reader, it is only a broken heart and a contrite spirit that can truly enter into the marvellous love of God as set forth in the cross of Christ. How could Joseph ever have said, "Be not grieved with yourselves," if he had not seen his brethren broken down in his presence? Impossible. And how can an unbroken heart, an unreached conscience, an impenitent soul enter into the value of the atoning blood of Christ, or taste the sweetness of the love of God? Utterly impossible. Joseph "spake roughly" to his brethren at the first, but the very moment those accents emanated from their broken hearts, "We are verily guilty," they were in a condition to understand and value the words, "Be not grieved with yourselves." It is when we are completely broken down in the presence of the cross, seeing it as the perfect measure of our own deep personal guilt, that we are prepared to see it as the glorious display of God's love towards us.

And then and there we escape from a guilty world. Then and there we are rescued completely from that dark and rapid current of which we have spoken, and brought within the hallowed and peaceful circle of God's salvation, where we can walk up and down in the very sunlight of a Father's countenance and breathe the pure air of the new creation. "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!"

3. And now, one word, ere closing this branch of our subject on the cross as displaying the heart of Christ toward God. We can do little more than indicate this point, leaving the reader to prove its suggestive power, under the immediate ministry of the Holy Ghost.

It is an unspeakable comfort to the heart, in the midst of such a world as this, to remember that God has been perfectly glorified by One, at least. There has been One on this earth whose meat and drink was to do the will of God, to glorify Him, and finish His work. In life and death, Jesus perfectly glorified God. From the manger to the cross, His heart was perfectly devoted to *the* one great object, namely, to accomplish the will of God, whatever that will might be.

"Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God." In the roll of Scripture it was written of the Son that, in due time, He should come into this world, according to God's eternal counsels, and accomplish the will of the Godhead. To this He dedicated Himself with all the energies of His perfect being. From this He never swerved a hair's breadth from first to last; and when we gaze on that centre cross which is now engaging our attention, we behold the perfect consummation of that which had filled the heart of Jesus from the very beginning, even the accomplishment of the will of God.

All this is blessedly unfolded to us in that charming passage in Philippians 2. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (ver. 5-8).

How wonderful is all this! What profound depths there are in the mystery of the cross! What lines of truth converge in it! What rays of light emanated from it! What unfoldings of heart there! The heart of man to Godward — the heart of God to manward — the heart of Christ to God! All this we have in the cross. We can gaze on that One who hung there between two thieves, a spectacle to Heaven, earth, and hell, and see the perfect measure of every one and everything in the whole universe of God. Would we know the measure of the heart of God — His love to us — His hatred of sin? we must look at the cross. Would we know the measure of the heart of man, his real condition, his hatred of all that is divinely good, his innate love of all that is thoroughly bad? we must look at the cross.

Would we know what the world is — what sin is — what Satan is? we must look at the cross. Assuredly, then, there is nothing like the cross. Well may we ponder it. It shall be our theme throughout the everlasting ages. May it be, more and more, our theme now! May the Holy Ghost so lead our souls into the living depths of the cross, that we may be absorbed with the One who was nailed thereto, and thus weaned from the world that placed Him there. May the real utterance of our hearts ever be, "God forbid that I

should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." God grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake!

Having dwelt, for a little, on that marvellous centre cross to which the Lord of glory was nailed, for our redemption, we shall now turn to the other two, and seek to learn some solemn and weighty lessons from the inspired record concerning the men who hung thereon. We shall find in these two men samples of the two great classes into which the human family is divided, from the beginning to the end of time, namely the receivers and the rejecters of the Christ of God — those who believe in Jesus, and those who believe not. In the first place, it is of the utmost importance to see that there was no essential difference between those two men. In nature, in their recorded history, in their circumstances, they were one. Some have laboured to establish a distinction between them; but for what object it is difficult to say, unless it be to dim the lustre of the grace that shines forth in the narrative of the penitent thief. It is maintained that there must have been some event in his previous history to account for his marvellous end — some redeeming feature — some hopeful circumstance on account of which his prayer was heard at the last.

But Scripture is totally silent as to aught of this kind. And not only is it silent as to any redeeming or qualifying circumstance, but it actually gives us the testimony of two inspired witnesses to prove that, up to the very moment in which Luke introduces him to our notice, he, like his fellow on the other side, was engaged in the terrible work of railing on the Son of God. In Matthew 27: 44, we read that "The *thieves* also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth." So also in Mark 15: 32, "*They* that were crucified with Him reviled Him."

Now, this is divinely conclusive. It proves, beyond all question, that there was no difference between the two thieves. They were both condemned malefactors; and not only so, but when actually on the very confines of the eternal world, they were both occupied in the awful sin of reviling the blessed Son of God.

It is utterly vain, therefore, for any one to seek to establish a distinction between these two men, inasmuch as they were alike in

their nature, in their guilt, in their criminality, and in their profane wickedness. There was no difference up to the moment in which the arrow of conviction entered the soul of him whom we call the penitent thief. The more clearly this is seen, the more the sovereign grace of God shines out in all its blessed brightness. "There is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." And, on the other hand, "There is no difference, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him" (compare Rom. 3: 22-23, with Rom. 10: 12).

The only standard by which men are to be measured is "the glory of God"; and inasmuch as all have come short of that — the best as well as the worst of men — there is no difference. Were it merely a question of conscience, or of human righteousness, there might be some difference. Were the standard of measurement merely human, then indeed some shades of distinction might easily be established. But it is not so. All must be ruled by the glory of God; and, thus ruled, all are alike deficient. "There is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

But, blessed be God, there is another side to this great question. "The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him." The riches of the grace of God are such as to reach down to the very deepest depths of human ruin, guilt and misery. If the light of divine glory reveals — as nothing else could reveal — man's utter ruin; the riches of divine grace, as displayed in the person and work of Christ, have perfectly met that ruin, and provided a remedy in every way adequate to meet the claims of the divine glory.

But let us see how all this is illustrated in the striking and beautiful narrative of the penitent thief.

It is very evident that the Spirit of God, in the evangelist Luke, takes up this interesting case at that special point in the which a divine work had really begun. Matthew and Mark present him as a blaspheming malefactor. We can hardly conceive a deeper shade of moral turpitude than that which he, according to their inspired record, exhibits to our view! There is not so much as a single relieving tint. All is dark as midnight — dark almost as hell; yet not

too dark to be reached by the light that was shining straight down from Heaven through the mysterious medium of that centre cross.

It is well to get a very profound sense of our true condition by nature. We cannot possibly go too deep in this line. The ruin of nature is complete — of nature in all its phases and in all its stages. If all have not gone to the same length as the thief on the cross — if all have not brought forth the same fruit — if all have not clothed themselves in forms equally hideous, it is no thanks to their nature. The human heart is a seed plot in which may be found the seed of every crime that has ever stained the page of human history. If the seed has not germinated and fructified, it is not owing to a difference in the soul, but a difference in surrounding circumstances and influences

The testimony of Scripture on this great question, is distinct and conclusive, "There is no difference." Men do not like this. It is too levelling for them. Self-righteousness is cut out by the roots by this sweeping statement of inspiration. Man likes to establish distinctions. He cannot bear to be placed in the same category with the Magdalenes and the Samaritans, and such like. But it cannot be otherwise. Grace levels all distinctions now; and judgement will level them all by-and-by. If we are saved, it is in company with Magdalenes and Samaritans; and if we are lost, it will be in company with such likewise. There will, no doubt, be degrees of glory; as there will be degrees of punishment; but as to the real nature and character of the human heart, "there is no difference." "The *heart* is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." What heart? Man's heart — the heart of the writer and the reader of these lines. "For out of *the heart* proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Out of what heart? Man's heart — the heart of the writer and the reader of these lines. These things could not come out of the heart if they were not there; and if they do not come out in action, it is not because they are not there, but that circumstances have operated to prevent.

Such is the clear and unvarying testimony of Holy Scripture; and whenever the Spirit of God begins to operate on the heart and conscience of a man He produces the deep sense and full confession of the truth of this testimony. Every divinely convicted soul is ready

to adopt as his own these words, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good." Every truly contrite spirit owns the fact of his total ruin. All wisdom's children justify God and condemn themselves — there is no exception. All who are really brought under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit will, without any reserve, set their seal — the seal of their whole moral being to the inspired statement, "there is no difference."

Any who hesitate to own this have yet to learn themselves, in the light of the holiness of God. The most refined, polished and cultivated person, if enlightened by the Spirit of God, will readily take his place with the thief on the cross, inasmuch as the divine light shining in upon him, reveals the hidden springs of his being, leads him to see the profound depths of his nature — the roots and sources of things. Thus while relatives, friends and acquaintances — mere onlookers, judging from the surface, may think very highly of his character, he himself, knowing better, because of divine light, can only exclaim, "O wretched man that I am" — "Behold I am vile" — "Woe is me, I am undone" — "I am a sinful man, O Lord."

These are the proper utterances of a divinely convicted soul; and it is only when we can thus truly and heartily express ourselves that we are really prepared to appreciate the riches of the grace of God as unfolded in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Grace takes up real sinners. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost;" and the more fully I realize my lost estate, my hopeless ruin, my utter wretchedness, the more fully I can enter into the fullness and freeness of God's salvation — a salvation purchased by the blood of the cross.

Hence we see how brightly grace shines in the salvation of the thief on the cross. There can be no possible mistake as to him. Clearly he had no good works to trust in. He had performed no deeds of charity. Of baptism and the Lord's Supper he knew nothing. The rites, ceremonies, and ordinances of religion had done — could do nothing for him. In a word, his case was a thoroughly hopeless one, so far as *he* was concerned. For what could *he* do? Whither could he turn? His hands and his feet were nailed fast to a malefactor's cross. It was useless to talk to him about doing or going. His hands, while he had the use of them, had been stretched forth in

deeds of violence; and now they were nailed to the tree, and could do nothing. His feet, while he had the use of them, had trodden the terrible path of the transgressor; and now they were nailed to the tree, and could not carry him anywhere.

But, note this. Although the poor thief no longer had the use of his hands and his feet — so indispensable to a religion of works — his heart and his tongue were free; and these are the very things that are called into exercise in a religion of faith, as we read in that lovely tenth of Romans, "With the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness; and with the *mouth* confession is made unto salvation."

Precious words! How suited to the thief on the cross! How suited and seasonable for *every* poor helpless, hopeless, self-destroyed sinner! And we must all be saved in like manner as the thief on the cross. There are no two ways to Heaven. There is not one way for the religionist, the moralist, the Pharisee, and another way for the malefactor. There is but one way, and that way is marked from the very throne of God down to where the guilty sinner lies, dead in trespasses and sins, with the footprints of redeeming love; and from thence back to the throne by the precious atoning blood of Christ. This is the way to Heaven — a way paved with love, sprinkled with blood, and trodden by a happy holy band of redeemed worshipers gathered from all the ends of the earth, to chant the heavenly anthem, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

We have said that the heart of the thief was free; yes, free under the mighty action of the Holy Ghost, to turn toward that blessed One who hung beside him — that One whom he had just been reviling, but on whom he could now fix his repentant gaze, and to whom he could now bear the noblest testimony ever uttered by men or angels.

But it is most instructive and interesting to mark the progress of the work of God in the soul of the dying thief. Indeed the work of God in any soul is ever of the deepest possible interest. The operations of the Holy Spirit *in* us must never be separated from the work of Christ for us; and, we may add, both the one and the other are founded upon, and inseparably linked with the eternal counsels

of God with respect to us. This is what makes it all so real, so solid, so entirely divine. It is not of man. It is all of God, from first to last — from the first dawning of conviction in the soul until it is introduced into the full-orbed light of the glorious gospel of the grace of God. The Lord be praised that it is so! Were it otherwise — were there a single atom of the creature in it, from beginning to end, that one atom would neutralise and destroy the whole, and render it not worth having.

Now in the case of the penitent thief, we discern the first touch of the Eternal Spirit — the very earliest fruit of His sanctifying work, in the words addressed to his fellow, "Dost thou not fear God?" He does not say, "Dost thou not fear punishment?" The sanctification of the Spirit, in every case, is evidenced by the fear of the Lord, and a holy abhorrence of evil for its own sake. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." There may be a fear of judgement, a fear of hell, a fear of the consequences of sin, without the smallest particle of hatred of sin itself. But where the Spirit of God is really at work in the heart, He produces the real sense of sin and the judgement thereof in the sight of God.

This is repentance; let the reader ponder it deeply. It is a grand reality; an essential element, in every case. "God commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent" (Acts 17: 30). There is no getting over this — no setting it aside. Some may seek to do away with man's responsibility on the plea of his inability to do anything right or good. They may seek to persuade us that it is useless, yea unsound, to call upon men to repent and believe, seeing that men can do nothing of themselves. But the question is, what is the meaning of the words which we have just culled from the apostle's address at Athens? Did Paul preach the truth? Was he sound in the faith? Was he sufficiently high in doctrine?

Well then Paul declares, in the clearest and most emphatic manner, that "God commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent." Will any turn around and say they cannot? Will any venture to deny man's responsibility to obey a divine command? If so, where are they? On very dangerous ground. If God commands all men to repent, woe be to those who refuse to do so; and woe be to those who teach that they are not responsible to do so.

But let us devote a few moments to the examination of this great practical question in the light of the New Testament. Let us see whether our Lord and His apostles called upon men — "all men, everywhere, to repent."

In the third chapter of Matthew's Gospel, we read, "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

It will, perhaps, be said that John addressed himself specially to Israel — a people in recognized relationship with Jehovah — and hence this passage cannot be adduced in proof of the universal and abiding necessity of repentance. Well, we merely quote it here in order to show that man, whether Jew or Gentile, is responsible to repent, and that the very first voice which falls upon the ear, in the time of the New Testament, is heard calling sinners to repentance. Was the Baptist right or wrong? Was he trespassing upon the domain of sound doctrine when he summoned men to repent? Would some of our modern theologians have called him aside, after he was done preaching, and taken him to task for deceiving men by leading them to suppose that they could repent? We should like to have heard the Baptist's reply.

But we have the example of a greater than John the Baptist, as our warrant for preaching repentance, for in Matthew 4 we read, "From that time, Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Dare any one turn round and say to the divine Preacher, "We cannot repent. We have no power. We are not responsible!" Ah, no! men may argue and reason, and talk theology; but there stands the living record before us — Jesus called upon men to repent, and that, too, without entering, in any way, upon the question of man's ability here or there. He addressed man as a responsible being, as one who was imperatively called to judge himself and his ways, to confess his sins, and repent in dust and ashes. The only true place for a sinner is the place of repentance; and if he refuses to take that place in the presence of divine grace, he will be compelled to take it in the presence of divine judgement, when repentance will be too late. "God commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent."

Passing on to the opening of the Acts of the Apostles, we are privileged to harken to Peter's address on the day of Pentecost — the most fruitful sermon ever preached in this world — crowned with the glorious result of three thousand souls! And what did Peter preach? He preached Christ, and he called upon men to repent. Yes, the great apostle of the circumcision insisted upon repentance — self-judgement — true contrition of heart before God. "Then said Peter unto them, Repent, and be baptised *every one of you* in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2: 38). And, again, "Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3: 19).

Was Peter right in calling upon men to repent and be converted? Would any one be justified in saying to him, at the close of his preaching, "How can men repent? How can they be converted? They can do nothing." We should vastly like to hear Peter's reply. One thing is certain, the power of the Holy Ghost accompanied the preaching. He set His seal to it, and that is enough. "God commandeth *all men, everywhere*, to repent." Woe to all who refuse.

We have already referred to the preaching of the blessed apostle of the Gentiles, and the great teacher of the Church of God. He himself, referring to his ministry at Ephesus, declares in the audience of the elders, "I kept back nothing that was profitable, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20: 20-21). So also, in his pungent address to Agrippa, he says, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision; but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."

Thus we have a body of evidence, drawn from Scripture, such as cannot be gainsaid, proving the universal and abiding necessity of repentance. "God commandeth all men, everywhere, to *repent*." There is no avoiding this. Let men beware how they set it aside. No

system of theology can be sound that denies the responsibility of the sinner to repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

We have digressed; but the digression was needful, and we now return to our theme.

The case of the penitent thief furnishes a very fine illustration of Peter's weighty sentence, "Repent and be converted." It teaches us in a clear and forcible manner, the true meaning of repentance and conversion — two subjects so little understood, so sadly clouded by false teaching.

The human heart is ever prone to take divine things by the wrong end; and when false theology combines with this tendency of the heart, by presenting things in a one-sided manner, the moral effect upon the soul is something terrible. Hence it is that, when men are called upon in the gospel message to repent and turn to God, they think it needful to set about doing something or other, in the shape of reading, praying, and attending upon the ordinances and offices of religion, so called. Thus they become occupied with their doings instead of judging their state.

This is a fatal mistake — the result of the combined influence of self-righteousness and bad theology — these fruitful sources of darkness and misery to precious souls, and of serious damage to the truth of God.

It is perfectly marvellous to note the varied forms in which self-righteousness clothes itself. Indeed so varied are these forms that one would scarcely recognize it to be what it really is. Sometimes it looks like humility, and speaks largely of the evil and danger of being too presumptuous. Then again, it assumes the garb and adopts the language of what is called experimental religion, which, very often, is nothing more than intense self-occupation. At other times, it expresses itself in the threadbare formularies of systematic divinity — that stumbling-block of souls and the sepulchre of divine revelation.

What then is repentance? It is, in one of its grand elements, the thorough judgement of self — of its history and its ways. It is the

complete breaking up of the entire system of self-righteousness and the discovery of our complete wreck, ruin and bankruptcy. It is the sense of personal vileness, guilt, and danger — a sense produced by the mighty action of the Word and Spirit of God upon the heart and conscience. It is a hearty sorrow for sin, and a loathing of it for its own sake.

True, there are other features and elements in genuine repentance. There is a change of mind as to self, and the world, and God. And further, there are various degrees in the depths and intensity of the exercise. But, for the present, we confine ourselves to that deeply important feature of repentance illustrated in the touching narrative of the penitent thief, which we may term, in one word, self-judgement. This must be insisted upon constantly. We greatly fear it is sadly lost sight of in much of our modern preaching and teaching. In our efforts to make the gospel simple and easy, we are in danger of forgetting that "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." The sinner must be made to feel that he is a sinner, a lost sinner, a guilty sinner, a hell-deserving sinner. He must be made to feel that sin is a terrible thing in the sight of God; so terrible, that nothing short of the death of Christ could atone for it — so terrible, that all who die unpardoned must inevitably be damned — must spend a dreary, never-ending eternity in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

Is there, then, anything meritorious in repentance? Is there anything to build upon or to boast in? Has it aught to do with the ground of our salvation, our righteousness, or our acceptance with God? As well might we inquire if the consciousness of bankruptcy could form the basis of a man's credit or future fortune. No, no, reader; repentance, in its deepest and most intensified form, has nothing to do with the ground of our pardon. How could the sense of guilt have aught to do with the ground of pardon? How could the feelings of a drowning man have aught to do with the life-boat that saves him? Or how could the agonies of a man in a house on fire have aught to do with the fire-escape by which he descends from the burning pile?

Look at the case of the thief on the cross. Harken to his words: "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation:

and we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds." Here are the accents of a genuine repentance, "we indeed justly." He felt and owned that he was justly condemned; that he was reaping only "the due reward of his deeds." Was there anything meritorious in this? By no means. It was the judgement of himself, the condemnation of his ways, the sense of his guilt. And this was right. It was the sure precursor of conversion to God. It was the fruit of the Spirit's work in his soul, and enabled him to appreciate God's salvation. It was the hearty acknowledgement of his own just condemnation; and, most surely, this could in no wise contribute to his righteousness before God. It is utterly impossible that the sense of guilt could ever form the basis of righteousness.

Still, there must be repentance; and the deeper the better. It is well that the plough should do its work in breaking up the fallow ground, and making deep the furrows in which the incorruptible seed of the Word may take root. We do not believe that any one had ever to complain that the ploughshare entered too deeply into the soul. Nay, we feel assured that the more we are led down into the profound depths of our own moral ruin, the more fully we shall appreciate the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe.

But, be it well understood, repentance is not doing this or that. What did the thief do? What could he do? He could not move hand or foot. And yet he was truly repentant. He is handed down, on the page of history, as "the penitent thief." Yes, he was penitent; and his penitence expressed itself in the unmistakable accents of self-judgement. Thus it must ever be. There must be the judgement of sin, sooner or later; and the sooner, the better; and the deeper, the better.

And what then? What is the divine order? "Repent, and be converted." "Repent, and turn to God." Beauteous order! It is conviction and conversion. It is the discovery of self and its ruin, and the discovery of God and His remedy. It is condemning myself and justifying God. It is finding out the emptiness of self, and finding out the fullness of Christ. It is learning the force and application of those few words, "Thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thy help."

And see how all this comes out in the brief but comprehensive record of the thief. No sooner does he give expression to the sense of his own just condemnation, than he turns so that blessed One who was hanging beside him, and bears the sweet testimony, "This man hath done nothing amiss." Here he gives a flat contradiction to the whole world. He joins issue with the chief priests, elders, and scribes, who had delivered up the holy One as a malefactor. They had declared, "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto thee." But the dying thief declares, "This man hath done nothing amiss." Thus he stands forth in clear and decided testimony to the spotless humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ — that grand truth which lies at the very base of "the great mystery of godliness." He turns from a guilty self to a spotless Christ; and he tells the world that it had made a terrible mistake in crucifying the Lord of glory.

And was not this a good work? Yes, truly, the very best work that any one could do. To bear a full, clear, bold testimony to Christ, is the most acceptable and fragrant service that any mortal can render to God. Millions bestowed in charity, continents traversed in the interests of philanthropy, a lifetime spent in the dreary exercises of mechanical religiousness — all these things put together are as the small dust of the balance when compared with one word of heartfelt, genuine, Spirit-taught testimony to God's beloved Son. The poor thief could do nothing and give nothing; but oh, he was permitted to enjoy the richest and rarest privilege that could possibly fall to the lot of any mortal, even the privilege of bearing witness to Christ, when the whole world had cast Him out, when one of His own disciples had denied Him, another had sold Him, and all had forsaken Him. This, indeed, was service; this was work; a service and a work which shall live in the records and the memory of Heaven when the proudest monuments of human genius and benevolence shall have crumbled and sunk in eternal oblivion.

But we have some further lessons to learn from the lips of the dying malefactor. Not only does he bear a bright and blessed testimony to the spotless humanity of Christ, but he also owns Him as Lord and King; and this, too, at a moment, and amid a scene when, to nature's view, there was not a single trace of lordship or

royalty. "He said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."

Think of this! Think of one who had, as it were, a moment before, been railing on the dying Saviour, now owning Him as Lord and King! Truly this was divine work. Surely this was real conversion — a true turning to God. "Lord, remember *me*." Oh, how unspeakably precious is this golden chain with its three links! How lovely to see a poor worthless, guilty, hell-deserving "me" linked on to the divine Saviour by that one word, "*remember!*"

This was life eternal. A Saviour and a sinner linked together, is everlasting salvation. Nothing can be simpler. People may talk of works, of feelings, of experiences; but here we have the matter presented in its divine simplicity, and in its divine order. We have first the fruit of a genuine repentance, in the words, "We indeed justly"; and then the sweet result of spiritual conversion in the one simple but powerful utterance, "Lord, remember me." "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." "Repent and turn to God."

What marvellous depth and power in those words! To repent is to see the utter ruin of self. To turn to God, is life, and peace, and everlasting salvation. We discover self and we loathe and abhor it. We discover God and turn to Him with the whole heart, and find in Him all we want for time and for eternity. It is all divinely simple and unspeakably blessed. Repentance and conversion are inseparably linked together. They are distinct, yet intimately connected. They must neither be separated nor confounded.

And, now, let us note the divine response to the appeal of the penitent thief. He had said "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." What is the answer? "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." It is as though the blessed Saviour had said to him, "You need not wait for the *glory* of the *kingdom*; this very day thou shalt taste the *grace* of the *house* — the love of My Father's home above; I shall have you with Me in that bright paradise, to enjoy full communion with Me long before the glories of the kingdom shall be unfolded." Most blessed Saviour, such was Thy matchless grace!

And not one reproving word! Not a single reference to the past! Not even a glance at the recent heartless wickedness! Ah, no; there is never aught of this in the divine dealing with a penitent soul. The thief had said — said from the depths of a broken and contrite heart, "We indeed justly." This was enough. True, it was needful; but it was enough. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." No; and not only will He not despise it, but He will pour into it the rich and precious consolation of His grace and pardoning love. It is the joy of God to pardon a penitent sinner; and none but a penitent sinner can truly enjoy the pardon of God.

"To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Here the glories of a present, personal, and perfect salvation pour themselves in divine lustre upon the gaze of the astonished thief.

And, be it noted, that there is not one syllable about doing, or giving, or feeling, or aught else that might turn the eye in upon self. The eye had been turned in, and rightly so; and it had seen nothing but a deep, dark abyss of guilt and ruin. This was enough. The eye must henceforth and for evermore be turned outward and upward; it must be fixed on the precious Saviour who was bringing him to paradise, and on that bright paradise to which He was bringing him.

No doubt the thief could never forget what a sinner he had been — never forget his guilt and wickedness — he never could, he never shall; yea, throughout the countless ages of eternity, he and all the redeemed shall remember the past. How could it be otherwise? Shall we lose the power of memory in the future? Surely not. But every remembrance of the past shall only tend to swell the note of praise which the heart shall give forth as we think of the grace that shines in those precious words, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Such is the style of divine forgiveness! God will never again refer to those sins which His own loving hand has cancelled by the blood of the cross. Never! No, never! He has cast them behind His back for ever. They have sunk as lead into the deep waters of His eternal forgetfulness. All praise to His glorious Name!

Let us now fix the eye, for a brief moment, upon the third cross. On it we behold — what? A guilty sinner? Not merely that. The penitent thief was that. They were in the same condemnation.

No one need go to hell simply because he is a sinner, inasmuch as Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, "even the chief." There is not a sinner this day, outside the precincts of hell, who is not within the reach of God's salvation if he only feel his need of it. No one need be lost, merely because he is a ruined, guilty, hell-deserving sinner.

But what do we behold on that third cross? We behold an *unbelieving* sinner. This is the solemn point. We may, without any hesitation, declare that had the occupant of that cross, like his penitent companion, cast himself upon the grace of the dying Saviour, he would, most assuredly, have met with the same response. There was grace in the heart of Jesus to meet the one as well as the other. But he did not want it, would not have it. He remained impenitent and unbelieving until the dark shadows of death gathered round him, and the darker horrors of hell burst upon his guilty soul. He perished within arm's length of the Saviour and salvation.

Tremendous thought! what finite mind can take it in? Who can fully estimate the contrast between those two men? True, the contrast was in one point; but that one point involved consequences of eternal moment. What was it? It was this — *the reception or rejection of the Son of God*; believing or not believing on that blessed One who was hanging between them — as near to the one as He was to the other. There was no difference in their nature; no difference in their condition; no difference in their circumstances. The grand and all-important difference lay in this, that one believed in Jesus, and the other did not; one was enabled to say, "Lord, remember me"; the other said, "If thou be the Christ."

What a contrast! What a broad line of demarcation! What an awful chasm between two men so like in other respects — so near to one another — so near to the divine Saviour! But it is just the same in all cases, everywhere, and at all times. The one simple but solemn question for each and for all is this, "What is my relation to Christ?" All hinges upon this — yes, for time and eternity. Have I received Christ? or have I not? Am I in Him? or am I not?

The two thieves represent the two great classes into which mankind has been divided, from the days of Cain and Abel down to this very moment. God's Christ is the one great and all-deciding test in every case. All the shades of moral character; all the grades of social life; all the castes, classes, sects and parties into which the human family has been, is, or ever shall be divided — all are absorbed in this one momentous point — "*In or out of Christ.*" The difference between the two thieves is just the difference between the saved and the lost; the Church and the world — the children of God and the children of God's great enemy. True it is that, in the case of the two thieves, the matter is brought to a point, so that we can see it at a glance; but it is the same in every case. The person of Christ is the one great boundary line that marks off the new creation from the old — the kingdom of God from the kingdom of Satan — the children of light from the children of darkness; and this boundary line stretches away into eternity.

Reader, what sayest thou to these things? On which side of this line art thou, at this moment, standing? Art thou, like the penitent thief, linked on to Christ by a simple faith? Or dost thou, like his impenitent companion speak of Christ with an "if"? Say dear friend, how is it? Do not put this question away from thee. Take it up and look it solemnly in the face. Your eternal weal or woe hangs on your answer to this question. Turn to Jesus now! Come now! God commands thee! Delay not! Reason not Come just as thou art to Jesus, who hung on that centre cross for us.

* NOTE. — The two thieves furnish a powerful answer to the ritualist and the rationalist. In one, we see a man going straight to paradise who had never been baptised, and never received what ritualists call "the holy communion. — In the other, we see a man who perishes, within arm's length of a Saviour, through a sceptical, rationalistic, infidel "if." Let all ritualists and rationalists ponder *these facts.*

Luke 24.

A Risen Saviour.

The period during which our blessed Lord lay in the tomb must needs have proved a dark and bewildering moment to many of those who looked for redemption in Israel. It would demand a calm, clear and vigorous faith to raise the heart above the heavy clouds which gathered just then upon the horizon of God's people, and it does not appear that many possessed such a faith at that trying moment.

We may doubtless look upon the two disciples who travelled together to Emmaus as illustrating the condition of many, if not all, the beloved saints of God during the three days and three nights that our beloved Lord lay in the heart of the earth. They were thoroughly bewildered and at their wits' end. "They talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him."

Their minds were full of surrounding circumstances. All hope seemed gone. Their fondly cherished expectations were blasted, apparently. The whole scene was overcast by the dark shadow of death, and their poor hearts were sad.

But mark how the risen Saviour's challenge falls upon their drooping spirits! "And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?"

Surely this was a reasonable and weighty question for those dear disciples — a question eminently calculated to recall them, as we say, to their senses. It was precisely what they wanted at the moment, occupied as they were with circumstances instead of resting in the eternal and immutable truth of God. Scripture was clear and plain enough had they only hearkened to its voice. But instead of listening only to the distinct testimony of the eternal Spirit in the Word they had allowed their minds to get thoroughly down under the action and influences of outward circumstances. Instead of

standing with firm foot on the everlasting rock of divine revelation, they were struggling amid the billows of life's stormy ocean. In a word, they had for a moment fallen under the power of death so far as their minds were concerned, and no marvel if their hearts were sad and their communications gloomy.

And does it not sometimes happen that you and I in like manner get down under the power of things seen and temporal, instead of living by faith in the light of things unseen and eternal? Yes, even we who profess to know and believe in a risen Saviour — who believe that we are dead and risen with Him — who have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, do not we at times sink and cower? And do we not at such moments stand in need of a risen Saviour's challenge? Has not that precious, loving Saviour oftentimes occasion to put the question to our hearts, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another?" Does it not often happen that when we come together or when we walk by the way our "communications" are anything but what they ought to be? It may be gloomily moping together over the depressing circumstances which surround us — the weather — the prospects of the country — the state of trade — our poor health — the difficulty of making both ends meet — anything and everything, in short, but the right thing.

Yes, and so occupied do we become with such things that our spiritual eyes are holden, and we do not take knowledge of the blessed One who in His tender faithful love is at our side, and He has to challenge our vagrant hearts with His pointed and powerful question, "What manner of communications are these that ye have?"

Let us think of this. It really demands our consideration. We are all far too apt to allow our minds to fall under the power and pressure of circumstances, instead of living in the power of faith. We get occupied with our surroundings instead of dwelling upon things above" — those bright and blessed realities which are ours in Christ.

And what is the result? Do we better our circumstances or brighten our prospects by gloomily moping over them? Not in the smallest degree. What then? We simply make ourselves miserable

and our communications depressing; and, worst of all, we bring dishonour on the cause of Christ.

Christians forget how much is involved in their temper, manner, look, and deportment in daily life. We forget that the Lord's glory is intimately bound up with our daily deportments. We all know that, in social life, we judge of the character of the head of a household by what we see of his children and servants. If we observed the children looking miserable and downcast, we should be disposed to pronounce their father morose, severe and arbitrary. If we see the servants crushed and overwrought, we consider the master hard-hearted and grinding. In short, as a rule, you can form a tolerably fair estimate of the head of a house by the tone, spirit, style and manner of the members of his household.

How earnestly, then, should we seek, as members of the household of *God*, to give a right impression of what He is by our temper, spirit, style, and manner! If men of the world — those with whom we come in contact from day to day in the practical details of life — if they see us looking sour, morose downcast — if they hear us giving utterance to doleful complaints about this, that and the other — if they see us occupied about our own things — grasping, griping, and driving as hard bargains as others — if they see us grinding our servants with heavy Work, low wages, and poor fare — what estimate can they form of Him whom we call our Father and our Master in heaven?

Let us not despise and turn away from such homely words. Depend upon it there is need of such in this day of much profession. There is a vast amount of intellectual traffic in truth which leaves the conscience unreached, the heart untouched, the life unaffected. We know we are dead and risen; but when anything occurs to touch us, either in our persons, in our relations, or in our interests, we speedily show how little power that precious truth has upon us.

May the Lord give us grace to apply our hearts very seriously and earnestly to these things, so that there may be, in our daily course, a more faithful exhibition of a genuine Christianity — such an exhibition as shall glorify our own most gracious God and Father, and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ — and such, too, as shall

afford to those who come in contact with us a fair specimen of what pure religion really is in its action upon the entire course and character.

May we all realize more a risen Saviour's presence, and find therein a triumphant answer to all the dark suggestions of the enemy, the depressing reasonings of our own hearts, and the deadening influence of surrounding circumstances. God, in His infinite mercy, grant it, for Jesus' sake.

It is impossible to read this charming section of inspiration (Luke 24) and not be struck with what we may venture to call the rallying power of a risen Saviour's voice and presence. We see the dear disciples scattered hither and thither in doubt and perplexity, fear and despondency — some running to the sepulchre; some coming from it; some going to Emmaus, and some crowded together at Jerusalem, in various states and conditions.

But the voice and realized presence of Jesus rallied, reassured, and encouraged them all, and brought all together around His own blessed Person in worship, love, and praise. There was an indescribable power in His presence to meet every condition of heart and mind. Thus it was; thus it is; thus it ever must be, blessed and praised be His precious name! There is power in the presence of a risen Saviour to solve our difficulties, remove our perplexities, calm our fears, ease our burdens, dry our tears, meet our every need, tranquillise our minds and satisfy every craving of our hearts.

Jesus! Thou art enough,

The mind and heart to fill;

Thy life — to calm the anxious soul

Thy love — its fear dispel.

The two disciples going to Emmaus proved something of this, if we are to judge from their own glowing words to one another. "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" Yes, here lay the

deep and precious secret: "*He* talked with us" — and "*He* opened to us the Scriptures"! What seraphic moments! what high communion! what loving ministry! A risen Saviour rallying their hearts by His marvellous words and mighty exposition of the Scriptures.

What was the effect — what the necessary result? The two travellers instantly returned to Jerusalem to seek their brethren. It could not be otherwise. If we lose sight of a risen Saviour we are sure to get away from our brethren, sure to get occupied with our own things; to pursue our own way — get into coldness, deadness, darkness, and selfishness. But, on the other hand, the moment we get really into the presence of Christ, when we hear His voice and feel the sweetness and power of His love, when our hearts are brought under the mighty moral influence of His most precious loving ministry, then we are led out in true affection and interest after all our brethren and in earnest desire to find our place in their midst in order that we may communicate to them the deep joy that is filling our own souls. We may lay it down as a fixed principle — a spiritual axiom — that it is utterly impossible to breathe the atmosphere of a risen Saviour's presence and remain in an isolated, independent, or fragmentary condition. The necessary effect of His dear presence is to melt the heart and cause it to flow out in streams of tender affection toward all that belong to Him.

But let us pursue our chapter.

"And they rose up the same hour" of the night — thus proving they had but little business at Emmaus, or how paramount was the blessed object now before them, "and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread. And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit."

They, too, needed a risen Saviour's challenge to bring them to their senses — to calm their fears and raise their drooping spirits. They needed to realize the power of His presence as the risen One.

They had just declared to their two brethren from Emmaus that "The Lord is risen indeed"; but yet when their risen Lord appeared to them they did not know Him, and He had to challenge their hearts with His stirring words, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them."

What tender love! What gracious condescension to their weakness and need! What compassionate entrance into all their feelings, spite of their folly and unbelief! Gracious Saviour! Who would not love Thee? Who would not trust Thee? May the whole heart be absorbed with Thee! May the whole life be cordially devoted to Thy blessed service! May Thy cause command all our energies!! May all we have and all we love be laid on Thine altar as a reasonable service! May the eternal Spirit work in us for the accomplishment of these grand and longed for objects!

But ere closing this brief article there is one point of special interest and value to which we must call attention, and that is, the way in which the risen Saviour puts honour upon the written Word. He rebuked the two travellers for their slowness of heart to believe the Scriptures. "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

So also in His interview with the eleven and the rest at Jerusalem. No sooner had He satisfied them as to His identity than He sought to conduct their souls to the same divine authority — the Holy Scriptures. "And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you that all things must be fulfilled, *which were written* in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand *the Scriptures*, and said unto them, *Thus it is written*, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and

remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

All this is of the deepest possible importance at the present moment. We feel persuaded that professing Christians everywhere need to have their hearts stirred up in reference to the paramount claims of the Word of God, its absolute authority over the conscience, its formative power, its complete sway over the entire course, character and conduct.

It is to be feared, greatly feared, that Holy Scripture is fast losing its divine place in the hearts of those who profess to take it as the divine rule of faith and morals. We have often heard that watchword sounded in our ears, "The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants." Alas! if this motto were ever really true we fear that its truth at this moment is more than questionable. Very few, comparatively, even of those who occupy the very highest platform of profession seem to admit, and still fewer actually acknowledge practically, that *in all things* — whether of faith or morals — in all the practical details of life, in the Church, in the family, in the business, and in our private walk from day to day — we are to be governed absolutely by that commanding, that mighty, that morally glorious sentence, "It is written" — a sentence enhanced exceedingly in value and heightened in its moral glory by the telling fact that it was used thrice by our adorable Lord at the opening of His public career, in His conflict with the adversary, and sounded in the ears of His loved ones just as He was about to ascend into the heavens.

Yes, dearly beloved Christian reader, "It is written" was a favourite sentence with our divine Master and Lord. He ever obeyed the Word. He yielded a hearty and unqualified submission to its holy authority in all things. He lived on it and by it from first to last. He walked according to it and never acted without it. He did not reason or question, imply or infer, He did not add or diminish, or qualify in any one way — *He obeyed*. Yes; He, the eternal Son of the Father — Himself God over all blessed for ever — having become a man, lived on the Holy Scriptures and walked by their rule continually. He made them the food of His soul, the material and the basis of His marvellous ministry — the divine authority of His perfect path.

In all this He was our great Exemplar. Oh, may we follow His blessed footsteps! May we bring ourselves, our ways, our habits, our associations, our surroundings, to the test of Holy Scripture, and reject with wholehearted decision everything, no matter what or by whom propounded, that will not bear that searching light.

We are most thoroughly persuaded that in hundreds of thousands of cases the first grand point to be gained is to recall the heart to that delightful attitude in which the Word of God is fully owned and submitted to as an absolute authority. It is positively labour lost to be arguing and disputing with a man who does not give Scripture the self-same place that our Lord Jesus Christ gave it. And when a man does this there is no need of argument. What is really needed is to make the Word of God the basis of our individual peace and authority of our individual path. May we all do so!

O come, Thou stricken Lamb of God!

Who shed'st for us Thine own life-blood,

And teach us all Thy love — then pain

Were sweet and life or death were gain.

Take Thou our hearts, and let them be

For ever closed to all but Thee;

Thy willing servants, let us wear

The seal of love for ever there.

How blest are they who still abide

Close shelter'd by Thy watchful side;

Who life and strength from Thee receive,

And with Thee move, and in Thee live.

Ah, Lord! enlarge our scanty thought,
To know the wonders Thou hast wrought;
Unloose our stammering tongues to tell
Thy love, immense, unsearchable.

First-born of many brethren, Thou!
To whom both heaven and earth must bow;
Heirs of Thy shame and of Thy throne,
We bear Thy cross, and seek Thy crown.

Luke 24: 44-49

The Great Commission

"And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, *Thus it is written*, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of My Father unto you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24: 44-49).

Part 1

This splendid passage of Holy Scripture sets before us the great commission which the risen Lord entrusted to His apostles just as He was about to ascend into the heavens, having gloriously accomplished all His blessed work upon earth. It is truly a most wonderful commission, and opens up a very wide field of truth, through which we may range with much spiritual delight and profit. Whether we ponder *the commission itself*, its *basis*, its *authority*, its *power*, or its *sphere*, we shall find it all full of most precious instruction. May the blessed Spirit guide our thoughts, while we meditate, first of all, upon *the commission itself*.

The apostles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ were specially charged to preach "repentance and remission of sins." Let us all remember this. We are prone to forget it, to the serious damaging of our preaching, and of the souls of our hearers. Some of us are apt to overlook the first part of the commission, in our eagerness, it may be, to get to the second. This is a most serious mistake. We may rest assured that it is our truest wisdom to keep close to the veritable terms in which our blessed Lord delivered His

charge to His earliest heralds. We cannot omit a single point, not to say a leading branch of the commission, without serious loss in every way. Our Lord is infinitely wiser and more gracious than we are, and we need not fear to preach with all possible plainness what He told His apostles to preach, namely, "repentance and remission of sins."

Now the question is, are we all careful to maintain this very important connection? Do we give sufficient prominence to the first part of the great commission? Do we preach "repentance?"

We are not now inquiring what repentance is; that we shall do, if God permit. But, whatever it is, do we preach it? That our Lord commanded His apostles to preach it is plain; and not only so, but He preached it Himself, as we read it in Mark 1: 14-15: "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe the gospel."

Let us carefully note this record. Let all preachers note it. Our divine Master called upon sinners to repent and believe the gospel. Some would have us to believe that it is a mistake to call upon persons dead in trespasses and sins to do anything. "How," it is argued, "can those who are dead repent? They are incapable of any spiritual movement. They must first get the power ere they can either repent or believe."

What is our reply to all this? A very simple one indeed — Our Lord knows better than all the theologians in the world what ought to be preached. He knows all about man's, condition — his guilt, his misery, his spiritual death, his utter helplessness, his total inability to think a single right thought, to utter a single right word, to do a single right act; and yet He called upon men to repent. This is quite enough for us. It is no part of our business to seek to reconcile seeming differences. It may seem to us difficult to reconcile man's utter powerlessness with his responsibility; but "God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain." It is our happy privilege, and our bounden duty, to believe what He says, and do what He tells us. This is true wisdom, and it yields solid peace.

Our Lord preached repentance, and He commanded His apostles to preach it; and they did so constantly. Harken to Peter on the day of Pentecost. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." And again, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." Harken to Paul also, as he stood on Mars' Hill, at Athens: "But now *God commandeth all men everywhere* to repent; because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead."

So also, in his touching address to the elders of Ephesus, he says, "I kept back nothing that was profitable [blessed servant!] but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also the Greeks, *repentance toward God*, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." And again, in his address to king Agrippa, he says, "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision, but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that *they should repent*, and turn to God, and *do works meet for repentance*."

Now, in the face of this body of evidence — with the example of our Lord and His apostles so fully and clearly before us — may we not very lawfully inquire whether there is not a serious defect in much of our modern preaching? Do we preach repentance as we ought? Do we assign to it the place which it gets in the preaching of our Lord, and of His early heralds? It is vanity and folly, or worse, to talk about its being legal to preach repentance, to say that it tarnishes the lustre of the gospel of the grace of God to call upon men dead in trespasses and sins to repent, and do works meet for repentance. Was Paul legal in his preaching Did he not preach a clear, full, rich, and divine gospel? Have we got in advance of Paul? Do we preach a clearer gospel than he? How utterly preposterous the notion! Well, but he preached repentance. He told his hearers that "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Does this

mar the gospel of the grace of God? Does it detract from its heavenly fullness and freeness? As well might you tell a farmer that it lowered the quality of his grain to plough the fallow ground before sowing.

No doubt it is of the very last possible importance to preach the gospel of the grace of God, or, if you please, the gospel of the glory, in all its fullness, clearness, and power. We are to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ — to declare the whole counsel of God, to present the righteousness of God and His salvation, without limit, condition, or hindrance of any kind — to publish the good news to every creature under heaven.

We should, in the very strongest possible manner, insist upon this. But at the same time we must jealously keep to the terms of "the great commission." We cannot depart the breadth of a hair from these without serious damage to our testimony, and to the souls of our hearers. If we fail to preach repentance, we are "keeping back" something profitable." What should we say to a husbandman, if we saw him scattering his precious grain along the beaten highway? We should justly pronounce him out of his mind. The plough-share must do its work. The fallow ground must be broken up ere the seed is sown; and we may rest assured that, as in the kingdom of nature, so in the kingdom of grace, the ploughing must precede the sowing. The ground must be duly prepared for the seed, else the operation will prove altogether defective. Let the gospel be preached as God has given it to us in His Word. Let it not be shorn of one of its moral glories; let it flow forth as it comes from the deep fountain of the heart of God, through the channel of Christ's finished work, on the authority of the Holy Ghost.

All this is not only most fully admitted but peremptorily insisted upon; but at the same time we must never forget that our Lord and Master called upon men to "repent and believe the gospel"; that He strictly enjoined it upon His holy apostles to preach repentance; and that the blessed apostle Paul, the chief of apostles, the profoundest teacher the Church has ever known, did preach repentance, calling upon men everywhere to repent and do works meet for repentance.

And here it may be well for us to inquire what this repentance is which occupies such a prominent place in "the great commission," and in the preaching of our Lord and of His apostles. If it be — as it most surely is — an abiding and universal necessity for man — if God commands all men everywhere to repent — if repentance is inseparably linked with remission of sins — how needful it is that we should seek to understand its true nature!

What, then, is repentance? May the Spirit Himself instruct us by the Word of God! He alone can. We are all liable to err — some of us have erred — in our thoughts on this most weighty subject. We are in danger, while seeking to avoid error on one side, of falling into error on the other. We are poor, feeble, ignorant, erring creatures, whose only security is in our being kept continually at the feet of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. He alone can teach us what repentance is, as well as what it is not. We feel most fully assured that the enemy of souls and of the truth has succeeded in giving repentance a false place in the creeds, and confessions, and public teachings of Christendom; and the conviction of this makes it all the more needful for us to keep close to the living teachings of Holy Scripture.

We are not aware of any formal definition of the subject furnished by the Holy Ghost. He does not tell us in so many words what repentance is; but the more we study the Word in reference to the great question, the more deeply we feel convinced that true repentance involves the solemn judgment of ourselves, our condition, and our ways, in the presence of God; and, further, that this judgment is not a transient feeling, but an abiding condition — not a certain exercise to be gone through as a sort of title to the remission of sins, but the deep and settled habit of the soul, giving seriousness, gravity, tenderness, brokenness, and profound humility, which shall overlap, underlie, and characterise our entire course.

We seriously question if this aspect of the subject is sufficiently understood. Let not the reader mistake us. We do not mean for a moment to teach that the soul should be always bowed down under the sense of unforgiven sin. Far be the thought! But we greatly fear that some of us, in running away from legality on the question of repentance, have fallen into levity. This is a serious

error. We may depend upon it that levity is no remedy for legality: were it proposed as such, we should have no hesitation in pronouncing the remedy much worse than the disease. Thank God we have His own sovereign remedy for levity, on the one hand, and legality on the other. "*Truth*" — insisting upon "repentance," is the remedy for the former. "*Grace*" — publishing "remission of sins," is the remedy for the latter. And we cannot but believe that the more profound our repentance, the fuller will be our enjoyment of remission.

We are inclined to judge that there is a sad lack of depth and seriousness in much of our modern preaching. In our anxiety to make the gospel simple, and salvation easy, we fail to press on the consciences of our hearers the holy claims of truth. If a preacher now-a-days were to call upon his hearers to "repent and turn to God, and to do works meet for repentance," he would, in certain circles, be pronounced legal, ignorant, below the mark, and such like. And yet this was precisely what the blessed apostle Paul did, as he himself tells us. Will any of our modern evangelists have the temerity to say that Paul was a legal or an ignorant preacher? We trust not. Paul carried with him the full, clear, precious gospel of God — the gospel of the grace, and the gospel of the glory. He preached the kingdom of God — He unfolded the glorious mystery of the Church — yea, that mystery was specially committed to him.

But let all preachers remember that Paul preached repentance. He called upon sinners to judge themselves — to repent in dust and ashes, as was meet and right they should. He himself had learnt the true meaning of repentance. He had not only judged himself once in a way, but he *lived* in the spirit of self-judgment. It was the habit of his soul, the attitude of his heart, and it gave a depth, solidity, seriousness and solemnity to his preaching of which we modern preachers know but little. We do not believe that Paul's repentance ended with the three days and three nights of blindness after his conversion. He was a self-judged man all his life long. Did this hinder his enjoyment of the grace of God or of the preciousness of Christ? Nay, it gave depth and intensity to his enjoyment.

All this, we feel persuaded, demands our most serious consideration. We greatly dread the light, airy, superficial style of

much of our modern preaching. It sometimes seems to us as if the gospel were brought into utter contempt and the sinner led to suppose that he is really conferring a very great favour upon God in accepting salvation at His hands. Now we most solemnly protest against this. It is dishonouring to God, and lowering His gospel; and, as might be expected, its moral effect on those who profess to be converted is most deplorable. It superinduces levity, self-indulgence, worldliness, vanity, and folly. Sin is not felt to be the dreadful thing it is in the sight of God. Self is not judged. The world is not given up. The gospel that is preached is what may be called "salvation made easy" to the flesh — the most terrible thing we can possibly conceive — terrible in its effect upon the soul — terrible in its results in the life. God's sentence upon the flesh and the world gets no place in the preaching to which we refer. People are offered a salvation which leaves self and the world practically unjudged, and the consequence is, those who profess to be converted by this gospel exhibit a lightness and unsubduedness perfectly shocking to people of serious piety.

Man must take his true place before God, and that is the place of self-judgment, contrition of heart, real sorrow for sin, and true confession. It is here the gospel meets him. The fullness of God ever waits on an empty vessel, and a truly repentant soul is the empty vessel into which all the fullness and grace of God can flow in saving power. The Holy Ghost will make the sinner feel and own his real condition. It is He alone who can do so: but He uses preaching to this end. He brings the Word of God to bear on man's conscience. The Word is His hammer, wherewith He breaks the rock in pieces — His plowshare, wherewith He breaks up the fallow ground. He makes the furrow, and then casts in the incorruptible seed, to germinate and fructify to the glory of God. True, the furrow, how deep soever it may be, can produce no fruit. It is the seed, and not the furrow; but there must be the furrow for all that.

It is not, need we say, that there is anything meritorious in the sinner's repentance. To say so could only be regarded as audacious falsehood. Repentance is not a good work whereby the sinner merits the favour of God. All this view of the subject is utterly and fatally false. True repentance is the discovery and hearty confession of our

utter ruin and guilt. It is the finding out that my whole life has been a lie, and that I myself am a liar. This is serious work. There is no flippancy or levity when a soul is brought to this. A penitent soul in the presence of God is a solemn reality; and we cannot but feel that were we more governed by the terms of "the great commission," we should more solemnly, earnestly and constantly call upon men "to repent and turn to God and do works meet for repentance" — we should preach "repentance" as well as "remission of sins."

Part 2

Since writing our last paper, we have been much interested in the way in which repentance is presented in those inimitable parables in Luke 15. There we learn, in a manner the most touching and convincing, not only the abiding and universal necessity the moral fitness in every case of true repentance — but also that it is grateful to the heart of God. Our Lord, in His marvellous reply to the scribes and Pharisees, declares that "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." And again, "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

Now this gives us a very elevated view of the subject. It is one thing to see that repentance is binding upon man, and another and very much higher thing to see that it is grateful to God. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." A broken heart, a contrite spirit, a repentant mind, gives joy to God.

Let us ponder this fact. The scribes and Pharisees murmured because Jesus received sinners. How little they understood Him! How little they knew of the object that brought Him down into this dark and sinful world! How little they knew of themselves! It was the "lost" that Jesus came to seek. But scribes and Pharisees did not think themselves lost. They thought they were all right. They did not want a Saviour. They were thoroughly unbroken, unrepentant, self-confident: and hence they had never afforded one atom of joy in Heaven. All the learning of the scribes, and all the righteousness of the Pharisees, could not waken up a single note of joy in the

presence of the angels of God. They were like the elder son in the parable who said, "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends."

Here we have a true specimen of an unbroken heart and an unrepentant spirit a man thoroughly satisfied with himself. Miserable object! He had never touched a chord in the Father's heart — never drawn out the Father's love — never felt the Father's embrace — never received the Father's welcome. How could he? He had never felt himself lost. He was full of himself, and therefore had no room for the Father's love. He did not feel that he owed anything, and hence he had nothing to be forgiven. It rather seemed to him that his father was his debtor. "Lo, these many years do I serve thee; and yet thou never gavest me a kid." He had not received his wages.

What egregious folly! And yet it is just the same with every unrepentant soul — every one who is building upon his own righteousness. He really makes God his debtor. "I have served Thee; but I have never gotten what I earned." Miserable notion! The man who talks of his duties, his doings, his sayings, his givings, is really insulting God. But on the other hand, the man who comes with a broken heart, a contrite spirit, repentant, self-judged — that is the man who gives joy to the heart of God.

And why? Simply because such a one feels his need of God. Here lies the grand moral secret of the whole matter. To apprehend this is to grasp the full truth on the great question of repentance. A God of love desires to make His way to the sinner's heart, but there is no room for Him so long as that heart is hard and impenitent. But when the sinner is brought to the end of himself, when he sees himself a helpless, hopeless wreck, when he sees the utter emptiness, hollowness and vanity of all earthly things; when like the prodigal he comes to himself and feels the depth and reality of his need, then there is room in his heart for God, and — marvellous truth! — God delights to come and fill it. "To this man will I look." To whom? To the man who does his duty, keeps the law, does his best, lives up to his light? Nay; but "to him who is of a contrite spirit."

It will perhaps be said that the words just quoted apply to Israel. Primarily, they do; but morally they apply to every contrite heart on the face of the earth. And, further, it cannot be said that Luke 15 applies specially to Israel. It applies to all. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that" — What? Does his duty? Nay, it does not even say, "that believeth." No doubt believing is essential in every case; but the interesting point here is that a truly repentant sinner causes joy in Heaven. A person may say, "I fear I do not believe." Well, but do you repent? Have your eyes been opened to see your true condition before God? Have you taken your true place before God as utterly lost? If so, you are one of those over whom there is joy in Heaven.

What gave joy to the shepherd's heart? Was it the ninety and nine sheep that went not astray? Nay, it was finding the lost sheep. What gave joy to the woman's heart? Was it the nine pieces in her possession? Nay, it was finding the one lost piece. What gave joy to the father's heart? Was it the service and the obedience of the elder son? Nay, it was getting back his lost son. A repentant, broken-hearted, returning sinner wakens up Heaven's joy. "Let us eat and be merry." Why? Because the elder son has been working in the fields and doing his duty? No; but "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

All this is perfectly wonderful. Indeed, it is so wonderful that if we had it not from the lips of Him who is the Truth, and on the eternal page of divine inspiration, we could not believe it. But, blessed be God, there it stands, and none can gainsay it. There shines the glorious truth that a poor, self-convicted, broken-hearted, penitent, though hell-deserving sinner, gives joy to the heart of God. Let people talk as they will about keeping the law and doing their duty: it may go for what it is worth; but be it remembered there is no such clause within the covers of the volume of God — no such sentence ever dropped from the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ as "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that does his duty."

A sinner's duty! What is it? "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." What is it that can really define our duty? Surely the divine command. Well, here it is, and there is no getting over it. God's command to all men, in every place, is to repent. His

commandment binds them to do it; His goodness leads them to it; His judgment warns them to it; and, above all, and most marvellous of all, He assures us that our repentance gives joy to His heart. A penitent heart is an object of profoundest interest to the mind of God, because that heart is morally prepared to receive what God delights to bestow, namely, "remission of sins" — yea, all the fullness of divine love. A man might spend millions in the cause of religion and philanthropy, and not afford one atom of joy in Heaven. What are millions of money to God? A single penitential tear is more precious to Him than all the wealth of the universe. All the offerings of an unbroken heart are a positive insult to God; but a single sigh from the depths of a contrite spirit goes up as a fragrant incense to His throne and to His heart.

No man can meet God on the ground of duty; but God can meet any man — the very chief of sinners — on the ground of repentance, for that is man's true place; and we may say with all possible confidence that when the sinner, as he is, meets God as He is, the whole question is settled once and forever. "I said, *I will confess* my transgressions unto the Lord, and *Thou forgavest* the iniquity of my sin." The moment man takes his true place — the place of repentance — God meets him with a full forgiveness, a divine and everlasting righteousness. It is His joy to do so. It gratifies His heart and it glorifies His name to pardon, justify and accept a penitent soul that simply believes in Jesus. The very moment the prophet cried, "Woe is me; for I am undone" — "Then flew one of the seraphim with a live coal from off the altar" to touch his lips, and to purge his sins (Isa. 6: 5-7).

Thus it is always. The fullness of God ever waits on an empty vessel. If I am full of myself, full of my own fancied goodness, my own morality, my own righteousness, I have no room for God, no room for Christ. "He filleth the *hungry* with good things; but the rich He hath sent empty away." A self-emptied soul can be filled with the fullness of God; but if God sends a man empty away, whither can he go to be filled? All Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, goes to prove the deep blessedness as well as the moral necessity of repentance. It is the grand turning-point in the soul's history — a great moral epoch which sheds its influence over the whole of one's

after life. It is not, we repeat, a transient exercise, but an abiding moral condition. We are not now speaking of how repentance is produced; we are speaking of what it is according to Scripture, and of the absolute need of it for every creature under Heaven. It is the sinner's true place; and when through grace he takes it, he is met by the fullness of God's salvation.

Here we see the lovely connection between the first and second clauses of "the great commission," namely, "repentance and remission of sins." They are inseparably linked together. It is not that the most profound and genuine repentance forms the meritorious ground of remission of sins. To say or to think so would be to set aside the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, for in that, and in that alone, have we the divine ground on which God can righteously forgive us our sins. This we shall see more fully when we come to consider the "basis" of "the great commission."

We are now occupied with the commission itself; and in it we see those two divinely settled facts, repentance and remission of sins. The holy apostles of our Lord and Saviour were charged to preach among all nations — to declare in the ears of every creature under heaven "repentance and remission of sins." Every man, be he Jew or Gentile, is absolutely commanded by God to repent; and every repentant soul is privileged to receive, on the spot, the full and everlasting remission of sins. And we may add, the deeper and more abiding the work of repentance, the deeper and more abiding will be the enjoyment of remission of sins. The contrite soul lives in the very atmosphere of divine forgiveness; and as it inhales that atmosphere, it shrinks with ever — increasing horror from sin in every shape and form.

Let us turn for a moment to the Acts of the Apostles, and see how Christ's ambassadors carried out the second part of His blessed commission. Hear the apostle of the circumcision addressing the Jews on the day of Pentecost. We cannot attempt to quote the whole of his address; we merely give the few words of application at the close. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ."

Here the preacher bears down upon the consciences of his hearers with the solemn fact that they had proved themselves to be at issue with God Himself about His Christ. What a tremendous fact! It was not merely that they had broken the law, rejected the prophets, refused the testimony of John the Baptist; but they had actually crucified the Lord of glory, the eternal Son of God. "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men, brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for *the remission of sins*, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2: 36-38).

Here are the two parts of the great commission brought out in all their distinctness and power. The people are charged with the most awful sin that could be committed, namely, the murder of the Son of God; they are called upon to repent, and assured of full remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost. What wondrous grace shines forth in all this! The very people that had mocked and insulted the Son of God, and crucified Him, even these, if truly repentant, were assured of the complete pardon of all their sins, and of this crowning sin amongst the rest. Such is the wondrous grace of God — such the mighty efficacy of the blood of Christ — such the clear and authoritative testimony of the Holy Ghost — such the glorious terms of "the great commission."

But let us turn for a moment to Acts 3. Here the preacher, after charging his hearers with this awful act of wickedness against God, even the rejection and murder of His Son, adds these remarkable words: "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, *He hath so fulfilled*. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that *your sins may be blotted out*."

It is not possible to conceive anything higher or fuller than the grace that shines out here. It is a part of the divine response to the prayer of Christ on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." This surely is royal grace. It is victorious grace — grace reigning through righteousness. It was impossible that such a prayer should fall to the ground. It was answered in part on the day

of Pentecost. It will be answered in full at a future day, for "All Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

Mark particularly the words "Those things which God before had showed . . . He hath so fulfilled." Here the preacher brings in God's side of the matter: and this is salvation. To see only man's part in the cross would be eternal judgment. To see God's part, and to rest in it is eternal life, full remission of sins, divine righteousness, everlasting glory.

The reader will doubtless be reminded here of the touching scene between Joseph and his brethren. There is a striking analogy between Acts 3 and Genesis 14. "Now therefore," says Joseph, "be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life.... And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. *So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God.*"

But when were these words uttered? Not until the guilty brethren had felt and owned their guilt. Repentance preceded the remission. "They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." Joseph "spake roughly" to his brethren at the first. He brought them through deep waters, and made them feel and confess their guilt. But the very moment they took the ground of repentance, he took the ground of forgiveness. The penitent brethren were met by a pardoning Joseph, and the whole house of Pharaoh was made to ring with the joy which filled the heart of Joseph on getting back to his bosom the very men that had flung him into the pit.

What an illustration of "repentance and remission of sins!" It is ever thus. It is the joy of the heart of God to forgive us our sins. He delights in causing the full tide of His pardoning love to flow into the broken and contrite heart.

Yes, if you have been brought to feel the burden of your guilt, then be assured it is your privilege this very moment to receive a divine and everlasting remission of all your sins. The blood of Jesus Christ has perfectly settled the question of your guilt, and you are now invited to rejoice in the

God of your salvation.

Part 3

We shall now turn for a few moments to the ministry of the apostle of the Gentiles, and see how he fulfilled the great commission. We have already heard him on the subject of "repentance." Let us hear him also on the great question of "remission of sins."

Paul was not of the twelve. He did not receive his commission from Christ on earth, but, as he himself distinctly and repeatedly tells us, from Christ in heavenly glory. Some have spent not a little time and pains in labouring to prove that he was of the twelve, and that the election of Matthias in Acts 1 was a mistake. But it is labour sadly wasted, and only proves an entire misunderstanding of Paul's position and ministry. He was raised up for a special object, and made the depository of a special truth which had never been made known to any one before, namely, the truth of the Church — the one body composed of Jew and Gentile, incorporated by the Holy Ghost, and linked, by His personal indwelling, to the risen and glorified Head in Heaven.

Paul received his own special commission, of which he gives a very beautiful statement in his address to Agrippa, in Acts 26, "Whereupon, as I went to Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief priests" — what a different "commission" he received ere he entered Damascus! — "at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." Here the glorious

truth of the intimate union of believers with the glorified Man in Heaven, though not stated, is beautifully and forcibly implied.

"But rise, and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people and the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins" (the same word as in the commission to the twelve in Luke 24) "and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in Me."

["By faith" is connected with remission of sins and inheritance among the sanctified.]

What depth and fullness in these words! What a comprehensive statement of man's condition! What a blessed presentation of the resources of divine grace! There is a very remarkable harmony between this commission to Paul and that to the twelve in Luke 24. It will perhaps be said there is nothing about repentance. True, the word does not occur; but we have the moral reality, and that with singular force and fullness. What mean the words, "*To open their eyes*"? Do they not most certainly involve the discovery of our condition? Assuredly. A man who has his eyes opened is brought to the knowledge of himself, the knowledge of his condition, the knowledge of his ways; and this is true repentance. It is a wonderful moment in a man's history when his eyes are opened. It is the grand crisis, the momentous epoch, the one turning-point. Till then he is blind — morally and spiritually blind. He cannot see a single divine object. He has no perception of anything pertaining to God, to Christ, to Heaven.

This is truly humbling to proud human nature. Think of a clear-headed, highly educated, deeply learned, intellectual man, a profound thinker, a powerful reasoner, a thorough philosopher, who has won the honours, the medals, the degrees, that this world's universities can bestow; and yet he is blind to everything spiritual, heavenly, divine. He gropes in moral darkness. He thinks he sees, assumes the right to judge and pronounce upon things, even upon

Scripture and upon God Himself. He undertakes to decide what is fitting for God to say and to do. He sets up his own mind as the measure in the things of God. He reasons upon immortality, upon eternal life, and eternal punishment. He deems himself perfectly competent to give judgment in reference to all these solemn and weighty matters; and all the while his eyes have never been opened. How much is his judgment worth? Nothing! Who would take the opinion of a man who, if his eyes were only opened, would reverse that opinion in reference to everything heavenly and divine? Who would think for a moment of being guided by a blind man?

But how do we know that every man in his natural, unconverted state is blind? Because, according to Paul's commission, the very first thing which the gospel is to do for him is "to open his eyes." This proves, beyond all question, that he must be blind. Paul was sent to the people and to the Gentiles — that is, to the whole human family — to open their eyes. This proves, to a divine demonstration, that all are by nature blind.

But there is more than this. Man is not only blind, but he is in "darkness." Supposing for a moment that a person has his eyesight, of what use is it to him if he is in the dark? It is the double statement as to man's state and position. As to his state, he is blind. As to his position, he is in darkness; and when his eyes are opened, and divine light streams in upon his soul, he then judges himself and his ways according to God. He sees his folly, his guilt, his rebellion, his wild, infidel reasonings, his foolish notions, the vanity of his mind, his pride and ambition, his selfishness and worldliness — all these things are judged and abhorred. He repents, and turns right round to the One who has opened his eyes and poured in a flood of living light upon his heart and conscience.

Further, not only is man — every man — Jew and Gentile, blind and in darkness, but, as if to give the climax of all, he is under the power of Satan. This gives a terrible idea of man's condition. He is the slave of the devil. He does not believe this. He imagines himself free — thinks he is his own master — fancies he can go where he pleases, do what he likes, think for himself, speak and act as an independent being. But he is the bondsman of another, he is sold under sin, Satan is his lord and master. Thus Scripture speaks,

and it cannot be broken. Man may refuse to believe, but that cannot in the least change the fact. A condemned criminal at the bar may refuse to believe the testimony from the witness table, the verdict from the jury-box, the sentence from the bench; but that in nowise alters his terrible condition. He is a condemned criminal all the same.

So with man as a sinner; he may refuse the plain testimony of Scripture, but that testimony remains notwithstanding. Even if the thousand millions that people this globe were to deny the truth of God's Word, that Word would still stand unmoved. Scripture does not depend for its truth upon man's belief. It is true whether he believes it or not. Blessed forever is the man who believes; doomed forever is the man who refuses to believe; but the Word of God is settled forever in Heaven, and it is to be received on its own authority, apart from all human thoughts for or against it.

This is a grand fact, and one demanding the profound attention of every soul. Everything depends upon it. The Word of God claims our belief because it is His Word. If we want any authority to confirm the truth of God's Word, we are in reality rejecting God's Word altogether, and resting on man's word. A man may say, "How do I know that the Bible is the Word of God?" We reply, It carries its own divine credentials with it; and if these credentials do not convince, all the human authority under the sun is perfectly worthless. If the whole population of the earth were to stand before me, and assure me of the truth of God's Word, and that I were to believe on their authority, it would not be saving faith at all. It would be faith in men, and not faith in God; but the faith that saves is the faith that believes what God says because God says it.

It is not that we undervalue human testimony, or reject what are called the external evidences of the truth of the Holy Scripture. All these things must go for what they are worth; they are by no means essential in laying the foundation of saving faith. We are perfectly sure that all genuine history, all true science, all sound human evidence, must go to establish the divine authenticity of the Bible; but we do not rest our faith upon them, but upon the Scriptures to which they bear witness; for if all human evidence, all science, and every page of history, were to speak against Scripture,

we should utterly and absolutely reject them; reverently and implicitly believe it. Is this narrow? Be it so. It is the blessed narrowness in which we gladly find our peace and our portion forever. It is the narrowness that refuses to admit the weight of a feather as an addition to the Word of God. If this be narrowness — we repeat it with emphasis, and from the very centre of our ransomed being — let it be ours forever.

If to be broad we must look to man to confirm the truth of God's Word, then away with such broadness; it is the broad way that leadeth straight down to hell. No, your life, your salvation, your everlasting peace, blessedness and glory, depend upon your taking God at His Word, and believing what He says because He says it. This is faith — living, saving, precious faith. May you possess it!

God's Word, then, most distinctly declares that man in his natural, unrenewed, unconverted state is Satan's bondsman. It speaks of Satan as "the god of this world," as "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." It speaks of man as "led captive by the devil at his will." Hence, in Paul's commission, the third thing which the gospel is to do is to turn man from "the power of Satan to God." Thus his eyes are opened; divine light comes streaming in; the power of Satan is broken, and the delivered one finds himself, peacefully and happily, in the presence of God. Like the demoniac in Mark 5, he is delivered from his ruthless tyrant, his cruel master; his chains are broken and gone; he is clothed and in his right mind, and sitting at the feet of Jesus.

What a glorious deliverance! It is worthy of God in every aspect of it, and in all its results. The poor blind slave, led captive by the devil, is set free; and not only so, but he is brought to God, pardoned, accepted, and endowed with an eternal inheritance among the sanctified. And all this is by faith, through grace. It is proclaimed in the gospel of God to every creature under heaven — not one is excluded. The great commission, whether we read it in Luke 24 or in Acts 26, assures us that this most precious, most glorious salvation is unto all.

Let us listen for a moment to our apostle as he discharges his blessed commission in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia. Most gladly would we transcribe the whole of his precious discourse, but our limited space compels us to confine ourselves to the powerful appeal at the end. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through *this Man*" (Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, and glorified) "is preached" — not promised in the future, but preached *now*, announced as a present reality — is preached "*unto you* the remission of sins. And by Him all who believe *are* justified from *all things*, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

From these words we learn, in the clearest possible manner, that every soul in that synagogue was called upon, there and then, to receive into his heart the blessed message which fell from the preacher's lips. Not one was excluded. "*Unto you* is the word of this salvation sent." If any one had asked the apostle if the message was intended for him, what would have been the reply? "*Unto you* is the word of this salvation sent." Was there no preliminary question to be settled? Not one. All the preliminaries had been settled at the cross. Was there no question as to election or predestination? Not a syllable about either in the whole range of this magnificent and comprehensive discourse.

Is there no such question? Not in that "great commission" whereof we speak. No doubt the grand truth of election shines in its proper place on the page of inspiration. But what is its proper and divinely appointed place? Most assuredly not in the preaching of the evangelist, but in the ministry of the teacher or pastor. When the apostle sits down to instruct believers, we hear such words as these: "Whom He did foreknow, He also did *predestinate* . ." And again: "Knowing, brethren beloved, your *election* of God."

Let it never be lost sight of, when he stands up as an ambassador of Christ, the herald of salvation, he proclaims in the most absolute and unqualified manner a present, a personal, a perfect salvation to every creature under heaven; and every one who heard him was responsible there and then to believe. And every one who reads him now is equally so. If any one had presumed to tell the preacher that his hearers were not responsible, that they were powerless, and could not believe — that it was only deceiving them

to call upon them to believe — what would have been his reply? We think we are warranted in saying that a full and overwhelming reply to this, and every such preposterous objection, is wrapped up in the solemn appeal with which the apostle closes his address, "Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe though a man declare it unto you."

Part 4

Having in the former papers dwelt a little upon the terms of "the great commission," we shall now, in dependence upon divine teaching, seek to unfold the truth as to the basis.

It is of the greatest importance to have a clear understanding of the solid ground on which "repentance and remission of sins" are announced to every creature under heaven. This we have distinctly laid down in our Lord's own words, "*It behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.*"

Here lies, in its impregnable strength, the foundation of the glorious commission whereof we speak. God — blessed forever be His holy name — has been pleased to set before us with all possible clearness the moral ground on which He commands all men everywhere to repent, and the righteous ground on which He can proclaim to every repentant soul the perfect remission of sins.

We have already had occasion to guard the reader against the false notion that any amount of repentance on the part of the sinner could possibly form the meritorious ground of forgiveness. But inasmuch as we write for those who may be ignorant of the foundations of the gospel, we feel bound to put things in the very simplest possible form, so that all may understand. We know how prone the human heart is to build upon something of our own — if not upon good works, at least upon our penitential exercises. Hence, it becomes our bounden duty to set forth the precious truth of the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ as the only righteous ground of the forgiveness of sins.

True, all men are commanded to repent. It is meet and right that they should. How could it be otherwise? How can we look at that accursed tree on which the Son of God bore the judgment of sin and not see the absolute necessity of repentance? How can we harken to that solemn cry breaking forth from amid the shadows of Calvary, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and not own, from the deepest depths of our moral being, the moral fitness of repentance?

If indeed sin is so terrible, so absolutely hateful to God, so perfectly intolerable to His holy nature, that He had to bruise His well beloved and only begotten Son on the cross in order to put it away, does it not well become the sinner to judge himself, and repent in dust and ashes? Had the blessed Lord to endure the hiding of God's countenance because of our sins, and we not be broken, self-judged and subdued on account of these sins? Shall we with impenitent heart hear the glad tidings of full and free forgiveness of sins — a forgiveness which cost nothing less than the unutterable horrors and agonies of the cross? Shall we, with flippant tongue, profess to have peace — a peace purchased by the ineffable sufferings of the Son of God? If it was absolutely necessary that Christ should suffer for our sins, is it not morally fitting that we should repent of them?

Nor is this all. It is not merely that it becomes us, once in a way, to repent. There is far more than this. The spirit of self-judgment, genuine contrition and true humility must characterise every one who enters at all into the profound mystery of the sufferings of Christ. Indeed, it is only as we contemplate and deeply ponder those sufferings that we can form anything approaching to a just estimate of the hatefulness of sin on the one hand, and the divine fullness and perfectness of remission on the other. Such was the hatefulness of sin, that it was absolutely necessary that Christ should suffer; but — all praise to redeeming love! — such were the sufferings of Christ, that God can forgive us our sins according to the infinite value which He attaches to those sufferings. Both go together; and both, we may add, exert a formative influence, under the powerful ministry of the Holy Ghost, on the Christian character from first to last. Our sins are all forgiven; but "it behoved Christ to

suffer"; and hence, while our peace flows like a river, we must never forget the soul-subduing fact that the basis of our peace was laid in the ineffable sufferings of the Son of God.

This is most needful, owing to the excessive levity of our hearts. We are ready enough to receive the truth of the remission of sins, and then go on in an easy, self-indulgent, world-loving spirit, thus proving how feebly we enter into the sufferings of our blessed Lord, or into the real nature of sin. All this is truly deplorable, and calls for the deepest exercise of soul.

There is a sad lack amongst us of that real brokenness of spirit which ought to characterise those who owe their present peace and everlasting felicity and glory to the sufferings of Christ. We are light, frivolous, and self-willed. We avail ourselves of the death of Christ to save us from the consequences of our sins, but our ways do not exhibit the practical effect of that death in its application to ourselves. We do not walk as those who are dead with Christ — who have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts — who are delivered from this present evil world. In a word, our Christianity is sadly deficient in depth of tone; it is shallow, feeble, and stunted. We profess to know a great deal of truth; but it is to be feared it is too much in theory — therefore not turned to practical account as it should be.

It may, perhaps, be asked, What has all this to do with "the great commission"? It has to do with it in a very intimate way. We are deeply impressed with a sense of the superficial way in which the work of evangelization is carried on at the present day. Not only are the *terms* of the great commission overlooked, but the *basis* seems to be little understood. The sufferings of Christ are not duly dwelt upon and unfolded. The atoning work of Christ is presented in its sufficiency for the sinner's need — and no doubt this is a signal mercy. We have to be profoundly thankful when preachers and writers hold up the precious blood of Christ as the sinner's only plea, instead of preaching up rites, ceremonies, sacraments good works (falsely so-called), creeds, churches, religious ordinances, and such-like delusions.

All this is most fully admitted. But at the same time we must give expression to our deep and solemn conviction that much of our modern evangelical preaching is extremely shallow and bald; and the result of that preaching is seen in the light, airy, flippant style of many of our so-called converts. Some of us seem so intensely anxious to make everything so easy and simple for the sinner that the preaching becomes extremely one-sided.

Thanks be to God, He has indeed made all easy and simple for the needy, broken-hearted, penitent sinner. He has left him nothing to do, nothing to give. It is "to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly." It is not possible for any evangelist to go too far in stating this side of the question. No one can go beyond Rom. 4: 5 in setting forth salvation by free grace, through faith, without works of any sort or description.

But then, we must remember that the blessed apostle Paul — the greatest evangelist that ever lived, except his divine Master — did not confine himself to this one side; and neither should we. He pressed the claims of divine holiness. He called upon sinners to judge themselves, and he called upon believers to subdue and deny themselves. He did not preach a gospel that left people at ease in the world, satisfied with themselves, and occupied with earthly things. He did not tell people that they were saved from the flames of hell and were therefore free to enjoy the follies of earth.

This was not Paul's gospel. He preached a gospel which, while it fully met the sinner's deepest need, did also most fully maintain God's glory — a gospel which, while it came down to the very lowest point of the sinner's condition, did not leave him there. Paul's gospel not only set forth a full, clear unqualified, unconditional, present *forgiveness of sins*, but also, just as fully and clearly, the *condemnation of sin*, and the believer's entire deliverance from this present evil world. The death of Christ, in Paul's gospel not only assured the soul of complete deliverance from the just consequences of sins, as seen in the judgment of God in the lake of fire, but it also set forth, with magnificent fullness and clearness, the complete snapping of every link with the world, and entire deliverance from the present power and rule of sin.

Now, here is precisely where the lamentable deficiency and culpable one-sidedness of our modern preaching are so painfully manifest. The gospel which one often hears nowadays is, if we may be allowed to use of such a term, a carnal, earthly, worldly gospel. It offers a kind of ease, but it is fleshly, worldly ease. It gives confidence, but it is rather a carnal confidence than the confidence of faith. It is not a delivering gospel. It leaves people in the world, instead of bringing them to God.

What must be the result of all this? We can hardly bear to contemplate it. We greatly fear that, should our Lord tarry, the fruit of much of what is going on around us will be a terrible combination of the very highest profession with the very lowest practice. It cannot be otherwise. High truth taken up in a light, carnal spirit tends to lull the conscience and quash all godly exercise of soul as to our habits and ways in daily life. In this way people escape from legality only to plunge into levity, and truly the last state is worse than the first.

We earnestly hope that the Christian reader may not feel unduly depressed by the perusal of these lines. God knows we would not pen a line to discourage the feeblest lamb in all the precious flock of Christ. We desire to write in the divine presence. We have entreated the Lord that every line of this paper, and of all our papers, should come directly from Himself to the reader.

Hence, therefore, we must ask the reader — and we do so most faithfully and affectionately — to ponder what is here put before him. We cannot hide from him the fact that we are most seriously impressed with the condition of things around us. We feel that the tone and aspect of much of the so-called Christianity of this our day are such as to awaken the gravest apprehension in the mind of every thoughtful observer. We perceive a terribly rapid development of the features of the last days, as detailed by the pen of inspiration. "This know also that, in the last days, perilous times shall come. For men shall be *lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a*

form of godliness, but denying the power thereof from such turn away" (2 Tim. 3: 1-5).

What an appalling picture! How solemn to find the same evils that characterise the heathen, as recorded in Rom. 1, reproduced in connection with the profession of Christianity! Should not the thought of this awaken the most serious apprehensions in the mind of every Christian? Should it not lead all who are engaged in the holy service of preaching and teaching amongst us to examine themselves closely as to the tone and character of their ministry, and as to their own private walk and ways? We want a more searching style of ministry on the part of evangelists and teachers. There is a lack of hortatory and prophetic ministry. By prophetic ministry mean that which brings the conscience into the immediate presence of God. (See 1 Cor. 14: 1-3, 23-26.)

In this we are lamentably deficient. There is a vast amount of objective truth in circulation amongst us — more, perhaps, than ever since the days of the apostles. Books and periodicals by hundreds and thousands, tracts by thousands and millions, are sent forth annually.

Do we object to this? Nay; we bless God for it. But we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that by far the largest proportion of this vast mass of literature is addressed to the intelligence, and not enough to the heart and conscience. Now, while it is quite right to enlighten the understanding, it is quite wrong to neglect the heart and conscience. We feel it to be a most serious thing to allow the intelligence to outstrip the conscience — to have more truth in the head than in the heart — to profess principles which do not govern the practice. Nothing can be more dangerous. It tends to place us directly in the hands of Satan. If the conscience be not kept tender, if the heart be not governed by the fear of God, if a broken and contrite spirit be not cultivated, there is no telling what depths we may plunge into. When the conscience is kept in a sound condition, and the heart is humble and true, then every fresh ray of light that shines in upon the understanding ministers strength to the soul and tends to elevate and sanctify our whole moral being.

This is what every earnest spirit must crave. All true-hearted Christians must long for increased personal holiness, more likeness to Christ, more genuine devotedness of heart, a deepening, strengthening and expanding of the kingdom of God in the soul — that kingdom which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

May we all have grace to seek after these divine realities! May we diligently cultivate them in our own private life, and seek in every possible way to promote them in all those with whom we come in contact! Thus shall we in some measure stem the tide of hollow profession around us, and be a living testimony against the powerless form of godliness so sadly dominant in this our day.

Christian reader! art thou one with us in this current of thought and feeling? If so, then let us most earnestly entreat thee to join us in earnest prayer to God that He will graciously raise our spiritual tone by drawing us closer to Himself, and filling our hearts with love to Him and earnest desire for the promotion of His glory, the progress of His cause, and the prosperity of His people.

Part 5

In handling our subject, we have yet to consider the *authority* and the *sphere* of "the great commission;" but ere proceeding to treat of these we must dwell a little longer on the basis. The commission is truly a great one, and would need a solid foundation on which to rest it; and such it has, blessed be God, in the atoning death of His Son. Nothing less than this could sustain such a magnificent fabric; but the grace that planned the commission has also laid the foundation; so that a full remission of sins can be preached among all nations, inasmuch as God has been glorified, in the death of Christ, as to the entire question of sin.

This is a grand point for the reader to seize. It lies at the very foundation of the Christian system. It is the keystone of the arch of divine revelation. God has been glorified as to sin. His judgment has been executed upon it. The claims of His throne have been vindicated as to it. The insult offered to His divine majesty has been flung back in the enemy's face. If the sweet story of remission of

sins had never fallen upon a human ear or entered a human heart, the divine glory would none the less have been most perfectly maintained.

The Lord Jesus Christ did, by His most precious death, wipe off the stain which the enemy sought to cast upon the eternal glory of God. A testimony has been given in the cross, to all created intelligence, as to God's thoughts about sin. It can there be seen, with all possible clearness, that a single trace of sin can never enter the precincts of the divine presence. God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity. Sin, wherever found, must be met by divine judgment.

Where does all this come most fully and forcibly out? Assuredly in the cross. Harken to that solemn and most mysterious cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" What means this wondrous inquiry? Who is the speaker? Is he one of Adam's fallen posterity? Is he a sinner? Surely not; for were he such, there would be no moral force whatever in the question. There never was a sinner on the face of this earth who, so far as he was personally concerned, did not richly deserve to be forsaken of a holy, sin-hating God. This must never be forgotten. Some people entertain most foolish notions as to this point. They have, in their own vain imagination, invented a god to suit themselves — one who will not punish sin — one who is so tender, so kind, so benevolent, that he will connive at evil and pass it over as though it were nothing.

Now, nothing is more certain than that this god of the human imagination is a false one, just as false as any of the idols of the heathen. The God of the Bible, the God of Christianity, the God whom we see at the cross, is not like this. Men may reason as they will; but sin must be condemned — it must be met by the just and inflexible judgment of a sin-hating God.

We repeat the question, Who uttered those words at the opening of Ps. 22? If He was not a sinner, who was he? Wonderful to declare, He was the only spotless, perfectly holy, pure and sinless Man that ever trod this earth. He was more. He was the eternal Son of the Father, the object of God's ineffable delight, who had dwelt in

His bosom from all eternity, "the brightness of His glory and the exact expression of His substance."

Yet He was forsaken of God! yes, that holy and perfect One, who knew no sin, whose human nature was absolutely free from every taint, who never had a single thought, never uttered a single word, never did a single act that was not in the most perfect harmony with the mind of God; whose whole life, from Bethlehem to Calvary, was a perfect sacrifice of sweetest odour presented to the heart of God. Again and again we see Heaven opening upon Him, and the voice of the Father is heard giving expression to His infinite complacency in the Son of His bosom. And yet, He it is whose voice is heard in that bitter cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Marvellous question! It stands alone in the annals of eternity. No such question had ever been asked before; no such question has ever been asked since; and no such question can ever be asked again. Whether we consider the One who asked the question, or the One of whom it was asked, or the answer, we must admit that it is perfectly unique. That God should forsake such an One is the most profound and marvellous mystery that could possibly engage the attention of men or angels. Human reason cannot fathom its depths. No created intelligence can comprehend its mighty compass.

Yet there it stands, a stupendous fact before the eye of faith. Our blessed Lord Himself assures us that it was absolutely necessary. "Thus it is written, and thus it *behooved* Christ to suffer." But why was it necessary? Why should the only perfect, sinless, spotless Man have to suffer? Why should He be forsaken of God? The glory of God, the eternal counsels of redeeming love, man's guilty, ruined, helpless condition — all these things rendered it indispensable that Christ should suffer. There was no other way in which the divine glory could be maintained; no other way in which the claims of the throne of God could be answered; no other way in which Heaven's majesty could be vindicated; no other way in which the eternal purposes of love could be made good; no other way in which sin could be fully atoned for, and finally taken away out of God's creation; no other way in which sins could be forgiven; no other way in which Satan and all the powers of darkness could be

thoroughly vanquished; no other way in which God could be just, and yet the Justifier of any poor ungodly sinner; no other way in which death could be deprived of its sting, or the grave of its victory; no other way in which any or all of these grand results could be reached save by the sufferings and death of our adorable Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.

But, blessed forever be His holy name, He went through it all. He went down under the heavy billows and waves of God's righteous wrath against sin. He took the sinner's place, stood in his stead, sustained the judgment, paid the penalty, died the death, answered every question, met every demand, vanquished every foe; and having done all, He ascended into the heavens and took His seat on the throne of God, where He is now crowned with glory and honour as the divine and all-glorious Accomplisher of the entire work of man's redemption.

Such, then, is the *basis* of "the great commission" whereof we speak. Need we wonder at the *terms*, when we contemplate the basis? Can there be anything too good, anything too great, anything too glorious, for the God of all grace to bestow upon us poor sinners of the Gentiles, seeing He has been so fully glorified in the death of Christ? That most precious death furnishes a divinely righteous ground on which our God can indulge the deep and everlasting love of His heart in the perfect remission of our sins. It has removed out of the way every barrier to the full flood-tide of redeeming love which can now flow through a perfectly righteous channel, to the very vilest sinner that repents and believes in Jesus.

A Saviour-God can now publish a full and immediate remission of sins to every creature under heaven. There is positively no hindrance. God has been glorified as to the question of sin; and the time is coming when every trace of sin shall be forever obliterated from His fair creation, and those words of John the Baptist shall have their full accomplishment, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Meanwhile, the heralds of salvation are commanded to go forth to the ends of the earth and publish, without let or limitation perfect remission of sins to every soul that believes. It is the joy of God's heart to pardon sins; and it is due to the One who bore the judgment of sin on the cross that in His

name forgiveness of sins should be thus freely published, fully received, and abidingly enjoyed.

But what of those who reject this glorious message — who shut their ears against it and turn away their hearts from it? This is the solemn question. Who can answer it? Who can attempt to set forth the eternal destiny of those who die in their sins, as all must who refuse God's only basis of remission? Men may reason and argue as they will; but all the reasoning and argument in the world cannot set aside the Word of God, which assures us in manifold places, and in terms so plain as to leave no possible ground for questioning, that all who die in their sins — all who die out of Christ — must inevitably perish eternally must bear the consequences of their sins, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

To quote the passages in proof of the solemn truth of eternal punishment would require a small volume. We cannot attempt it here; nor is it necessary, inasmuch as we have gone into the subject again and again in other places.

We would here put a question which arises naturally out of our present thesis. It is this: Was Christ judged, bruised, and forsaken on the cross — did God visit His only begotten and well beloved Son with the full weight of His righteous wrath against sin — and shall impenitent sinners escape? We solemnly press this question on all whom it may concern. Men talk of its being inconsistent with the idea of divine goodness, tenderness and compassion that God should send any of His creatures to hell. We reply, Who is to be the judge? Is man competent to decide as to what is morally fitting for God to do? And further, we ask, What is to be the standard of judgment? Anything that human reason can grasp? Assuredly not. What then? *The cross on which the Son of God died, the Just for the unjust* — this, and this only, is the great standard by which to judge the question as to sin's desert.

Who can harken to that bitter cry emanating from the broken heart of the Son of God, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and question the eternal punishment of all who die in their sins? Talk of tenderness, goodness, and compassion! Where do these shine out most brightly and blessedly? Surely in "the great

commission" which publishes full and free forgiveness of sins to every creature under heaven. But would it be just, or good, or compassionate, to suffer the rejecter of Christ to escape? If we would see the goodness, kindness, mercy and deep compassion of God, we must look at the cross. "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." "It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him. He hath put Him to grief." "He hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

If men reject all this, and go on in their sins, in their rebellion, in their infidel reasonings and impious speculations — what then? If men maintain that suffering for sin is not necessary, and that there is another and a better way of disposing of the matter — what then? Our Lord declared in the ears of His apostles that "it was necessary that Christ should suffer" — that there was no other way possible by which the great question could be settled. Whom are we to believe? Was the death of Christ gratuitous? Was His heart broken for nothing? Was the cross a work of supererogation? Did Jehovah bruise His Son and put Him to grief for an end which might be gained some other way?

How monstrous are the reasonings, or rather the ravings, of infidelity! Infidel doctors begin by throwing overboard the Word of God — that peerless and perfect revelation; and then, when they have deprived us of our divine guide, with singular audacity, they present themselves before us, and undertake to point out for us a more excellent way; and when we inquire what that way is, we are met by a thousand and one fine-spun theories, no two of which agree in anything save in shutting out God and His Word.

True, they talk plausibly about a God; but it is a God of their own imagination — one who will connive at sin — who will allow them to indulge in their lusts, and passions, and pleasures, and then take them to a heaven of which they really know nothing. They talk of mercy, and kindness, and goodness; but they reject the only channel through which these can flow, namely, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. They speak not of righteousness, holiness, truth, and judgment to come. They would fain have us to believe that God put Himself to needless cost in delivering up His Son. They would ignore that marvellous transaction which stands alone in the entire

history of the ways of God — the atoning death of His Son. In one word, the grand object of the devil, in all the sceptical, rationalistic and infidel theories that have ever been propounded in this world, is to shut out completely the Word of God, the Christ of God, and God Himself.

We solemnly call upon all our readers, specially our young friends, to ponder this. It is our deep and thorough conviction that the harbouring of a single infidel suggestion is the first step on that inclined plane which leads straight down to the dark and terrible abyss of atheism — down to the blackness of darkness forever.

We shall have occasion to recur to the foregoing line of thought when we come to consider the authority on which "the great commission" comes to us. We have been drawn into it by the sad fact that in every direction, and on every subject, we are assailed by the contemptible reasonings of infidelity; and we feel imperatively called upon to warn all with whom we come in contact against infidel books, infidel lectures, infidel theories in every shape and form. *May the inspired Word of God be more and more precious to our hearts! May we walk in its light, feel its sacred power, bow to its divine authority, hide it in our hearts, feed upon its treasures, own its absolute supremacy, confess its all-sufficiency, and utterly reject ad teaching which dares to touch the integrity of the Holy Scriptures.*

Part 6

We have seen that the *basis* of "the great commission" is the death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This must never be lost sight of. "It behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." It is a risen Christ that sends forth His heralds to preach "repentance and remission of sins." The incarnation and the crucifixion are great cardinal truths of Christianity; but it is only in resurrection they are made available for us in any way. Incarnation — precious and priceless mystery though it be — could not form the groundwork of remission of sins, for "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9: 22). We are justified by the *blood*, and reconciled by the *death* of Christ.

But it is in resurrection that all this is made good unto us. Christ was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification (Rom. 4: 25; Rom. 5: 9-10). "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15: 3-4).

Hence, therefore, it is of the very last possible importance, for all who would carry out our Lord's commission, to know in their own souls, and to set forth in their preaching, the grand truth of resurrection. The most cursory glance at the preaching of the earliest heralds of the gospel will suffice to show the prominent place which they gave to this glorious fact.

Harken to Peter on the day of Pentecost, or rather to the Holy Ghost, just come down from the risen, ascended and glorified Saviour. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.... *This Jesus hath God raised up*, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2).

So also in Acts 3: "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, *whom God hath raised from the dead*; whereof we are witnesses.... Unto you first *God, having raised up His Son Jesus*, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.... And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and *preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.*"

Their preaching was characterised by the prominent place which it assigned to the glorious, powerful and telling fact of resurrection. True, there was the full and clear statement of incarnation and crucifixion, with the great moral bearings of these facts. How could it be otherwise? The Son of God had to become a man to die, in order that by death He might glorify God as to the entire question of sin; destroy the power of Satan; rob death of its sting, and the grave of its victory; put away forever the sins of His people, and associate them with Himself in the power of eternal life in the new creation, where all things are of God, and where a single trace of sin or sorrow can never enter. Eternal and universal homage and adoration to His peerless name!

Let all preachers remember the place which resurrection holds in apostolic preaching and teaching. "With great power gave the apostles witness." Of what? Incarnation or crucifixion merely? Nay; but "of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." This was the stupendous fact that glorified God and His Son Jesus Christ. It was this that attested, in the view of all created intelligences, the divine complacency in the work of redemption. It was this that demonstrated, in the most marvellous way, the complete and eternal overthrow of the kingdom of Satan and all the powers of darkness. It was this that declared the full and everlasting deliverance of all who believe in Jesus — their deliverance, not only from all the consequences of their sins, but from this present evil world, and from every link that bound them to that old creation which lies under the power of evil.

No marvel, therefore, if the apostles, filled as they were with the Holy Ghost, persistently and powerfully presented the magnificent truth of resurrection. Hear them again before the council — a council composed of the great religious leaders and guides of the people. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree." They were at issue with God on the all-important question as to His Son. They had slain Him, but God raised Him from the dead. "Him hath God exalted with His right hand, a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins."

So also in Peter's address to the Gentiles, in the house of Cornelius, speaking of Jesus of Nazareth, he says, "whom they slew, and hanged on a tree, *Him God raised up the third day, and showed Him openly*: not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, to us who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead."

The Holy Ghost is careful to set forth the weighty and, to us, profoundly interesting fact that "God raised up His Son Jesus." This fact has a double bearing. It proves that God is at issue with the world, seeing He has raised, exalted and glorified the very One whom they slew and hanged on a tree. But, blessed throughout all ages be His holy name, it proves that He has found eternal rest and satisfaction as to us, and all that was or could be against us, seeing He has raised up the very One who took our place and stood charged with all our sin and guilt.

But all this will come more fully out as we proceed with our proofs.

Let us now listen for a moment to Paul's address in the synagogue at Antioch. "Men, brethren, children of the stock of Abraham and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him. And though they found no cause of death in Him, yet desired they Pilate that He should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre.

"But God raised Him from the dead. And He was seen many days of them which came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee. And as concerning that *He raised Him up from the dead*, no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

Wherefore He saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: but *He whom God raised again* saw no corruption."

Then follows the powerful appeal which, though not bearing upon our present line of argument, we cannot omit in this place. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and *by Him* all that believe are *justified from all things*, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. *Beware* therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you" (Acts 13: 26-41) .

We shall close our series of proofs from the Acts of the Apostles by a brief quotation from Paul's address at Athens. "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God overlooked; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all, in that *He hath raised Him from the dead*" (Acts 17).

This is a very remarkable and deeply solemn passage. The proof that God is going to judge the world in righteousness — a proof offered to all — is that He has raised His ordained Man from the dead. He does not here name the Man; but at verse 18 we are told that some of the Athenians deemed the apostle a setter forth of strange gods, "because he preached unto them *Jesus and the resurrection*."

From all this it is perfectly plain that the blessed Apostle Paul gave a most prominent place in all his preachings to the glorious truth of resurrection. Whether he addresses a congregation of Jews in the synagogue at Antioch, or an assembly of Gentiles on Mars

Hill at Athens, he presents a risen Christ. In a word, he was characterised by the fact that he preached not merely the incarnation and the crucifixion, but the resurrection; and this, too, in all its mighty moral bearings — its bearing upon man in his individual state and destiny; its bearing upon the world as a whole, in its history in the past, its moral condition in the present, and its certain doom in the future; in its bearing upon the believer, proving his absolute, complete and eternal justification before God, and his thorough deliverance from this present evil world.

We have to bear in mind that in apostolic preaching the resurrection was not presented as a mere doctrine, but as a living, telling, mighty moral fact — a fact, the magnitude of which is beyond all power of human utterance or thought. The apostles, in carrying out "the great commission" of their Lord, pressed the stupendous fact that God had raised Jesus from the dead — had raised the Man who was nailed to the cross and buried in the grave. In short, they preached a resurrection gospel. Their preaching was governed by these words, "It was necessary that Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead the third day."

We shall now turn for a moment to the Epistles, and see the wondrous way in which the Holy Ghost unfolds and applies the fact of resurrection. But ere doing so we would call the reader's attention to a passage which is sadly misunderstood and misapplied. The apostle, in writing to the Corinthians, says, "We preach Christ crucified." These words are continually quoted for the purpose of casting a damper on those who earnestly desire to advance in the knowledge of divine things. But a moment's serious attention to the context would be sufficient to show the true meaning of the apostle. Did he confine himself to the fact of the crucifixion? The bare idea, in the face of the body of Scripture which we have quoted, is simply absurd. The fact is, the glorious truth of resurrection shines out in all his discourses.

What, then, does the apostle mean when he declares, "We preach Christ crucified"? Simply this, that the Christ whom he preached was the One whom the world crucified. He was a rejected, outcast Christ — one assigned by the world to a malefactor's gibbet. What a fact for the poor Corinthians, so full of vanity and love for

this world's wisdom! A crucified Christ was the one whom Paul preached, "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but to those that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

Remarkable words! words divinely suited to people prone to boast themselves in the so-called wisdom and greatness of this world — the vain reasonings and imaginations of the poor human mind, which all perish in a moment. All the wisdom of God, all His power, all: His greatness, all His glory, all that He is, in short, comes out in a crucified Christ. The cross confounds the world, vanquishes Satan and all the powers of darkness, saves all who believe, and forms the solid foundation of the everlasting and universal glory of God.

We shall now turn for a moment to a very beautiful passage in Rom. 4, in which the inspired writer sets forth the subject of resurrection in a most edifying way for us. Speaking of Abraham, he says, "Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; *he staggered not* at the promise of God through unbelief," — which is always sure to stagger, — "but was *strong in faith, giving glory to God*" — as faith always does; "and being *fully persuaded* that what He had promised He was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness."

And then, lest any should say that all this applied only to Abraham, who was such a devoted, holy, remarkable man, the inspiring Spirit adds, with singular grace and sweetness, "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that" — what? Gave His Son? Bruised His Son on the cross? Not merely this, but "*that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.*"

Here lies the grand point of the apostle's blessed and powerful argument. We must, if we would have settled peace, believe in God as the One who raised up Jesus from the dead, and who in so doing proved Himself friendly to us, and proved too His infinite satisfaction in the work of the cross. Jesus having been "delivered for our offences," could not be where He now is if a single one of these offences remained unatoned for. But blessed forever be the God of all grace, He raised from among the dead the One who had been delivered for our offences; and to all who believe in Him righteousness shall be reckoned. "It behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." See how this glorious theme, the *basis* of the great commission, expands under our gaze as we pursue our study of it!

One more brief quotation shall close this paper. In Heb. 13 we read, "*Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.*"

This is uncommonly fine. The God of judgment met the Sin-bearer at the cross, and there, with Him, entered thoroughly into and definitively settled the question of sin. Then, in glorious proof that all was done — sin atoned for — guilt put away — Satan silenced — God glorified — all divinely accomplished — "the God of peace" entered the scene, and raised from the dead our Lord Jesus, that "great Shepherd of the sheep."

Beloved reader, how glorious is all this! How enfranchising to all who simply believe! Jesus is risen. His sufferings are over forever. God has exalted Him. Eternal Justice has wreathed His blessed brow with a diadem of glory; and, wondrous fact, that very diadem is the eternal demonstration that all who believe are justified from all things, and accepted in a risen and glorified Christ. Eternal and universal hallelujahs to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost!

Part 7

We are now called to consider the deeply important subject of the authority on which the great commission proceeds. This we have

presented to us in that one commanding and most comprehensive sentence, "It is written" — a sentence which ought to be engraved in characters deep and broad on the tablet of every Christian's heart.

Nothing can possibly be more interesting or edifying than to note the way in which our blessed Lord on all occasions and under all circumstances exalts the Holy Scriptures. He, though God over all, blessed forever, and as such the Author of all Scripture, yet, having taken His place as man on the earth, He plainly sets forth what is the bounden duty of every man, and that is to be absolutely, completely and abidingly governed by the authority of Scripture. See Him in conflict with Satan! How does He meet him? Simply as each one of us should meet him — by the written Word. It could be no example to us had our Lord vanquished him by the putting forth of divine power. Of course He could, there and then, have consigned him to the bottomless pit or the lake of fire, but that would have been no example for us, inasmuch as we could not so overcome. But on the other hand, when we find the blessed One referring to Holy Scripture, when we find Him appealing again and again to that divine authority, when we find Him putting the adversary to flight simply by the written Word, we learn in the most impressive manner the place, the value and the authority of the Holy Scriptures.

Is it not of the very last possible importance to have this great lesson impressed upon us at the present moment? Unquestionably it is. If ever there was a moment in the history of the Church of God when it behoved Christians to bow down their whole moral being to this very lesson, it is the moment through which we are just now passing. On all hands the divine authority, integrity, plenary inspiration and all-sufficiency of Holy Scripture are called in question. The Word of God is openly insulted and flung aside. Its integrity is called in question, and that too in quarters where we should least expect it. At our colleges and universities our young men are continually assailed by infidel attacks upon the blessed Word of God. Men who are in total spiritual blindness, and who therefore cannot possibly know anything whatever about divine things, and are utterly incompetent to give an opinion on the subject of Holy Scripture, have the cool audacity to insult the sacred

volume, to pronounce the five books of Moses an imposture, to assert that Moses never wrote them at all!

What is the opinion of such men worth? Not worth the weight of a feather. Who would think of going to a man who was born in a coal mine, and had never see the sun, to get his judgment as to the properties of light, or the effect of the sun's beams upon the human constitution? Who would think of going to one who was born blind to get his opinion upon colours, or the effect of light and shade? Surely no one in his senses. Well, then, with how much more moral force, may we not ask, who would think of going to an unconverted man — a man dead in trespasses and sins — a man spiritually blind, wholly ignorant of things divine, spiritual, and heavenly — who would think for a moment of going to such a one for a judgment on the weighty question of Holy Scripture? And if such a one were audacious enough, in ignorant self-confidence, to offer an opinion on such a subject, what man in his sober senses would think of giving the slightest heed?

It will perhaps be said, "The illustration does not apply." Why not? We admit it fails in force, but most certainly not in its moral application. Is it not a commonly received axiom amongst us that no man has any right to give an opinion on a subject of which he is totally ignorant? No doubt. Well, what does the blessed apostle say as to the unconverted man? We quote the whole context for the reader. It is morally grand, and its interest and value just now are unspeakable.

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that *your faith*" — mark these words, — "*should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*"

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that

come to naught. "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. *But God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit*", — otherwise they could not possibly be known — "for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so *the things of God knoweth no man,*

but the Spirit of God. Now we" — all true believers, all God's children — "have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" — or, communicating spiritual things through a spiritual medium. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them" — be he ever so wise and learned — "because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2: 1-16).

We dare not offer an apology for giving so lengthened an extract from the Word of God. We deem it invaluable, not only because it proves that it is only by divine teaching that divine things can be understood, but also because it completely withers up all man's pretensions to give judgment as to Scripture. If the natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God, then it is perfectly plain that all infidel attacks upon the Word of God are absolutely unworthy of the very smallest attention. In fact, all infidel writers, be they ever so clever, ever so wise, ever so learned, are put out of court; they are not to be listened to for a moment. The judgment of an unconverted man in reference to the Holy Scriptures is more worthless than the judgment of an uneducated plowman as to the use of the differential calculus, or the truth of the Copernican system. As

to each, we have only to say, he knows nothing whatever about the matter. His thoughts are absolutely good for nothing.

But how truly delightful and refreshing to turn from man's worthless notions, and see the way in which our blessed Lord Jesus Christ prized and used the Holy Scriptures! In His conflict with Satan, He appeals three times over to the book of Deuteronomy. "*It is written*" is His one simple and unanswerable reply to the suggestions of the enemy. He does not reason. He does not argue or explain. He does not refer to His own personal feelings, evidences, or experiences. He does not argue from the great facts of the opened heavens, the descending Spirit, the voice of the Father — precious and real as all these things were. He simply takes His stand upon the divine and eternal authority of the Holy Scriptures, and of that portion of the Scriptures in particular which modern infidels have audaciously attacked. He uses as His authority that which they are not afraid to pronounce an imposture! How dreadful for them! What will be their end, unless they repent?

Not only did the Son of God — Himself, as God, the Author of every line of Holy Scripture — use the Word of God as His only weapon against the enemy, but He made it also the basis and the material of His public ministry. When His conflict in the wilderness was over, "He returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and, *as His custom was*, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, *and stood up for to read*" — *His custom was to read the Scriptures publicly.*

"And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias." Here He puts His seal upon the prophet Isaiah, as before upon the law of Moses. "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, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4).

Let us turn now to that most solemn parable of the rich man and Lazarus, at the close of Luke 16, in which we have a solemn testimony from the Master's own lips to the integrity, value and surpassing importance of "Moses and the Prophets" — the very portions of the divine Word which infidels impiously assail. The rich man in torment — alas, no longer rich, but miserably and eternally poor! — entreats Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his five brethren, lest they also should come into that place of torment. Mark the reply! Mark it, all ye infidels, rationalists, and sceptics! Mark it, all ye who are in danger of being deluded and turned aside by the impudent and blasphemous suggestions of infidelity!

"Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the Prophets; *let them hear them.*" Yes; "hear them" — hear those very writings which infidels tell us are not divinely inspired at all, but documents palmed upon us by impostors pretending to inspiration. Assuredly the rich man knew better; indeed, the devil himself knows better. There is no thought of calling in question the genuineness of "Moses and the Prophets;" but perhaps "if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." Hear the weighty rejoinder! "And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

Now we must confess we rejoice exceedingly in the grandeur of this testimony. Nothing can be clearer, nothing higher, nothing more thoroughly confirmatory as to the supreme authority and divine integrity of "Moses and the Prophets." We have the blessed Lord Himself setting His seal to the two grand divisions of Old Testament Scripture; and hence we may with all possible confidence commit our souls to the authority of these holy writings; and not only to Moses and the Prophets, but to the whole canon of inspiration, inasmuch as Moses and the Prophets are so largely and so constantly quoted everywhere, are so intimately, yea, indissolubly, bound up with every part of the New Testament, that all must stand or fall together.

We must pass on, and turn for a moment to the last chapter of Luke — that precious section which contains "the great commission" whereof we speak. We might refer with profit and blessing to those occasions in which our blessed Lord, in His

interviews with Pharisees, Sadducees, and lawyers, ever and only appeals to the Holy Scriptures. In short, whether in conflict with men or devils, whether speaking in private or in public, whether for His public ministry or for His private walk, we find the perfect Man, the Lord from Heaven, always putting the very highest honour upon the writings of Moses and the Prophets, thus commending them to us in all their divine integrity, and giving us the very fullest and most blessed encouragement to commit our souls, for time and eternity, with absolute confidence, to those peerless writings.

We turn to Luke 24, and listen to the glowing words uttered in the ears of the two bewildered travellers to Emmaus — words which are the sure and blessed remedy for all bewilderment — the perfect solution of every honest difficulty — the divine and all-satisfying answer to every upright inquiry. We do not quote the words of the perplexed disciples; but here is the Master's reply. "Then said He unto them, O fools and slow of heart to believe *all that the prophets have spoken!*"

Alas! nowadays a man is counted a fool if he does believe all that the prophets have spoken. In many learned circles, yea, and in not a few religious circles likewise, the man who avows — as every true man ought — his hearty belief in every line of Holy Scripture, is almost sure — to be met with a sneer of contempt. It is deemed clever to doubt the genuineness of Scripture — fatal, detestable cleverness, from which may the good Lord deliver us! — cleverness which is sure to lead the soul that is ensnared by it down into the dark and dreary abyss of atheism, and the darker and more dreary abyss of hell. From all such cleverness, we again say, from the profoundest depths of our moral being, may God, in His mercy, deliver us and all our young people!

Have we not much cause to bless the Lord for these words of His addressed to His poor perplexed ones on their way to Emmaus? They may seem severe; but it is the necessary severity of a pure, a perfect, and a divinely wise love. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And" — mark these words! — "beginning at *Moses and all the Prophets*, He expounded unto them *in all the Scriptures* the things concerning

Himself." He Himself — all homage to His glorious Person! — is the divine centre of all the things contained in the Scriptures from cover to cover. He is the golden chain that binds into one marvellous and magnificent whole every part of the inspired volume, from Genesis to Revelation.

Hence the man that touches a single section of the sacred canon is guilty of the heinous sin of seeking to overthrow the Word of God; and of such a man even charity itself must say he knows neither the Christ of God nor God Himself. The man who dares to tamper in any way with the Word of God has taken the first step on that inclined plane that leads inevitably down to eternal perdition. Let men beware, then, how they speak against the Scriptures; and if some will speak, let others beware how they listen.

If there were no infidel listeners, there would be few infidel lecturers. How awful to think that there should be either the one or the other in this our highly favoured land! May God have mercy upon them, and open their eyes ere it be too late! Five minutes in hell will quash forever all the infidel theories that ever were propounded in this world. Oh, the egregious folly of infidelity!

We return to our chapter, which furnishes one more proof of the place assigned by our risen Lord to the Holy Scriptures. After having manifested Himself in infinite grace and tranquillising power to His troubled disciples, having shown them His hands and His feet, and assured them of His personal identity by eating in their presence, "He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that *all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms*, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus *it is written.*"

Here again we have the divine seal put upon all the grand divisions of the Old Testament. This is most comforting and strengthening for all pious lovers of Scripture. To find our Lord Himself on all occasions, and under all circumstances, referring to Scripture, using it at all times and for all purposes, feeding upon it Himself and commending it to others, wielding it as the sword of the

Spirit, bowing to its holy authority in all things, appealing to it as the only perfect standard, test and touchstone, the only infallible guide for man in this world, the only unfailing light amid all the surrounding moral gloom — all this is comforting and encouraging in the very highest degree, and it fills our hearts with deepest praise to the Father of mercies who has so provided for us in all our weakness and need.

Here we might close this branch of our subject, but we feel bound to furnish our readers with two more uncommonly fine illustrations of our thesis; one from the Acts, and one from the Epistles. In Acts 24 the apostle Paul, in his address to Felix, thus expresses himself as to the ground of his faith: "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, *believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.*" So, then, he reverently believed in Moses and the Prophets. He fully accepted the Old Testament Scriptures as the solid foundation of his faith, and as the divine authority for his entire course. Now how did Paul know that the Scriptures were given of God? He knew it in the only way in which any one can know it, namely, by divine teaching.

God alone can give the knowledge that the Holy Scriptures are His own very revelation to man. If He does not give it, no one can; if He does, no one need. If I want human evidence to accredit the Word of God, it is not the Word of God to me. The authority on which I receive it is higher than the Word itself. Supposing I could by reason or human learning work my way to the rational conclusion that the Bible is the Word of God, then my faith would merely stand in the wisdom of man, and not in the power of God. Such a faith is worthless; it does not link me with God, and therefore leaves me unsaved, unblest, uncertain. It leaves me without God, without Christ, without hope. Saving faith is believing what God says because He says it, and this faith is wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit. Intellectual faith is a cold, lifeless, worthless faith, which only deceives and puffs up; it never can save, sanctify, or satisfy.

We turn now to 2 Tim. 3: 14-17. The aged apostle, at the close of his marvellous career, from his prison at Rome, looking back at the whole of his ministry, looking around at the failure and ruin so

sadly apparent on every side, looking forward to the terrible consummation of the "last days," and looking beyond all to "the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, *shall give in that day,*" thus addresses his beloved son: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and *hast been assured of,* knowing of whom thou hast learned; and that *from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation* through faith which is in Christ Jesus. *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,* and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that *the man of God may be perfect* [complete] *thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*"

All this is unspeakably precious to every true lover of the Word of God. The place here assigned, and the virtues here attributed, to the Holy Scriptures are beyond all price. In short, it is utterly impossible to overstate the value and importance of the foregoing quotation. It is deeply touching to find the revered and beloved old veteran, in the full power of the Holy Ghost, recalling Timothy to the days of his childhood, when, at the knees of his pious mother, he drank at the pure fountain of inspiration. How did the dear child know that these holy writings were the Word of God? He knew it just in the same way that the blessed apostle himself knew it, by their divine power and effect upon his heart and conscience through the Holy Ghost.

Did the Holy Scriptures need man's credentials? What an insult to the dignity of Scripture to imagine that any human seal or guarantee is necessary to accredit it to the soul! Do we want the authority of the Church, the judgment of the Fathers, the decrees of councils, the consent of the doctors, the decision of the universities, to accredit the Word of God? Far away be the thought! Who would think of bringing out a rush light at noon to prove that the sun shines, or to bring home its beams in their genial virtue to the human frame? What son would think of taking his father's letter to an ignorant crossing-sweeper to have it accredited and interpreted to his heart?

These figures are feebleness itself when used to illustrate the egregious folly of submitting the Holy Scriptures to the judgment of

any human mind. No, the Word of God speaks for itself. It carries its own powerful credentials with it. Its own internal evidences are amply sufficient for every pious, right-minded, humble child of God. It needs no letter of commendation from men. No doubt external evidences have their value and their interest. Human testimony must go for what it is worth. We may rest assured that the more thoroughly all human evidence is sifted, and the nearer all human testimony approaches to the truth, the more fully and distinctly will all concur in demonstrating the genuineness and integrity of our precious Bible.

Further, we must declare our deep and settled conviction that no infidel theory can hold water for a moment; no infidel argument can pass muster with an honest mind. We invariably find that all infidel assaults upon the Bible recoil upon the heads of those who make them. Infidel writers make fools of themselves, and leave the divine volume just where it always was, and where it always will be, like an impregnable rock, against which the waves of infidel thought dash themselves in contemptible impotency.

There stands the Word of God in its divine majesty, in its heavenly power, in its beautiful simplicity, in its matchless glory, in its unfathomed because unfathomable depths, in its never-failing freshness and power of adaptation, in its marvellous comprehensiveness, in its vastness of scope, its perfect unity, its thorough uniqueness. The Bible stands alone. There is nothing like it in the wide world of literature; and if anything further were needed to prove that that book which we call "The Bible" is in very deed the living and eternal Word of God, it may be found in the ceaseless efforts of the devil to prove that it is not.

"*Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven.*" What remains, beloved reader, for thee? Just this: "Thy word have I *hid in my heart*, that I might not sin against Thee." Thus it stands, blessed be His holy name; and when we have His Word hid in the depths of our hearts, the theories and the arguments, the reasonings or the ravings, the questionings and the conclusions of sceptics, rationalists, and infidels, will be to us of less moment than the pattering of rain upon the window.

Thus much as to the weighty question of the "*authority*" upon which the great commission proceeds. The immense importance of the subject, and the special character of the moment through which we are passing, must account for the unusual length of this article. We feel profoundly thankful for an opportunity of bearing our feeble testimony to the power, authority, all-sufficiency, and divine glory of "the Holy Scriptures." "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!"

Part 8

In full keeping with all that has passed in review before us is the *sphere* of "the great commission," as set forth in that comprehensive clause, "*Among all nations.*"

Such was to be the wide range of those heralds whom the risen Lord was sending forth to preach "repentance and remission of sins." Theirs was emphatically a world-wide mission. In Matt. 10 we find something quite different. There the Lord, in sending forth the twelve apostles, "commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not."

This was to be a mission exclusively to the house of Israel. There was no message for the Gentiles, no word for the poor Samaritans. If these messengers approached a city of the uncircumcised, they were on no account to enter it. The ways of God — His dispensational dealings — demanded a circumscribed sphere for the twelve apostles sent forth by the Messiah in the days of His flesh. "The lost sheep of the house of Israel" were to be the special objects of their ministry.

But in Luke 24 all is changed. The dispensational barriers are no longer to interfere with the messengers of grace. Israel is not to be forgotten, but the Gentiles are to hear the glad tidings. The sun of God's salvation must now pour its living beams over the whole world. Not a soul is to be excluded from the blessed light. Every city, every town, every village, every hamlet, every street, lane and alley, hedge and highway, must be diligently and lovingly searched out and visited, so that "every creature under heaven" might hear the good news of a full and free salvation.

How like our God is all this! How worthy of His large, loving heart! He would have the tide of His salvation flowing from pole to pole, and from the river to the ends of the earth. His righteousness is unto all, and the sweet tale of His pardoning love must be wafted far and wide over a lost and guilty world. Such is His most gracious purpose, however tardy His servants may be in carrying it out.

It is of the greatest importance to have a clear view as to this branch of our subject. It brings out the character of God in a very magnificent light, and it leaves man wholly without excuse. Salvation is sent to the Gentiles. There is absolutely no limit, and no obstacle. Like the sun in the heavens, it shines on all. If a man will persist in hiding himself in a mine or in a tunnel, so that he cannot see the sun, he has none but himself to blame. It is no defect in the sun if all do not enjoy his beams. He shines for all. And in like manner, "the grace of God that bringeth salvation unto all men hath appeared." No one need perish because he is a poor lost sinner, for "God will have all to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." "He willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

And then, that not a single feature might be lacking to set forth with all possible force and fullness the royal grace which breathes in "the great commission," our blessed Lord does not fail to point out to His servants the remarkable spot which was to be the centre of their *sphere*. He tells them to "begin at Jerusalem." Yes, Jerusalem, where our Lord was crucified; where every indignity that human enmity could invent was heaped upon His divine Person; where a murderer and a robber was preferred to "God manifest in the flesh"; where human iniquity had reached its culminating point in nailing the Son of God to a malefactor's cross — here the messengers were to begin their blessed work; that was to be the centre of the sphere of their gracious operations; and from thence they were to travel to the utmost bounds of the habitable globe. They were to begin with "Jerusalem sinners" — with the very murderers of the Son of God, and then go forth to publish everywhere the glorious tidings, so that all might know that precious grace of God which was sufficient to meet the crimson guilt of Jerusalem itself.

How glorious is all this! The guilty murderers of the Son of God were the very first to hear the sweet tale of pardoning love, so that all men might see in them a pattern of what the grace of God and the blood of Christ can do. Truly the grace that could pardon Jerusalem sinners can pardon any one; the blood that could cleanse the betrayers and murderers of the Christ of God can cleanse any sinner outside the precincts of hell. These heralds of salvation, as they made their way from nation to nation, could tell their hearers where they had come from; they could tell of that superabounding grace of God which had commenced its operations in the guiltiest spot on the face of the earth, and which was amply sufficient to meet the very vilest of the sons of Adam.

Sovereign grace o'er sin abounding:

Ransomed souls the tidings swell;

'Tis a deep that knows no sounding;

Who its length or breadth can tell?

Precious grace of God! May it be published with increased energy and clearness throughout the divinely appointed sphere. Alas, that those who know it should be so slow to make it known to others! That slowness is, most surely, not of God. He absolutely delights in the publication of His saving, pardoning grace. He tells us that the feet of the evangelist are beautiful upon the mountains. He assures us that the preaching of the cross is a sweet savour to His heart. Ought not all this to quicken our energies in the blessed work? Ought we not in every possible way to seek to carry out the gracious desire of the heart of God? Why are we so slow? Why so cold and indolent? Why so easily discouraged and repulsed? Why so ready to make excuses for not speaking to people about their souls?

There stands the great commission shining on the eternal page of inspiration in all its moral grandeur — its *terms*, its *basis*, its *authority*, its *sphere*! The work is not yet done. Nearly nineteen hundred years have rolled past since the risen Saviour sent forth His messengers; and still He waits, in sweet, long-suffering mercy, not willing that any should perish. Why are we not more willing-hearted

in carrying out the gracious desire of His heart? It is not by any means necessary that we should be great preachers, or powerful public speakers, in order to carry on the precious work of evangelization. What we want is a heart in communion with the heart of God, the heart of Christ, and that will surely be a heart for souls. We do not, and cannot, believe that one who is not led out in loving desire after the salvation of souls can really be in communion with the mind of Christ. We cannot be in His presence and not think of the souls of those around us. For whoever cared for souls as He did? Mark His marvellous path! — His ceaseless toil as a teacher and preacher! — His thirst for the salvation and blessing of souls!

And has He not left us an example that we should follow His steps? Are we doing so in this one matter of making known the blessed gospel? Are we seeking to imitate Him in His earnest diligence in seeking the lost? See Him at the well of Sychar! Mark His whole deportment! Listen to His earnest, loving words! Note the joy and refreshment of His spirit as He sees one poor sinner receiving His message! "I have meat to eat that ye know not of;" "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together."

We would earnestly entreat the Christian reader to consider this great subject in the divine presence. We deeply feel its importance. We cannot but judge that, amid all the writing and reading, all the speaking and hearing, all the coming and going, there is a sad lack of deep-toned, earnest, solemn dealing with individual souls. How often do we rest satisfied with inviting people to come to the preaching, instead of seeking to bring them directly to Christ? How often do we rest content with the periodical preaching, instead of earnestly seeking, all the week through, to persuade souls to flee from the wrath to come? No doubt it is good to preach, and good to invite people to the preaching; but we may rest assured there is something more than all this to be done, and that something must be sought in deeper communion with the heart and mind of Christ.

Some there are who speak disparagingly of the blessed and holy work of evangelization. We tremble for them. We feel

persuaded they are not in the current of the Master's mind, and hence we utterly reject their thoughts. It is to be feared that their hearts are cold in reference to an object that engages the heart of God. If so, they would need to humble themselves in His presence, and seek to get their souls restored to a true sense of the magnitude, importance and interest of the grand question before us. At least let them beware of how they seek to discourage and hinder others whose hearts the Lord has moved to care for precious, immortal souls.

The present is most assuredly not the time for raising difficulties, and starting questions which can only prove stumbling-blocks in the pathway of earnest workers. It becomes us to seek in every right way to strengthen the hands of all who are endeavouring, according to their measure, to publish the glad tidings, and make known the unsearchable riches of Christ. Let us see that we do so, so far as in us lies; and above all things, let us never utter a sentence calculated to hinder any one in the blessed work of winning souls to Christ.

There is one more point in our subject which we feel must not be omitted, and that is the power by which "the great commission" was to be carried out. To leave this out would be a great defect, a serious blank indeed; and we are the more anxious to notice it, inasmuch as the special form in which the power was communicated links itself, in a very remarkable way, with that which has been before us. If the *sphere* was to be "all nations," the *power* must be adapted thereto; and, blessed be God, so it was.

Our blessed Lord, in closing His commission to His disciples, said, "And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." This promise was fulfilled, this power was communicated on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Ghost came down from the ascended and glorified Man, to qualify His servants for the glorious work for which He had called them. They had to "tarry" until they got the power. How could they go without it? Who but the Holy Ghost could speak adequately of the love of God, of the person, work and glory of Christ? Who but He could enable any one to preach repentance and remission of sins? Who but He could properly handle all the

weighty subjects comprehended in "the great commission?" In a word, the power of the Holy Ghost is absolutely essential in every branch of Christian service, and all who go to work without it will find it to be barrenness, misery, and desolation.

We must call the reader's special attention to the form in which the Holy Ghost came down on the day of Pentecost. It is full of deepest interest, and lets us into the precious secret of the heart of God in a most touching manner.

Let us turn to Acts 2.

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were *all with one accord in one place*" — instructive and suggestive fact! — "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them *cloven tongues*, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" — He had full possession of their hearts and minds, full sway over their whole moral being — blessed condition! — "And they began to speak with *other tongues*" (not in the absurd and unintelligible jargon of cunning impostors or deluded fanatics, but) "as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, *out of every nation under heaven.*" Note this fact.

"Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that *every man heard them speak in his own language.*" — How real — how telling! — "And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how *hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born?*" — not merely wherein we were educated — "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, *we do hear them speak in our tongues* the wonderful works of God."

What a marvellous occurrence! How marked the coincidence! God so ordered it, in His infinite wisdom and perfect grace, that

there should be assembled in the city of Jerusalem, at the exact moment, people from every nation on the face of the whole earth, in order that — even should the twelve apostles fail to carry out their commission — all might hear, in the very dialect in which their mothers first whispered into their infant ears the accents of a mother's love, the precious tidings of God's salvation.

Can anything exceed this in interest? Who can fail to see in the fact here recorded that it was the loving desire of the heart of God to reach every creature under Heaven with the sweet story of His grace? The world had rejected the Son of God, had crucified and slain Him; but no sooner had He taken His seat at the right hand of God than down came the august Witness, God the Spirit, to speak to man — to every man — to speak to him, not in accents of withering denunciation, not in the thundering anathemas of judgment, but in accents of deep and tender love, to tell him of full remission of sins through the blood of the cross.

True, He called on man to judge himself, to repent, to take his only true and proper place. Why not? How could it be otherwise? Repentance is — as we have already fully shown and earnestly insisted upon in these papers — a universal and abiding necessity for man. But the Spirit of God came down to speak face to face with man, to tell him in his own mother tongue of the wonderful works of God. He did not speak to a Hebrew in Latin, or a Roman in Greek; but He spoke to each in the very dialect in which he was born, thus proving to a demonstration — proving in the most affecting manner possible — that it was God's gracious desire to make His way to man's heart in deepest, richest, fullest grace. All homage to His name!

How different it was when the law was to be published from mount Sinai! If all the nations of the earth had been assembled round that fiery mount, they could not have understood one word — unless, indeed, any one happened to know the Hebrew tongue. The law was addressed to one people, it was wrapped up in one language, it was enclosed in the ark. God took no pains to publish the record of man's duty in every language under Heaven. But when grace was to be published, when the glad tidings of salvation were to be sounded abroad, when testimony was to be borne to a crucified,

risen, ascended and coming Saviour and Lord, then, verily, God the Holy Ghost came down, for the purpose of fitting His messengers to speak to every man in a tongue which he could understand.

Facts are powerful arguments, and assuredly the above two facts, in reference to the law and the gospel, must speak to every heart, in a manner the most convincing, of the matchless grace of God. God did not send forth heralds to publish the law to "all nations." No — this was reserved for "the great commission" on which we have been dwelling, and which we now earnestly commend, with all its great subjects, to the serious attention of every reader.

John 1:9

JOHN THE BAPTIST

It is not our object in the following pages to dwell upon the ministry of the Baptist, nor yet upon the place which he filled in the history of God's dealings with Israel, deeply interesting as all this might be and profitable too, inasmuch as his ministry was solemn and powerful, and his dispensational position full of the very deepest interest. But we must confine ourselves to two or three of his utterances as recorded by the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John, in which we shall find two things very strikingly presented to our view — his estimate of himself and his estimate of his Lord.

These are points worthy of our attention. John the Baptist was, according to the testimony of his blessed Master, the greatest “among them that are born of women.” This is the very highest testimony that could be borne to anyone, whether we consider the source from which it came or the terms in which it is stated. He was not only a prophet, but the greatest of prophets — the forerunner of the Messiah, the harbinger of the King, the great preacher of righteousness.

Such was John, officially. Hence it must be of the deepest interest to know what such an one thought of himself and what he thought of Christ — to hearken to his fervent utterances on both these points as given on the page of inspiration. Indeed we shall find herein a mine of most precious practical instruction.

Let us turn to John 1: 19. “And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed and denied not, but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am *the voice* of one crying in the wilderness.”

They were determined to have an answer, and he gives them one. They would compel him to speak of himself, and he does so.

But mark his answer! Who or what was he? Nobody. He was only "a voice." This is morally lovely. The self-emptiness of this most honored servant is beautiful. It does the heart good to be brought in contact with such practical grace as this. Here was a man of real power and dignity, one of Christ's most illustrious servants, occupying the very highest position, whose preaching had stirred the hearts of thousands, whose birth had been announced by angels, whose ministry had been foretold by prophets, the herald of the kingdom, the friend of the King. Yet this remarkable man, when forced to speak of himself, can merely be induced to say, "I am a voice." Not even a man, but only a voice.

What a lesson is here for us! What a wholesome "corrective" for our lamentable self-occupation, self-complacency and self-exaltation. It is truly wonderful to think of the Baptist's brilliant career, of his powerful ministry, of his widespread influence, extending even to the heart of Herod the king, of the place he occupied and the work he did. Yet, notwithstanding all this, when forced to give out what he had to say of himself, he sums it all up in that one self-emptied word, "A voice."

This contains a volume of deep practical instruction for the heart. It is precisely what is needed in this day of busy self-importance — needed by each — needed by all; for have we not, each and all, to judge ourselves on the ground of our inordinate tendency to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think? Are we not all prone to attach importance to any little work with which we ourselves happen to stand connected? Alas! it is even so. Hence it is that we so deeply need the wholesome teaching furnished by the lovely self-emptiness of John the Baptist, who when challenged to speak of himself, could retire into the shade and say, "I am only a voice."

Now this was a very remarkable answer to fall on the ears of the Pharisees who were the messengers sent to question the Baptist, as we read, "They which were sent were of the Pharisees." Surely it is not without meaning that this fact is stated. Pharisees know very little of self-hiding or self-emptiness. Such rare and exquisite fruits do not thrive beneath the withering atmosphere of Pharisaism. They only grow in the new creation and there is no Pharisaism there.

Pharisaism, in all its phases and in all its grades, is the moral direct opposite of self-denial. Therefore, John's reply must have sounded strange in the ears of the questioners.

“And they asked him and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not the Christ nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water, but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.”

Thus, the more this dear servant of Christ is forced to speak of himself or of his work, the more he retires into the shade. When asked about himself, he says “I am a voice.” Then asked about his work, he says, “I am not worthy to unloose my Master's shoe-latchet.” There is no puffing up or exalting of self, no making much ado of his service, no parading of his work. The greatest of prophets was, in his own eyes, merely a voice. The most honored of servants deemed himself unworthy to touch his Master's shoe.

All this is truly refreshing and edifying. It is most healthful for the soul to breathe such an atmosphere as this in a day like the present of so much contemptible egotism and empty pretension. John was a man of *real* power, *real* worth, *real* gift and grace. Therefore he was a lowly unpretending man. It is generally thus. Really great men are fond of the shade. If they must speak of themselves, they make short work of it. David never spoke of his wonderful feat with the lion and the bear until compelled to do so by Saul's unbelief. Paul never spoke of his rapture to paradise till it was drawn forth by the folly of the Corinthians; and when forced to speak of himself or his work, he apologizes and says again and again, “I speak as a fool.”

Thus it is ever. True worth is modest and retiring. The Davids, the Johns and the Pauls have delighted to retire behind their Master and lose sight of themselves in the blaze of His moral glory. This was their joy. Here they found and ever shall find their deepest, fullest, richest blessing. The very highest and purest enjoyment which the creature can taste is to lose sight of self in the immediate presence of God. Oh! to know more of it! It is what we want. It

would effectively deliver us from the tendency to be occupied with and influenced by the thoughts and opinions of men. It would impart a moral elevation to the character and a holy stability to the course which is for the glory of God and for our souls' true peace and blessing.

But we must gather up further instruction from the history of John the Baptist. Let the reader turn to John 3: 25: "Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying." There were questions then as there are questions now, for our hearts are full of questions. "And they came unto John and said unto him, Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth and all men come to Him."

Here was something calculated to test the heart of the Baptist. Could he bear to lose all his disciples? Was he prepared for desertion? Was he really up to the height of his own words? Was he merely a voice, a nothing and a nobody? These were pertinent questions, for we all know it is one thing to talk humbly and another thing to *be* humble. It is one thing to speak about self-emptiness and quite another to *be* self-emptied.

Was the Baptist, then, up to the mark? Was he prepared to be superceded and set aside? Was it of any importance to him *who* did the work, provided the work was done? Harken to his reply: "John answered and said, A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven." This is a great practical truth. Let us seize it and hold it fast. It is an effective remedy for self-confidence and self-exaltation.

If a man can "take unto himself" nothing, if he can do nothing, if he is nothing, it ill becomes him to be boastful, pretentious or self-occupied. The abiding sense of our own nothingness would ever keep us humble. The abiding sense of God's goodness would ever keep us happy. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." The remembrance of this would ever keep us looking up. Whatever good there is in us or around us, comes from heaven, comes from God — the living and ever flowing Source of all goodness and blessedness.

To be near Him, to have Him before the heart, to serve in His holy presence is the true secret of peace, the unfailing safeguard against envy and jealousy.

The Baptist knew something of this. Hence he had an answer ready for his disciples. "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled. *He must increase, but I must decrease.*"

Here lay the deep and precious secret of John's happiness and peace. His joy was not in his own work, not in gathering a number of disciples round himself, not in his personal influence or popularity, not in any or all of these things put together. His pure and holy joy was to stand and hear the voice of the Bridegroom and to see others including his own disciples, flocking to that blessed One and finding all their springs in Him.

"This is my joy, which ne'er can fail,
To see my Savior's arm prevail.
And mark His steps of grace;
Now new-born souls convinced of sin,
His blood revealed to them within,
Extol the Lamb in every place."

Such was the Baptist's estimate of himself and of his Lord. As to himself, he was but a voice and must decrease. As to his Lord, He was the Bridegroom, He was from heaven, He was above all, the center of all, whose glory must increase and fill with its blessed beams the whole universe of God when all other glory shall have faded away forever.

But we have further testimony from the lips of this beloved and honored servant of God. This testimony is drawn forth, not by any “question” about purifying or any appeal to his personal feelings on the subject of his ministry, but simply by his intense admiration of Christ as an Object for his own heart. “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him and saith, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, After me cometh a Man which is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not, but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God” (John 1: 29-36).

Here was what occupied John's heart. *The Lamb of God*. Peerless, precious Object! Satisfying portion! Christ Himself — His work, His Person. In verse 29 we have one great branch of His work — “He taketh away the *sin* of the world.” His atoning death is the foundation of everything. It is the propitiation for His people's sins and for the whole world. In virtue of this precious sacrifice, every stain is removed from the believer's conscience, and in virtue thereof every stain shall yet be obliterated from the whole creation. The cross is the divine pedestal on which the glory of God and the blessedness of man shall rest forever.

Then in verse 33 we have another branch of Christ's work. “He baptizeth with the Holy Spirit.” This was made good on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came down from the risen and glorified Head to baptize believers into one body. We do not attempt to enter upon these weighty subjects here, inasmuch as our object is to present to the heart of the reader the great practical effect of occupation with Christ Himself, the only true object of all believers. This effect comes very strikingly out in the following verses. “Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking

upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God” (vv. 35-36).

Here the Baptist is wholly engrossed with the *Person* of his Lord. Hence we have no reference to His work. This is a point of the deepest possible interest and importance. “John stood” — fixed — riveted — gazing upon the most glorious Object that had ever fixed the gaze of men and angels — the Object of the Father's delight and of heaven's adoration, “*the Lamb of God.*” Mark the effect. “The two disciples heard Him speak and they followed Jesus.” They felt there must be something uniquely attractive in One who could so command their master's heart. Therefore, leaving him, they attached themselves to that glorious Person of whom he spoke.

This is full of instruction for us. There is immense moral power in true occupation of heart with Christ and in the testimony which flows from thence. The positive enjoyment of Christ — feeding upon and delighting in Him, the heart going out in holy adoration after Him, the affections centered in Him — these are the things that tell powerfully upon the hearts of others because they tell upon our own hearts and ways. A man who is finding his delight in Christ is lifted out of himself and lifted above the circumstances and influences which surround him. Such an one is morally elevated above the thoughts and opinions of men. He enjoys a holy calmness and independence. He is not thinking about himself or seeking a name or a place for himself. He has found a satisfying portion and is therefore able to tell the world that he is wholly independent of it.

Was John troubled by the loss of his disciples? No, it was the joy of his heart to see them finding their center and their object where he had found his own. He had not sought to make a party or to gather disciples around himself. He had borne witness to another, and that other was “the Lamb of God” in whom he himself delighted, not only because of His work, but because of His worth — His moral glory, His intrinsic, peerless, divine excellence. He heard the Bridegroom's voice and saw His face, and his joy was full.

Now we may well inquire, What can the world offer to a man whose joy is full? What can circumstances, what can the creature do for him? If men slight and desert him, if they wound and insult him,

what then? Why, he can say, “My joy is full. I have found all I want in that blessed One who not only has taken away my sins and filled me with the Holy Spirit, but who has drawn me to Himself and filled me with His own divine preciousness and eternal excellency.”

Reader, let us earnestly seek to know more of this deep blessedness. Rest assured we shall find therein an effective cure for the thousand and one ills that afflict us in the scene through which we are passing. How is it that *professors* so often exhibit a gloomy and unlovely temper? Why are they peevish, fretful and irritable in the domestic life? Why so ruffled and put about by the petty annoyances of their daily history? Why so easily upset by the most contemptible trifles? Why put out of temper if the dinner be not properly and punctually served up? Why so touchy and tenacious? Why so ready to take offense if self be touched or its interests intruded upon? Ah! the answer is easily given. The poor heart is not finding its center, its satisfying portion in “the Lamb of God.” Here lies the secret of our failure. The moment we take our eye off Christ, the moment we cease to abide in Him by a living faith, that moment we get under the power of every passing current of circumstances and influences. We become feeble and lose our balance; self and its surroundings rise into prominence and fill the heart's vision. Thus, instead of exhibiting the beautiful features of the image of Christ, we exhibit the very reverse, even the odious and humiliating tempers and dispositions of unsubdued nature.

May God enable us to lay these things seriously to heart, for we may depend upon it that serious damage is done to the cause of Christ, and grievous dishonor brought upon His holy name by the uncomely manners, tempers and ways of those who profess to belong to Him.

John 1:29, 1 John 2:2

ATONEMENT

The testimony of Holy Scripture is clear, explicit and abundant as to the grand cardinal truth that atonement is by the shedding of blood. The coats of skin which the Lord God made for Adam and Eve were procured from dead victims. The “more excellent sacrifice” of Abel consisted of blood and fat. So also in the history of Noah in Genesis 8 and in the history of Abraham in Genesis 15. Israel was screened from judgment in Egypt by the blood of the paschal lamb, as we read, “when I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Exodus 12). The whole book of Leviticus is one great stream tending to swell the tide of evidence on this vital question. The burnt offering, peace offering, sin offering and trespass offering were all based on blood-shedding. See also that famous passage in Leviticus 17. “The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (v. 11).

Time fails us to bring forward the thousandth part of the Scripture proofs on this subject. We shall merely give two most pointed passages from the New Testament and then leave you to follow out the chain of evidence for yourself. “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood: and without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9: 22). “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood” (Rev. 1: 5, 9 with Acts 20: 28). These passages speak for themselves. We desire to bow in reverent submission to the authority of Holy Scripture. We do not want to reason or argue. “Thus saith the Lord” is amply sufficient for us.

Your question as to John 1: 29 and 1 John 2: 2 is a very important one. It will help you much to distinguish between Christ as the *propitiation* for the whole world and as the *substitute* for His people. The two goats in Leviticus 16 typify Him in these two aspects of His work. The Lord's lot fell upon one. This was Christ the propitiation. The people's lot fell upon the other. This was Christ the substitute. John 1: 29 refers to the former. “The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” See also Hebrews 9: 26.

Christ did a work on the cross in virtue of which every trace of sin shall yet be obliterated from the whole creation. The full result of this work will not be seen until the new heavens and the new earth shall shine forth as the eternal abode of righteousness. It is in virtue of Christ's propitiatory work that God has been dealing in mercy and goodness with the world and with man from the Fall down to the present moment. He has sent His sunshine and His rain upon the earth. He has filled men's hearts with food and gladness. He has been dealing in patience and longsuffering with the human family. And it is in virtue of the same propitiatory sacrifice that the evangelist goes forth with a world-wide gospel for the ears of every creature under heaven.

The evangelist cannot go and tell every creature that Christ died as his substitute, but he can tell him that He died as a propitiation; and when, through grace, the soul believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, he can learn the further calming truth that He died as a substitute and bore all his sins in His own body on the tree. See Hebrews 9: 28, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" — all His people. In verse 26 we read, "He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Christ is never said to have borne the sins of the world. It is utterly false doctrine; it is universalism. He bore the sins of His people, and He has done a work in virtue of which every trace of sin shall yet be abolished throughout the wide universe of God.

These distinctions, dear friend, are of the utmost importance. Scripture maintains them. Theology confounds them, and confounds souls as a result.

1 Peter 2: 24 refers to the whole of Christ's sacrificial work. It is a quotation from Isaiah 53. The Septuagint version renders the word "stripe" by a singular noun. The atoning work of Christ is set forth in various ways throughout Scripture — "Death," "Blood shedding," "Stripes," "Cross," etc. There is always a distinct object in the use of any particular term. Accept, beloved friend, our warmest thanks for your truly kind and encouraging letter. May God bless you most abundantly!

John 1: 37

Simon Peter — His life and its lessons.

Part 1

We propose, in dependence upon the Spirit's guidance, to write a few papers on the life and ministry of the blessed servant of Christ whose name stands at the head of this paper. We shall trace him through the Gospels, through the Acts, and through the Epistles, for he appears in all the three grand divisions of the New Testament. We shall meditate upon his call, upon his conversion, his confession, his fall, his restoration; in a word, we shall glance at all the scenes and circumstances of his remarkable history, in which we shall find, if we mistake not, many valuable lessons which we may well ponder. May the Lord the Spirit be our Guide and Teacher!

For the earliest notice of Simon Peter, we must turn to the first chapter of the Gospel of John. Here we find, at the very outset, a scene full of interest and instruction. Amongst those who had been gathered by the powerful ministry of John the Baptist there were two men who heard him deliver his glowing testimony to the Lamb of God. We must quote the words: "Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God."

These words fell with peculiar power upon the hearts of two of John's disciples. Not that the words were specially addressed to them; at least, we are not told so. But they were words of life, freshness, and power — words welling up from the depths of a heart that had found an object in the Person of Christ. On the preceding day, John had spoken of the work of Christ. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And again, "The same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."

But let the reader note particularly John's testimony to the *person* of the Lamb of God. "John stood," riveted, no doubt, by the object which filled the vision of his soul. "And looking upon Jesus, as He walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God." It was this that went right to the very heart of the two disciples who stood beside

him, and so affected them that they left their master to follow this new and infinitely more glorious Object that had been presented to their notice.

There is always immense moral power in the testimony that emanates from an absorbed heart. There is nothing formal, official, or mechanical, in such testimony. It is the pure fruit of heart communion; and there is nothing like it. It is not the mere statement of true things about Christ. It is the heart occupied and satisfied with Christ. It is the eye riveted, the heart fixed, the whole moral being centred and absorbed in that one commanding object that fills all Heaven with His glory.

This is the kind of testimony we so much want both in our private life and in our public reunions. It is this that tells, with such marvellous power, on others. We never can speak effectively for Christ, unless our hearts are filled with Him. And so it is also, in reference to our meetings. When Christ is the one absorbing object of every heart, there will be a tone and an atmosphere which must tell in some way or other on all who enter the place. There may not be much gift, not much teaching — very little charm in the singing, for persons of musical taste; but oh! there is heart-enjoyment of Christ. His name is as ointment poured forth. Every eye is fixed on Him; every heart is centred in Him; He is the commanding object — the satisfying portion. The unanimous voice of the assembly seems to say, "Behold the Lamb of God," and this must produce its own powerful effect, either in attracting souls to Him, or in convincing them that the people in that assembly have gotten something of which they know nothing at all.

But let us note particularly the effect produced on the two disciples of John. "They heard him speak and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto Him, Rabbi — which is to say, being interpreted, Master — where dwellest Thou? He said unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day; for it was about the tenth hour." Thus the blessed testimony of the Baptist led them to follow Jesus, and as they followed on, fresh light was poured upon their path, and they found

themselves at length, in the very abode of that One of whom they had heard their master speak.

Nor was this all, though it was much — with their own hearts' deepest longings satisfied. There was now that delightful going out after others which must, in every instance, be the result of close personal acquaintance and occupation with the Person of Christ. "One of the two which heard John, and followed Jesus, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus."

Here is something which we may well ponder. See how the circle of blessing widens! See the result of a single sentence uttered in truth and reality! It might seem to a carnal observer as though John had lost by his testimony. Far from it. That honoured servant found his joy in pointing souls to Jesus. He did not want to link them on to himself, or to gather a party round himself. "John bare witness of Him, and cried saying, This was He of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me." And again, "This is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they ask him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees." What a fine moral lesson for Pharisees to be set down to! "And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth One among you, whom ye know not. He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."

It is not very likely that the man who could give such answers, and bear such a testimony, would be, in the smallest degree, affected by the loss of a few disciples. But, in good truth it was not losing them when they followed Jesus and found their abode with Him. Of

this we have the very finest evidence that could be furnished, from John's own lips, in reply to those who evidently thought that their master might possibly feel at being left in the shade. "They came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all come to Him. John answered and said, *A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.* Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: *this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease*" (John 3: 26-30).

Noble words! It was the joy of this most illustrious servant — this greatest of woman born, to hide himself behind his Master, and find all his personal springs in Him. As to himself, he was but a voice. As to his work, he was only baptising with water, he was not worthy to loose the latchet of his Master's shoe.

Such was John. Such the man whose glowing testimony led the brother of Simon Peter to the feet of the Son of God. The testimony was clear and distinct, and the work deep and real in the souls of those who received it.

It does the heart good to note the simple, earnest, forcible words of Simon's brother, Andrew. He is able to say, without reserve or hesitation, "*We have found the Messiah.*" It was this that led him to look after his brother. He lost no time. Saved and blessed himself, he would, at once, begin to lead his brother into the same blessing.

How simple! How morally lovely! How divinely natural! No sooner had he found the Messiah, than he went in search of his brother to tell him of his joy. It must ever be thus. We cannot doubt for a moment, that the actual finding Christ for ourselves is the true secret of looking after others. There is no uncertainty in Andrew's testimony — no wavering — no doubting or fearing. He does not even say, "I hope I have found." No; all is clear and distinct; and, we may say, with all possible assurance, it would not have done Simon

Peter much good had it been anything else. An uncertain sound is not much use to any one.

It is a grand point to be able to say, "*I have found Christ.*" Reader, can you say it? Doubtless, you have heard of Him. It may be you have heard from the lips of some ardent lover of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God." But have you followed that blessed One? If so, you will long to find some one to whom you can speak of your newly found treasure, and bring him to Jesus. Begin at home, Get hold of your brother or your sister, or your companion, your fellow-student, your fellow-shopman, your fellow-workman, your fellow-servant, and whisper lovingly, but clearly and decidedly, into his ear, "I have found Jesus. Do come, taste and see how gracious He is. Come! oh do come to Jesus." Remember this was the way that the great Apostle Peter was first called. He first heard of Jesus from the lips of his own brother Andrew. This mighty workman — this great preacher who was blessed, on one occasion, to three thousand souls — who opened the kingdom of Heaven to the Jew in Acts 3 and to the Gentile in Acts 10 — this blessed servant was brought to Christ by the hand of his own brother in the flesh.

Part 2

The notice which we have of our apostle, in John 1, is very brief indeed, though, doubtless, there is much wrapped up in it. "Andrew first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone."

Now, we have no record here of any deep spiritual work in the soul of Simon. We are told his name in the old creation, and his name in the new; but there is no allusion whatever to those deep exercises of soul of which we know he was the subject. For these we must ask the reader to turn for a few moments to Luke 5, where we have a marvellous piece of divine workmanship.

"And it came to pass that, as the people pressed upon Him to hear the word of God, He stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw

two ships standing by the lake; but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And He sat down, and taught the people out of the ship."

Mark especially the moral grace that shines here. "He *prayed* him that he would thrust out *a little* from the land." Though Lord of all creation — Possessor of Heaven and earth — He nevertheless, as the lowly, gracious Man, courteously owns Simon's proprietorship, and asks, as a favour, that he would thrust out *a little* from the shore. This was morally lovely, and we may rest assured it produced its own effect upon the heart of Simon.

"Now when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." Simon was about to be well paid for the loan of his boat. "And Simon, answering, said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless, at Thy word, I will let down the net." There was power, as well as grace, in that word! "And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink." Neither their nets nor their ships were able to sustain the fruit of divine power and goodness. "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Here, then, we have the great practical effect produced in Peter's soul by the combined action of grace and power. He is brought to see himself in the light of the divine presence, where alone self can be truly seen and judged. Simon had heard the word of Jesus addressed to the multitude on the shore. He had felt the sweet grace and moral beauty of His way towards himself. He had marked the display of divine power in the astonishing draught of fish. All told powerfully upon his heart and conscience, and brought him on his face before the Lord.

Now this is what we may call a genuine work of conviction. Simon is in the place of true self-judgement — a very blessed place indeed — a place from which all must start if they are to be much used in the Lord's work, or if, indeed, they are ever to exhibit much depth or stability in the divine life. We need never look for any real power or progress unless there is a deep and solid work of the Spirit of God in the conscience. Persons who pass rapidly into what they call peace, are apt to pass as rapidly out of it again. It is a very serious thing indeed to be brought to see ourselves in the light of God's presence, to have our eyes opened to the truth of our past history, our present condition, and our future destiny. Simon Peter found it so in his day, and so have all those who have been brought to a saving knowledge of Christ. Harken to Isaiah's words, when he saw himself in the powerful light of the divine glory. "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: *for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*" So also in the case of the patriarch, Job. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now *mine eye seeth Thee.* Wherefore I *abhor myself,* and repent in dust and ashes."

These glowing utterances reveal a deep and genuine work in both the patriarch and the prophet. And surely our apostle occupied the same moral ground when he exclaimed, from the very depths of a broken heart, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." If Simon is to be called Cephas, he must be thoroughly broken up, and brought to the end of himself. If he is to be used to catch men, he must learn, in a divine way, man's true condition. If he is to teach others that "all flesh is as grass," he must learn the application of this great truth to his own heart.

Thus it is in every case. Look at Saul of Tarsus. What mean those three days of blindness, during which he neither did eat nor drink? May we not confidently affirm that they were serious days, perhaps the most serious in the entire history of that remarkable man? They were, doubtless, days in the which he was led down to the most profound depths of his moral being, the deepest roots of his history, his nature, his character, his conduct, his religion. He was led to see that his whole life had been a terrible mistake, an awful lie; that his very career as a religious man had been one of mad

rebellion against the Christ of God. All this, we may feel assured, passed in solemn and soul-subduing review before the soul of this deeply, because divinely, convicted man. His repentance was no superficial work; it was deep and thorough; it left its impress upon the whole of his after course, character, and ministry. He, too, like Simon, was brought to the end of himself, and there he found an Object that not only met his deepest need, but also perfectly satisfied all the cravings and aspirations of his renewed being.

Now, we must confess we delight in contemplating a spiritual work of this kind. It is truly refreshing to dwell upon conversions of this type. We greatly fear that in much of the work of our time there is a sad lack of depth and spiritual power, and, as a consequence, a lack of stability in the Christian character, of depth and permanency in the Christian course. It may be that those of us who are engaged in the work of evangelisation are feeble and shallow in the divine life ourselves, that we are not near enough to Christ to understand how to deal with souls; that we do not know how to present the truth from God's side of it; that we are more desirous of showing out how the sinners need is met, than how the glory of God is secured and maintained. We do not, perhaps, sufficiently press the claims of truth and holiness upon the consciences of our hearers. There is a want of fullness in the presentation of the truth of God, too much harping upon one string; there is a barrenness and dreary monotony in the preaching, arising from lack of abiding near the fountain head, and drinking into our own souls from the inexhaustible springs of grace and truth in the Person and work of Christ. Perhaps, too, we are more occupied with ourselves and our preaching than with Christ and His glory; more anxious to be able to parade the results of our work, than to be a sweet savour of Christ to Godward.

We cannot but feel the weight and seriousness of these considerations for all who take part in the work of the gospel. We certainly do need to be more in the presence of God in reference to our service, for we cannot, by any possibility, hide from ourselves the fact, in reference to the preaching of this our day, that the fruit is small in quantity, and poor in quality. We desire to bless God for any display of His grace and power in souls; though we are by no means able to accredit as genuine much that is boastfully paraded in

the way of conversion. What we long for is a deep, genuine unmistakable work of the Holy Ghost; a work which will prove itself, beyond all contradiction, by its permanent results in the life and character. It is one thing to reckon up and publish a number of cases of conversion, and quite another to see these cases made good in actual fact. The Holy Ghost can, and does tell us at times in the page of inspiration the number of souls converted. He tells us of three thousand on one occasion. He can do so, because He knows perfectly all about it. He can read the heart. He can distinguish between the spurious and the genuine. But when men undertake to count up and publish the number of their converts, we must receive their statement with considerable reserve and caution.

Not that we would be suspicious. God forbid; yea, we would earnestly cultivate a hopeful temper of soul. Still, we cannot but feel that it is better, in every case, to let the work speak for itself. All that is really divine is sure to be found, even though it be after many days; whereas, on the other hand, there is immense danger, both for the workman and his work, in an eager and hasty reckoning up and publishing of results.

But we must return to the lake of Gennesaret, and dwell for a moment on the lovely grace that shines forth in our Lord's dealing with Simon Peter. The work of conviction was deep and real. There could be no mistaking it. The arrow had entered the heart, and gone right to its very centre. Peter felt and owned that he was a man full of sin. He felt he had no right to be near such an one as Jesus; and yet we may truly say he would not for worlds have been anywhere else. He was perfectly sincere in saying, "Depart from me," though we cannot but believe he had an inward conviction that the blessed One would do nothing of the kind. And if he had, he was right. Jesus could never depart from a poor broken-hearted sinner — no, never. It was His richest, deepest, joy to pour the healing balm of His love and grace into a wounded soul. It was His delight to heal the broken heart. He was anointed for that work, and it was His meat and His drink to do it, blessed forever be His holy name!

"And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Here was the divine response to the cry of a contrite heart. The wound was deep, but the grace was deeper still.

The soothing hand of a Saviour-God applied the precious balm. Simon was not only convicted, but converted. He saw himself to be a man full of sin, but he saw the Saviour full of grace; nor was it possible that his sin could be beyond the reach of that grace. Oh, no, there is grace in the heart of Jesus, as there is power in His blood, to meet the very chief of sinners. "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook *all* and followed Him."

This was real work. It was a *bona fide* case, as to which there could be no question; a case of conviction, conversion, and consecration.

Part 3

We closed our last paper with these suggestive words, "*They forsook all and followed Him*" — words expressive, at once, of thorough separation from the things of time and of nature, and of wholehearted consecration to Christ and His interests.

Both these we see in Simon Peter. There was a deep and blessed work wrought in his soul at the lake of Gennesaret. He was given to see himself, in the light of the divine presence, where alone self can be really seen and judged. We have no reason to suppose that, viewed from a human standpoint, Simon was worse than his neighbours. On the contrary, it is more than probable, that so far as his outward life was concerned, it was more blameless than that of many around him. He was not, like the great apostle of the Gentiles, arrested at the very height of a mad career of rebellion against Christ and His cause. He is introduced to us, by the inspired historian, in the pursuit of his quiet and honest calling as a fisherman.

But then Scripture expressly informs us that, "There is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3). And it repeats this statement, in chap. 10 of the same Epistle, basing it upon another footing, "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him."

See that you really understand this most important doctrine. It is not that there are not broad lines of distinction, in a moral and social point of view, between men. Most assuredly there are such. There is, for example, a vast difference between the wretched drunkard who comes home, or is carried home, night after night, worse than a beast, to his poor broken-hearted wife and squalid, starving children, and a sober, industrious man, who realises his responsibility as a husband and a father, and seeks to fulfil the duties attaching to such relationships.

Now, we judge it would be a very great mistake indeed to ignore such a distinction as this. We believe that God, in His moral government of the world, recognises it. Contrast, for a moment, the drunkard's home with that of the sober man. Yea, contrast their whole career, their social position, their course and character. Who can fail to recognize the amazing difference between the two? There is a certain way of presenting what is called, "the no-difference doctrine" which, to say the least of it, is far from judicious. It does not allow the margin which, as we believe, Scripture suggests, wherein to insert great social and moral distinctions between men and men — distinctions which only blindness itself can refuse to see. If we look at the present government of God, we cannot but see that there is a very serious difference indeed between one man and another. Men reap as they sow. The drunken spendthrift reaps as he sows; and the sober, industrious, honest man reaps as he sows. The enactments of God's moral government are such as to render it impossible for men to escape, even in this life, the consequences of their ways.

Nor is this all. Not only does God's present government take cognisance of the conduct of men, causing them to reap, even here, the due reward of their deeds, but when Scripture opens to our view, as it does in manifold places, the awful judgement to come, it speaks of "books being opened." It tells us that men "shall be judged *every man according to their works.*" In short, we have close and accurate discrimination, and not a promiscuous muddling of men and things.

And further, be it remembered, that the Word of God speaks of degrees of punishment. It speaks of "few stripes" and "many stripes." It uses such words as "more tolerable" for one than another.

What mean such words, if there be not varied grounds of judgement, varied characters of responsibility, varied measures of guilt, varied degrees of punishment? Men may reason; but "the Judge of all the earth will do right." It is of no possible use for people to argue and discuss. Every man will be judged and punished according to his deeds. This is the teaching of Holy Scripture; and it would be much better and safer and wiser for men to submit to it than to reason against it, for they may rest fully assured of it that the judgement-seat of Christ will make very short work of their reasonings. Impenitent sinners will be judged and punished according to their works: and, although men may affect to believe that it is inconsistent with the idea of a God of love that any of His creatures should be condemned to endure eternal punishment in hell, still sin must be punished; and those who reason against its punishment have only a one-sided view of God's nature and character. They have invented a god of their own who will connive at sin. But it will not do. The God of the Bible, *the God whom we see at the cross*, the God of Christianity will beyond all question, execute judgement upon all who reject His Son; that judgement will be according to every man's works; and the result of that judgement will, inevitably, be "The lake that burneth with fire and brimstone," forever and forever.

We deem it of the utmost importance to press on all whom it may concern the line of truth on which we have been dwelling. It leaves wholly untouched the real truth of the no-difference doctrine; but, at the same time, it qualifies and adjusts the mode of presenting the truth. It is always well to avoid an ultra one-sided way of stating things. It damages truth and stumbles souls. It perplexes the anxious, and gives a plea to the caviller. The full truth of God should always be unfolded, and thus all will be right. Truth puts men and things in their right places, and maintains a holy moral balance which is absolutely priceless.

Is it then asserted that there is a difference? Not as regards the question of righteousness before God. On this ground there is not a shadow of difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Looked at in the light of that glory, all human distinctions vanish. All are lost, guilty and condemned. From the

very lowest strata of society — its deepest dregs, up to the loftiest heights of moral refinement, men are seen, in the light of the divine glory, to be utterly and hopelessly lost. They all stand on one common ground, are all involved in the one common ruin. And not only so, but those who plume themselves on their morality, refinement, orthodoxy, and religiousness, are further from the kingdom of God than the vilest of the sons and daughters of men, as our Lord said to the chief priests and elders, "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you" (Matt. 21).

This is very humbling to human pride and pretension. It is a doctrine to which none will ever submit until they see themselves as Simon Peter saw himself in the immediate presence of God. All who have ever been there will fully understand those self-condemning words, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." These were accents flowing from the depths of a truly penitent and contrite soul. There is what we may venture to call a lovely inconsistency in them. Simon had no such thought as that Jesus would depart from him. He had, we may feel assured, an instinctive sense that that blessed One who had spoken such words to him, and shown such grace, could not turn away from a poor broken-hearted sinner. And he judged rightly. Jesus had not come down from Heaven to turn His back upon any one who needed Him. "He came to seek and to save that which is lost." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "Him that cometh unto Me, I will *in no wise* cast out." A Saviour-God had come down into this world, not, surely, to turn away from a lost sinner, but to save him and bless him, and make him a blessing. "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

Such was the grace that shone upon the soul of Simon Peter. It removed his guilt, hushed his fears, and filled him with joy and peace in believing. Thus it is in every case. Divine pardon follows human confession — follows it with marvellous rapidity. "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord: and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." God delights to pardon. It is the joy of His loving heart to cancel our guilt, and fill our souls with His own blessed peace, and to make us the messengers of His grace to others.

Not that we are called in the same way, or to the same work, as our apostle; but surely we are called to follow the Lord, and cleave to Him, with purpose of heart. This is the blessed privilege and sacred duty of every saved soul on the face of the earth; we are imperatively called upon to break with the world, and follow Christ.

It is not a question of abandoning our proper calling in life, as in Simon's case. Few indeed and far between are the cases in which such a course of action is fitting. Many, alas! have assayed to do this, and have entirely broken down, simply because they were not called of God *to* it, or sustained of God *in* it. We are convinced that, as a rule, it is better for every man to work with his hands or his brains at some bread-winning calling, and preach and teach as well, if gifted to do so. There are exceptions, no doubt, to the rule. There are some who are so manifestly called, fitted, used, and sustained of God, that there can be no possible mistake as to their course. Their hands are so full of work, their every moment so engrossed with ministry in speaking or writing, teaching publicly and from house to house, that it would be a simple impossibility for them to take up what is termed a secular calling — though we like not the phrase. All such have to go on with God, looking only to Him, and He will infallibly maintain them unto the end.

Still, admitting, as we are bound to do fully, the exceptions to the rule, we are nevertheless convinced that, as a rule, it is better in every way for men to be able to preach and teach without being chargeable to any. It gives moral weight, and it furnishes a fine testimony against the wretched hirelingism of Christendom so demoralising to souls, and so damaging, in every way, to the cause of Christ.

But Christian reader, we have to distinguish between abandoning our lawful calling and breaking with the world. The former may be quite wrong; the latter is our bounden duty. We are called to rise up, in the spirit of the mind and in the firm purpose of the heart, out of all merely worldly influences, to break every worldly link, and lay aside every weight, in order to follow our blessed Lord and Master. We are to be absolutely and completely for Him in this world, as He is for us in the presence of God. When this is really the case with us, it matters not whether we are

sweeping a crossing or evangelising a continent. All is done to Him. This is the one grand point. If Christ has His due place in our hearts, all will be right. If He has not, nothing will be right. If there is any undercurrent in the soul, any secondary object, any worldly motive, any selfish aim or end, there can be no progress. *We must make Christ and His cause our absorbing object.*

Part 4

The more deeply we ponder the history of professing Christians, whether as furnished by the pen of inspiration, or as coming within the range of personal observation, the more fully we must see the vast importance of a complete break with the world, at the outset. If there be not this, it is vain to look for inward peace, or outward progress. There may be a measure of clearness as to the doctrines of grace, the plan of salvation, as it is called, justification by faith, and the like. But unless there is the thorough judgement of self, and the complete surrender of this present evil world, peace and progress must be out of the question. How can there be peace where *self*, in some one or other of its thousand shapes, is fostered? And how can there be progress where the heart is hankering after the world, halting between two opinions, and vacillating between Christ and present things? Impossible. As well might a racer expect to get on in the race while still lingering about the starting post, and encumbering himself with heavy weights.

Is it then, that peace is to be found by denying self and giving up the world? Most certainly not. But neither can peace ever be found while self is indulged and the world retained. True peace is found *only* in Christ — peace of conscience in His finished work — peace of heart in His blessed Person. All this is clear enough. But how comes it to pass that hundreds of people who know, or profess to know, these things have no settled peace, and never seem to take a single step in advance? You meet them, week after week, month after month, year after year, and there they are in the same position, in the same state, and with the same old story, chronic cases of self-occupation, stereotyped world-borderers, "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." They seem to delight in hearing the gospel clearly preached, and truth fully unfolded. In fact,

they cannot endure anything else. But, for all that, they are never clear, bright, or happy. How can they be? They are halting between two opinions; they have never broken with the world; they have never surrendered a whole heart to Christ.

Here, we are persuaded, lies the real secret of the whole matter as regards that class of persons now before us. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." A man who tries to keep one eye on the world, and the other on Christ, will be found to have no eye for Christ, but both eyes for the world. It must be so: Christ must be all or nothing; and hence it is the very height of absurdity to talk of peace or progress where Christ is not the absorbing object of the soul. Where He is, there will never be any lack of settled peace; and there will be progress. The Holy Ghost is jealous for the glory of Christ, and He can never minister comfort, consolation, or strength to a heart divided between Him and the world. It could not be. He is grieved by such unfaithfulness; and instead of being the minister of comfort, He must be the stern reprover of indulged selfishness, worldliness, and vacillation.

Let us look at the case of our apostle. How refreshing it is to contemplate his thoroughgoing style! His starting was of the right sort. "He forsook all and followed Christ." There was no halting here, at all events; no vacillating between Christ and present things. Boats, nets, fish, natural ties, all are unhesitatingly and unreservedly surrendered, not as a matter of cold duty or legal service, but as the grand and necessary result of having seen the glory and heard the voice of the Son of God.

Thus it was with Simon Peter, at the opening of his remarkable career. All was clear and unequivocal, whole-hearted and decided, so far as the starting was concerned; and we must bear this in mind, as we pursue his after history. No doubt, we shall find mistakes and stumblings, failure, ignorance, and sin; but, underneath, and in spite of all this, we shall find a heart true to Jesus — a heart divinely taught to appreciate the Christ of God.

This is a grand point. Blunders may well be borne with, when the heart beats true to Christ. Some one has remarked that, "The blunderers do all the work." If this be so, the reason is that those

blunderers have real affection for their Lord; and that is precisely what we all want. A man may make a great many mistakes, but if he can say when challenged by his Lord, "Thou knowest that I love Thee," he is sure to come right in the end; and not only so, but, even in the very midst of his mistakes, our hearts are much more drawn to him than to the cold, correct, sleek professor, who thinks of himself, and seeks to make the best of both worlds.

Simon Peter was a true lover of Christ. He had a divinely given sense of His preciousness, of the glory of His Person, and the heavenly character of His mission. All this comes out, with much force and freshness, in his varied confessions of Christ, even before the day of Pentecost. We shall glance at one or two of these, not with any view to chronological order, but simply to illustrate and prove the lovely devotedness of this true-hearted servant of Christ.

Let us turn to Matt. 16, "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" Weighty question! Upon the answer to this question hangs the whole moral condition and future destiny of every human being under the sun. All really depends upon the heart's estimate of Christ. This it is, which like a great moral indicator, reveals a man's true state, character, bent and object, in all things. It is not merely a question of his outward life, or of his profession of faith. The former may be blameless, and the latter orthodox; but, if underneath all this blameless morality and orthodox profession, there be not one true pulsation of the heart for Christ, no divinely wrought sense of what, and who, and whence He is, then verily all the morality and the orthodoxy are but the trappings with which a guilty, hell-deserving sinner adorns himself in the eyes of his fellows, or with which he deceives himself as to the awful eternity which lies before him. "What think ye of Christ?" is the all-deciding question; for God the Holy Ghost has emphatically declared that, "If any man" — no matter who or what he be — "love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha" (1 Cor. 16: 22).

How awful is this! And how remarkable to find it at the close of such an Epistle as the first to the Corinthians! How forcibly it declares to all who will only bend their ears to listen, that love to Christ is the basis of all sound doctrine, the motive spring of all true

morality! If that blessed One be not enthroned at the very centre of the heart's affections, an orthodox creed is an empty delusion; and an unblemished reputation is but dust cast in a man's eyes to prevent him seeing his true condition in the sight of God. The Christians at Corinth had fallen into many doctrinal errors and moral evils, all needing rebuke and correction; but when the inspiring Spirit pronounces His awful anathema, it is levelled, not at the introducers of any one special error, or moral pravity, but at "any man who loves not the Lord Jesus Christ."

This is peculiarly solemn at all times; but specially so for the day in which our lot is cast, when the Person and glory of Christ are so little thought of or cared for. A man may actually blaspheme Christ, deny His deity or His eternal Sonship, and yet be received into professing Christian circles, and allowed to preside at so-called religious meetings Surely all this must be dreadful in the sight of God, whose purpose it is "that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father"; and that every knee should bow, and every tongue confess to Jesus as Lord of all. God is jealous for the honour of His Son; and the man that neglects, rejects, and blasphemes that blessed One will yet have to learn and own the eternal justice of that most solemn decree, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."

How momentous, therefore, the question put by our Lord Christ to His disciples, "Whom do *men* say that I, the Son of man, am?" Alas, "men" knew nothing, cared nothing about Him. They knew neither who He was, what He was, nor whence He was. "Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." In a word, there was endless speculation, because there was utter indifference and thorough heartlessness. The human heart has not so much as a single true thought about Christ, not one atom of affection for Him. Such is the awful condition of the very best of men until renewed by divine grace. They know not, they love not, they care not for the Son of God — the Beloved of the Father's heart — the Man on the throne of Heaven's majesty. Such is their moral condition, and hence their every thought, word, and act is contrary to God. They have not a single feeling in common with God, for the most distinct of all

reasons, that the One who is everything to Him is nothing to them. Christ is God's standard, and every one and everything must be measured by Him. The heart that does not love Christ has not a single pulsation in unison with the heart of God; and the life that does not spring from love to Christ however blameless, respectable, or splendid in the eyes of men, is a worthless, objectless, misspent life in the judgement of God.

But how truly delightful to turn from all the heartlessness and indifference of "men" and harken to the testimony of one who was taught of God to know and own who the Son of man was! "Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Here was the true answer. There was no vain speculation here, no uncertainty, no may be this, or may be that. It was divine testimony flowing from divinely given knowledge. It was not yea and nay, but yea and amen to the glory of God. We may rest fully assured that these glowing words of Simon Peter went up, like fragrant incense, to the throne of God, and refreshed the heart of the One who sat there. There is nothing in all the world so precious to God as a heart that, in any measure, appreciates Christ. Let us never forget this!

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this Rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Here we have the very first direct allusion to the Church, or assembly of Christ; and the reader will note that our Lord speaks of it as yet future. He says, "I *will* build My church." He was the Rock, the divine foundation; but ere a single stone could be built on Him, He must die.

This is a grand cardinal truth of Christianity — a truth which our apostle had yet to learn, notwithstanding his brilliant and beautiful confession. Simon Peter was not yet prepared for the profound mystery of the cross. He loved Christ, and he had been taught of God to own Him in a very full and blessed manner; but he had yet much to learn ere he could take in the soul-subduing truth

that this blessed Son of the living God must die, ere even he, as a living stone, could be built upon Him. "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."

Here the solemn truth begins to break through the clouds. But Simon Peter is not prepared for it. It withered up all his Jewish hopes and earthly expectations. What! The Son of the living God must die! How could it be? The glorious Messiah be nailed to a cross! "Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, (or pity Thyself) Lord, this shall not be unto Thee."

Such is man! Such was even Simon Peter! He would fain turn the blessed Lord away from the cross! He would, in his ignorance, frustrate the eternal counsels of God, and play into the hands of the devil! Poor Peter! What a rock he would be for the Church to be built upon! "The Lord turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan, thou art an offence unto Me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Withering words? Who would have thought that "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona," should so speedily be followed by, "Get thee behind Me, Satan"?

Part 5

We must still linger a little over the deeply interesting and instructive scene in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew. It brings before us two great subjects, namely, "the Church," and "the kingdom of Heaven." These things must never be confounded. As to the first, it is only to be found in the New Testament. Indeed, as has often been remarked, verse 18 of our chapter contains the very first direct allusion in the volume of God to the subject of the Church, or assembly, of Christ.

This, though familiar to many of our readers, may present a difficulty to others. Many Christians and Christian teachers strongly maintain that the doctrine of the Church is distinctly unfolded in Old Testament Scripture. They consider that the saints of the Old

Testament belonged to the Church; in fact, that there is no difference whatever; all form one body; all stand on one common ground; and that to represent the Lord's people in New Testament times as in a higher position, or endowed with higher privileges than Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is a delusion. It seems strange to such to assert that Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses did not belong to the Church — were not members of the body of Christ — were not endowed with the selfsame privileges as believers now. Trained from their earliest days to believe that all God's people, from the beginning to the end of time, stand on the same ground, and form one common body, they find it impossible to admit of any difference. It seems to them presumption on the part of Christians to assert that they are in any A respect different from God's beloved people of old — those blessed worthies of whom we read in Hebrews 11, who lived a life of faith and personal devotedness, and who are now in Heaven with their Lord.

But the all-important question is, "What saith the Scripture?" It can be of no possible use to set up our own thoughts, our own reasonings, our own conclusions, in opposition to the Word of God. It is a very easy matter for men to reason, with great apparent force, point, and cleverness, about the absurdity and presumption of the notion that Christians are in a better and higher place, and more privileged, than God's people of old.

But this is not the proper way in which to approach this great subject. It is not a question of the difference *personally* between the Lord's people at different periods. Were it so, where should we find, amongst the ranks of Christian professors, any one to compare with an Abraham, a Joseph, a Moses, or a Daniel? Were it a question of simple faith, where could we find in the entire history of the Church a finer example than the father of the faithful? Were it a question of personal holiness, where could we find a brighter illustration than Joseph? For intimacy with God, and acquaintance with His ways and mind, who could go beyond Moses? For unswerving devotedness to God and His truth, could we find a brighter example than the man who went down into the lions' den rather than not pray toward Jerusalem?

However, let it be distinctly understood that it is not by any means a personal question, or a comparison of people, but of dispensational position. If this be clearly seen, it will, we doubt not, remove out of the way a great deal of the difficulty which many pious people seem to feel in reference to the truth of the Church.

But above and beyond all this stands the question, What does Scripture teach on the subject? If any one had spoken to Abraham about being a member of the body of Christ, would he have understood it? Could that honoured and beloved saint of God have had the most remote idea of being linked by an indwelling Spirit to a living Head in Heaven? Utterly impossible. How could he be a member of a body which had no existence? And how could there be a body without a Head? And when do we first hear of the Head? When the Man Christ Jesus, having passed through death and the grave, ascended into the heavens, and took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Then, and not until then, did the Holy Ghost come down to form the body, and link it by His presence to the glorified Head above.

This, however, is rather anticipating a line of argument which is yet to come before us. Let us here put another question to the reader. If any one had spoken to Moses about a body composed of Jews and Gentiles — a body whose constituent parts had been drawn from among the seed of Abraham and the cursed race of the Canaanites — what would he have said? May we not safely assert that his whole moral being would have shrunk with horror from the thought? What! Jews and Canaanites — the seed of Abraham and uncircumcised Gentiles — united in one body? Impossible for the lawgiver to take in such an idea. The fact is, if there was one feature which more strongly than another marked the Jewish economy, it was the rigid separation by divine appointment of Jew and Gentile. "Ye know," says Simon Peter, "how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or to come unto one of another nation."

Such was the order of things under the Mosaic economy. It would have been a flagrant transgression on the part of a Jew to climb over that middle wall of partition which separated him from all the nations around; and hence the thought of a union between

Jew and Gentile could not possibly have entered into any human mind; and the more faithful a man was to the existing order of things under the law, the more opposed he must have been to any such thought.

Now, in the face of all this, how can any one seek to maintain that the truth of the Church was known in Old Testament times, and that there is no difference whatever between the position of a Christian and that of an Old Testament believer? The fact is that even Simon Peter himself found it extremely difficult to take in the idea of admitting the Gentiles into the kingdom of Heaven. Though he was entrusted with the keys of that kingdom, he was very reluctant indeed to use them for the admission of the Gentiles. He had to be expressly taught by a heavenly vision, ere he was prepared to fulfil the commission with which he was charged by his Lord in Matthew 16.

No, reader, it is of no possible use to stand against the plain testimony of Scripture. The truth of the Church was not — could not — be known in Old Testament times. It was, as the inspired apostle tells us, "hid in God" — hid in His eternal counsels — "not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit,* that the Gentiles should be *fellow-heirs* and of *the same body*, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. 3).

{*The "prophets," in this passage, are those of the New Testament. This is evident from the expression, "*Now revealed*," He could not speak of a thing being "now revealed" to men who had been dead for hundreds of years Besides, had the apostle meant Old Testament prophets, the order would assuredly have been "Prophets and apostles." We have a similar expression in Eph. 2: 20 "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." He does not say, "prophets and apostles." The truth is that the apostles and prophets formed the first layer of the foundation of the Church of which Jesus Christ is the chief Corner-stone, and this is an additional proof that the Church had no existence save in the secret counsels of God until our Lord Christ. having accomplished the work of redemption, ascended into the heavens, and sent down the Holy Ghost to baptize believers — Jews and Gentiles — into one body. The reader may

also refer with real profit and interest to Rom. 16: 25, 26: Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and he preaching of Jesus Christ, according to *the revelation of the he mystery which was kept secret since the world began but now is made manifest*, and by the scriptures of the prophets [literally, by the prophetic writings, that is, of the New Testament] according to the commandment of the everlasting God. made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."}

We can only reach the great mystery of the Church by walking over the broken-down middle wall of partition. "Wherefore remembers that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by *the blood of Christ*. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the law of commandments in ordinances, for to make in Himself of twain one new man, making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. 2: 11-18).

Thus, from all that has passed before us, the reader will, we trust, fully see why it is that our Lord in His word to Simon Peter speaks of the Church as a future thing. "Upon this rock *I will build My Church*." He does not say, "I have been," or, "I am, building My Church." Nothing of the kind. It could not be. It was still "hid in God." The Messiah had to be cut off and have nothing — nothing, for the present, as regards Israel and the earth. He must be rejected, crucified, and slain, in order to lay the foundation of the Church. It was utterly impossible that a single stone could be laid in this new, this wondrous building until "the chief Corner-stone" had passed through death and taken His place in the Heavens. It was not in

incarnation, but in resurrection, that our Lord Christ became Head of a body.

Now our apostle was not in the least prepared for this. He did not understand one jot or tittle of it. That Messiah should set up a kingdom in power and glory — that He should restore Israel to their destined pre-eminence in the earth — all this he could understand and appreciate — he was looking for it. But a suffering Messiah — a rejected and crucified Christ — of this he could not hear just then. "Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee." These were the words which drew forth that withering rebuke with which we closed our last paper, "Get thee behind Me, Satan; thou art an offence unto Me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

We may gather the gravity of his error from the severity of the rebuke. Peter had much to learn, much to go through, ere he could grasp the great truth which His Lord was putting before him. But he did grasp it, by the grace of God, and confess it, and teach it with power. He was led to see not only that Christ was the Son of the living God, but that He was a rejected Stone, disallowed of men, but chosen of God and precious; and that all who through grace come to Him must share His rejection on earth as well as His acceptance in Heaven. They are perfectly identified with Him.

Part 6

At the close of John 6 we have a very clear and beautiful confession of Christ from the lips of our apostle — a confession rendered all the more touching and forcible by the circumstances under which it was delivered.

Our blessed Lord, in His teachings in the synagogue at Capernaum, had unfolded truth which puts the poor human heart to the test, and withers up all the pretensions of man in a very remarkable manner. We cannot here attempt to enter upon the subject of our Lord's discourse, but the effect of it is thus recorded: "From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him." They were not prepared for the reception of such heavenly doctrine. They were offended by it, and they turned their

backs upon that blessed One who alone was worthy of all the affections of the heart, and of the homage and devotion of the whole moral being. "*They went back, and walked no more with Him.*"

Now we are not told what became of these deserters, or whether they were saved or not. No such question is raised. We are simply told that they abandoned Christ, and ceased to be any longer publicly identified with His name and His cause. How many, alas! have since followed their sad example! It is one thing to profess to be the disciples of Christ, and another thing altogether to stand with firm purpose of heart on the ground of public testimony for His name, in thorough identification with a rejected Lord. It is one thing for people to flock to Christ because of the benefits which He bestows, and it is quite another to cleave to Him in the face of the world's scorn and contempt. The application of the doctrine of the cross very speedily thins the ranks of professors. In the chapter before us we see at one moment multitudes thronging enthusiastically around the Man who could so marvellously supply their need, and the next moment abandoning Him, when His teaching offended their pride.

Thus it has been, thus it is, and thus it will be until that day in the which the despised Stranger of Nazareth shall reign from pole to pole, and from the river to the ends of the earth. We are ready enough to avail ourselves of the benefits and blessings which *a loving Saviour* can bestow upon us, but when it becomes a question of following *a rejected Lord* along that rough and lonely path which He has trodden for us in this sinful world, we are disposed, like those of old, to go back, and walk no more with Him.

This is very sad and very humiliating. It proves how little we know of His heart, or of what that heart desires from us. Jesus longs for fellowship. He does not want patronage. It does not meet the desire of His heart to be followed, or admired, or gazed at, because of what He can do or give. He delights in a heart taught of God to appreciate His Person, for this glorifies and gratifies the Father. He retired from the gaze of an excited and tumultuous throng who would fain make Him a king, because they had eaten of the loaves and were filled; but He could turn, with touching earnestness, to the

little band of followers who still remained, and challenge their hearts with the question, "Will ye also go away?"

How deeply affecting! How it must have touched the hearts of all, save that one who had no heart for aught but money — who was "a thief" and "a devil"! Alas! a moment was approaching when all were to forsake Him and fly — when He was to be left absolutely *alone*, forsaken of men, forsaken of God — utterly and awfully deserted.

But that moment was yet future; and it is peculiarly refreshing to harken to the fine confession of our beloved apostle, in reply to the deeply affecting inquiry of his Lord. "Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

Well indeed might he say, "To whom shall we go?" There was not another throughout the wide universe of God to whom the heart could turn. He alone could meet their every need, satisfy their every right desire, fill up every chamber of the heart. Simon Peter felt this, and hence, with all his mistakes, his failures, and his infirmities, his loving and devoted heart turned with earnest affection to his beloved Lord. He would not abandon Him, though little able to rise to the height of His heavenly teaching. There was a link binding him to Jesus Christ which nothing could snap. "Lord, to whom shall we go?" — whither shall we betake ourselves? — on whom could we reckon beside? True, there may be trial and difficulty in the path of true discipleship. It may prove a rough and a lonely path. The heart may be tried and tested in every possible way. There may be deep and varied sorrow — deep waters, dark shadows; but in the face of all we can say, "To whom shall we go?"

And mark the singular fullness of Peter's confession. "Thou *hast* the words of eternal life;" and then, "Thou *art* that Christ, the Son of the living God." We have the two things, namely, what He *has*, and what He *is*. Blessed be His name, Christ has all we can possibly want for time and eternity. Words of eternal life flow from His lips into our hearts. He causes those who follow Him to "inherit substance." He bestows upon them "durable riches and

righteousness." We may truly say that, in comparison of what Christ has to give, all the riches, honours, dignities, and pleasures of this world are but dross. They all pass away as the vapours of the morning, and leave only an aching void behind. Nothing that this world has to offer can possibly satisfy the cravings of the human soul. "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." And not only so — it must be given up. If one had all the wealth of Solomon, it lasts but a moment in comparison with that boundless eternity which lies before every one of us. When death approaches, all the riches of the universe could not purchase one moment's respite. The last great enemy gives no quarter. He ruthlessly snaps the link that connects man with all that his poor heart prizes and loves upon earth, and hurries him away into eternity.

And what then? Yes, this is the question. Who can answer it? Who can attempt to picture the future of a soul that passes into eternity without God, without Christ, without hope? Who can describe the horrors of one who, all in a moment, opens his eyes to the fact — the tremendous fact — that he is lost, lost forever — hopelessly, eternally, lost? It is positively too dreadful to dwell upon it. And yet it must be looked at; and if the reader is still of the world, still unconverted, careless, thoughtless, unbelieving, we would earnestly entreat of him now, just now, to give his earnest attention to the weighty and all-important question of his soul's salvation - a question, in comparison with which all other questions dwindle into utter insignificance. "What shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" It is, beyond all question, the most egregious folly that any one can be guilty of to put off the grand business of his soul's salvation. And if any one inquire what he has to do in this business, the answer is *Nothing* — "nothing, either great or small." Jesus has the words of eternal life. He it is who says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into judgement, but is *passed* from death unto life."

Here is the hinge on which the whole matter shoves. Harken to the words of Christ. Believe in Him that sent His blessed Son. Put

your trust in God, and you shall be saved; you shall have eternal life, and never come into judgement.

Nor is this all. Simon Peter, in his lovely confession, does not confine himself to what Christ has to give, precious and blessed as that is, but he also speaks of what He is. "Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." This is full of deepest interest for the heart. Christ not only gives us eternal life, but He also becomes the object of our heart's affections — our satisfying portion, our unfailing resource, our infallible Guide and Counsellor, our constant reference, in all our need, in all our pressure, in all our sorrows and difficulties. We need never go to any one else for succour, sympathy, or guidance. We have all we want in Him. He is the eternal delight of the heart of God, and He may well be the delight of our hearts here and hereafter, now and forever.

Part 7

The close of Matt. 14 presents a scene in the life of our apostle on which we may dwell with profit for a few moments. It furnishes a very fine illustration of his own touching inquiry, "Lord, to whom shall we go?"

Our Lord having fed the multitude, and sent His disciples across the sea, retired into a mountain, to be alone in prayer. In this we have a striking foreshadowing of the present time. Jesus has gone on high. Israel is for the present set aside, but not forgotten. Days of trouble will come — rough seas and stormy skies will fall to the lot of the remnant; but their Messiah will return, and deliver them out of all their troubles. He will bring them to their desired haven, and all will be peace and joy for the Israel of God.

All this is fully unfolded on the page of prophecy, and is of the deepest interest to every lover of God and His Word; but for the present we can merely dwell upon the inspired record concerning Simon Peter, and seek to learn the lesson which that record so forcibly teaches. "And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray; and when the

evening was come, He was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered Him, and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said! Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

This brief passage presents to our view in a very forcible way some of the leading features of Simon Peter's character. his zeal, his energy, his real devotedness of heart, no one can for a moment call in question; but these very qualities — beautiful as they surely are — led him not infrequently into a position of such prominence as to render his weak points all the more conspicuous. A man of less zeal, less energy, would have remained on board the ship, and thus avoided Peter's failure and breakdown. Perhaps, too, men of cooler temperament would condemn as unwarrantable rashness Peter's act in leaving the ship, or pronounce it a piece of forwardness which justly deserved a humiliating rebuff.

All this may be so; but we are free to confess that the zeal, energy and devoted self-considering spirit which, in order to avoid the shame and humiliation of a defeat, refuses to take a bold and decided step for Christ. True it is that Peter in the interesting scene now before us completely broke down. But why did he? Was it because he left the ship? No; but because he ceased to look in simple faith to Jesus. Here lay the root of his failure. Had he only kept his eye on the Master, he could have walked on the water though ever so rough. Faith can walk on rough water as easily as on smooth. Nature cannot walk on either. It is not a question of the state of the water, but the state of the heart. Circumstances have nothing to do with faith, except, indeed, that when difficult and trying, they develop its power and brightness. There was no reason whatever, in

the judgement of faith, why Peter should have failed in his walk on the water. Faith looks not at the things that are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal. It endures as seeing Him who is invisible. "Faith is the evidence of things *not seen*." It lifts the heart above the winds and waves of this rough world, and keeps it in perfect peace, to the praise of Him who is the Giver of faith, as of "every good and perfect gift."

But our beloved apostle utterly failed in faith on the occasion now before us. He, as we, alas! so often do, took his eye off the Lord and fixed it on his surroundings, and as a consequence he immediately began to sink. It must ever be so. We cannot get on for a single moment save as we have the living God as a covering for our eyes. The grand motto for the life of faith is, "Looking off unto Jesus." It is this alone which enables us to "run the race set before us," be the way rough or smooth. When Peter came down out of the ship, it was either Christ or drowning. He might well say at such a moment, "Lord, to whom shall I go?" Whither could he turn? When on board the ship, he had its timbers between him and death, but when on the water he had nothing but Jesus.

And was not He enough? Yes, verily, if only Peter could have trusted Him. This is the point. All things are possible to him that believeth. Storms are hushed into a perfect calm, rough seas become like glass, lofty mountains are levelled, when faith brings the power of God to bear. The greater the difficulties, the brighter the triumphs of faith. It is in the furnace that the real preciousness of faith is displayed. Faith has to do with God, and not with men or things. If we cease to lean on God, we have nothing but a wild, watery waste — a perfect chaos — around us, where nature's resources must hopelessly fail.

All this was proved by Simon Peter when he came down out of the ship to walk on the water; and every child of God and every servant of Christ must prove it in his measure, for Peter's history is full of great practical lessons for us all. If we want to walk above the circumstances of the scene through which we are passing — if we would rise superior to its influences — if we would be able to give an answer, clear, distinct, and decided, to the scepticism, the rationalism and infidelity of the day in which we live — then,

assuredly, we must keep the eye of faith firmly fixed on "the Author and Perfecter of faith." It is not by logical skill or intellectual power we shall ever meet the arguments of the infidel, but by an abiding sense, a living and soul-satisfying apprehension, of the all-sufficiency of Christ — Himself - His work — His Word — to meet our every need, our every exigency.

But it may be the reader feels disposed to condemn Peter for leaving the ship. He may think there was no need for his taking such a step. Why not abide with his brethren on board the vessel? Was it not possible to be quite as devoted to Christ in the ship as on the water? And, further, did not the sequel prove that it would have been far better, and safer, and wiser, for Peter to remain where he was, than to venture forth on a course which he was not able to pursue?

To all this we reply that our apostle was evidently governed by an earnest desire to be nearer to his Lord. And this was right. He saw Jesus walking on the water, and he longed to be with Him. And, further, he had the direct authority of his Lord for leaving the ship. We fully and freely grant that without this it would have been a fatal mistake to leave his position; but the moment that word "Come" fell on his ear he had a divine warrant for going forth upon the water — yea, to have remained would have been to miss great blessing.

Thus it is in every case. We must have authority before we can act in anything. Without this, the greater our zeal, energy, and apparent devotedness, the more fatal will be our mistake, and the more mischief we shall do to ourselves, to others, and to the cause of Christ. It is of the very last possible importance in every case, but especially where there is a measure of zeal, earnestness, and energy, that there should be sober subjection to the authority of the Word. If there be not this, there is no calculating the amount of mischief which may be done. If our devotedness flow not in the channel of simple obedience, if it rush over the embankments formed by the Word of God, the consequences must be most disastrous.

But there is another thing which stands next in importance to the authority of the *divine Word*, and that is the abiding realization of the *divine presence*. These two things must never be separated if we want to walk on the water. We may be quite clear and settled in

our own minds, having distinct authority for any given line of action; but if we have not with equal distinctness the sense of the Lord's presence with us — if our eyes are not continually on the living God — we shall most assuredly break down.

This is very serious, and demands the gravest consideration of the Christian reader. It was precisely here that Peter failed. He did not fail in obedience, but in realized dependence. He acted on the word of Jesus in leaving the ship, but he failed to lean on the arm of Jesus in walking on the water; hence his terror and confusion. Mere authority is not enough; we want power. To act without authority is wrong. To act without power is impossible. The authority for starting is the Word. The power to proceed is the divine presence. The combination of the two must ever yield a successful career. It matters not in the smallest degree what the difficulties are if we have the stable authority of Holy Scripture for our course, and the blessed support of the presence of God in pursuing it. When God speaks, we must obey; but in order to do so, we must lean on His arm. "Have not I commanded you?" "Lo, I am with you.

Here are the two things so absolutely essential to every child of God and every servant of Christ. Without these, we can do nothing; with them, we can do all things. If we have not a "Thus saith the Lord," or "It is written we cannot enter upon a path of devotedness, and if we have not His realized presence, we cannot pursue it. It is quite possible to be right in setting out, and yet to fail in going on.

It was so in the case of Simon Peter, and it has been so in the case of thousands since. It is one thing to make a good start, and another thing to make good progress. It is one thing to leave the ship, and another thing to walk on the water. Peter did the former but he failed in the latter. This beloved servant of Christ broke down in his course; but where did he find himself? In the arms of a loving Saviour. "Lord, save me!" How touching! How deeply affecting! He casts himself upon a well-known love — a love which was yet to meet him in far more humiliating circumstances. Nor was he disappointed. Ah, no! Blessed be God, no poor failing creature can ever appeal to that love in vain. "And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little

faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Exquisite grace! If Peter failed to reach his Lord, his Lord did not fail to reach him. If Peter failed in faith, Jesus could not fail in grace. Impossible. The grace of our Lord Jesus is exceeding abundant. He takes occasion from our very failures to display His rich and precious love. Oh, how blessed to have to do with such a tender, patient, loving Lord! Who would not trust Him and praise Him, love Him and serve Him?

Part 8

We have now to follow our beloved apostle into the darkest and most humbling scene in his entire history — a scene which we could hardly understand or account for if we did not know something of the infinite depths of divine grace on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of the terrible depths into which even a saint of God or an apostle of Christ is capable of plunging if not kept by divine power.

It seems very wonderful to find on the page of inspiration the record of the fall of such an eminent servant of Christ as Simon Peter. We, in our wisdom, would judge it best to draw the curtain of silence over such an event. Not so the Holy Ghost. He has seen fit to tell us plainly of the errors, and failures, and sins, of such men as Abraham, Moses, David, Peter, and Paul, in order that we may learn holy records from such records — lessons of human frailty, lessons of divine grace, lessons full of solemn warning, and yet of most precious consolation and encouragement. We learn what we are, and we learn what God is. We learn that we cannot trust ourselves for a single moment; for, if not kept by grace, there is no depth of sin into which we are not capable of falling; but we learn to trust the eternal stability of that grace which has dealt with the erring ones and sinning ones of other days, and to lean with ever-growing confidence on the One who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Not one of the four evangelists omits the fall of Peter. Let us open at Matt. 26; "And when they had sung a hymn they went out into the mount of Olives. Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again I will go before you into Galilee. Peter

answered and said unto Him, Though all shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended."

In these few words Peter lets out the real root of the whole matter. That root was self-confidence — alas! alas! no uncommon root amongst us. We do not in the least question Peter's sincerity. We feel perfectly sure he meant all he said; and, further, that he had not the most remote idea of what he was about to do. He was ignorant of himself, and we generally find that ignorance and self-confidence go together. Self-knowledge destroys self-confidence. The more fully self is known, the more it must be distrusted. If Peter had known himself, known his tendencies and capabilities, he never would have uttered the words which we have just penned. But so full was he of self-confidence, that when his Lord told him expressly what he was about to do, he replied, "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee."

This is peculiarly solemn. It is full of instruction for us all. We are all so ignorant of our own hearts that we deem ourselves incapable of falling into certain gross sins. But we should, every one of us, bear in mind that if not kept each moment by the grace of God, we are capable of anything. We have materials in us for any amount or character of evil; and whenever we hear any one saying, "Well, I certainly am a poor, failing, stumbling creature, but I am not capable of doing the like of that," we may feel assured he does not know his own heart; and not only so, but he is in imminent danger of falling into some grievous sin. It is well to walk humbly before our God, distrusting self, and leaning on Him. This is the true secret of moral safety at all times. Had Peter realized this, it would have saved him his terrible downfall.

But Peter was self-confident, and, as a consequence, he failed to watch and pray. This was another stage in his downward journey. Had he only felt his utter weakness, he would have sought for strength divine. He would have cast himself on God for grace to help in time of need. Look at the blessed Master! He, though God over all, blessed forever, yet being a Man, having taken the place of the creature, and fully entering into His position, was agonising in prayer while Peter was fast asleep. Yes, Peter slept in the garden of Gethsemane while his Lord was passing through the deepest anguish

He had yet tasted, though deeper still lay before Him. "Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And He took with Him Peter and the sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with Me. And He went a little further, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt. And He cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and *saith unto Peter*, What! could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

What tender grace! What readiness to make allowance! What moral elevation! And yet He felt the sad want of sympathy, the cold indifference to His sore agony. "I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none." How much is involved in these words! He looked for comforters. That perfect human heart craved sympathy; but, alas! there was none for Him. Even Peter, who declared himself ready to die with Him, fell asleep in view of the agonies of Gethsemane.

Such is man — yea, the very best of men! Self-confident, when he ought to be self-distrusting — sleeping, when he ought to be watching; and, we may add, fighting, when he ought to be submitting. "Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus." How incongruous, how utterly out of place, was a sword in company with the meek and lowly Sufferer! "Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" Peter was entirely out of the current of his Master's spirit. He had not a thought in common with Him in reference to His path of suffering. He would fain defend Him with carnal weapons, forgetting that His kingdom was not of this world.

All this is peculiarly solemn. To find a dear and honoured servant of Christ failing so grievously is surely sufficient to teach us to walk very softly. But, alas! we have not yet reached the lowest point in Peter's downward course. Having used his sword in defence

of his Master, we next find him "following afar off." "Then took they Jesus, and led Him, and brought Him to the high priest's house. And *Peter followed afar off*. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, *Peter sat down among them*."

What company for an apostle of Christ! "Can a man touch pitch, and not be defiled by it? Can one walk on burning coals, and his feet not be burned?" It is terribly dangerous for the Christian to sit down among the enemies of Christ. The very fact of his doing so proves that decline has set in, and made serious progress. In Peter's case the stages of decline are strongly marked. First, boasting in his own strength; secondly, sleeping when he ought to have been praying; thirdly, drawing his sword when he ought to have been meekly bowing his head; fourthly, following afar off; fifthly, making himself comfortable in the midst of the open enemies of Christ.

Then comes the last sad scene in this terrible drama. "And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest; and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, *I know not, neither understand I, what thou sayest*. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. *And he denied it again*. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them, for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. But *he began to curse and to swear, I know not this man of whom ye speak*. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crew twice thou shalt deny Me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept" (Mark 14: 66-72).

Luke adds a most touching clause: "*And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter*. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

How deeply affecting is all this! Only think of a saint of God, and an apostle of Christ, cursing and swearing that he did not know his Lord! Does the reader feel disposed to question the fact that Peter was, spite of all this, a genuine saint of God? Some do question it, but their questioning is a gross mistake. They find it hard to conceive such a thing as a true child of God falling so terribly. It is because they have not yet thoroughly learnt what flesh is. Peter was as really a saint of God in the palace of the high priest as he was on the mount of transfiguration. But he had to learn himself, and that, too, by as humiliating and painful a process as any soul could well be called to pass through. Doubtless, if any one had told Peter, a few days before, that he would ere long curse and swear that he did not know his Lord, he would have shrunk with horror from the thought. He might have said, like one of old, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" Yet so it was. We know not what we may do until we are in the circumstances. The great thing for us all is to walk humbly with our God day by day, deeply sensible of our own utter weakness, and clinging to Him who is able to keep us from falling. We are safe only in the shelter of His presence. Left to ourselves, we are capable of anything, as our apostle found to his deep sorrow.

But the Lord was watching over His poor erring servant. He never lost sight of him for a single moment, He had His eye upon the whole process. The devil would have smashed the vessel in hopeless fragments if he could. But he could not. He was but an instrument in the divine hand to do a work for Peter which Peter had failed to do for himself. "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted (or restored), strengthen thy brethren."

Here we are permitted to see the root of the matter. Peter needed to be sifted, and Satan was employed to do the work — just as in the case of Job, and the man in 1 Cor. 5. It seems very wonderful, very mysterious, very solemn, that Satan should be so used. Yet so it is. God uses him "for the destruction of the flesh." He cannot touch the spirit. That is eternally safe. But it is terrible work

to get into Satan's sieve. Peter found it so, and so did Job, and so did that erring Corinthian.

But oh, the *grace* of those words! "I have prayed for thee" — not that he might not fall, but, having fallen, that his faith might not fail, his confidence might not give way. Nothing can surpass the grace that shines out here. The blessed One knew all that was to happen — the shameful denial — the cursing and swearing; and yet, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" — that thy confidence in the eternal stability of My grace may not give way.

Perfectly marvellous! And then, the *power* of that look! "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." It was this that broke Peter's heart, and drew forth a flood of bitter, penitential tears.

Part 9

We are now called to consider the intensely interesting subject of Simon Peter's restoration, in which we shall find some points of the utmost practical importance. If in his fall we learn the frailty and folly of man, in his restoration we learn the grace, wisdom, and faithfulness of our Lord Jesus Christ. The fall was, indeed, deep, terrible, and humiliating. The restoration was complete and marvellous. We may rest assured that Simon Peter will never forget either the one or the other; nay, he will remember them with wonder, love, and praise, throughout the countless ages of eternity. The grace that shines in Peter's restoration is the same which is displayed in his conversion. Let us glance at some of the salient points. It can be but the merest glance, as our space is limited. And first let us look at

the procuring cause.

This we have given us with peculiar force by the pen of the inspired evangelist Luke. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat." If Satan had been suffered to have his way, poor Simon would have been hopelessly ruined. But no; he was merely employed as an instrument, as he had been in Job's case, to do a needed work, and, when that work was done, he had to retire. He dare go one hair's

breadth beyond his appointed sphere. It is well to remember this. Satan is but a creature — crafty, wily, powerful, no doubt, but a creature who can only go as far as he is permitted by God. Had Peter walked softly, had he humbly and earnestly looked for divine help, had he been judging himself in secret, there would have been no need of Satan's sifting. Thanks be to God, Satan has no power whatever with a soul that walks humbly with God. There is perfect shelter, perfect safety, in the divine presence; and there is not an arrow in the enemy's quiver that can reach one who leans in simple confidence upon the arm of the living God. Here our apostle failed, and hence he had to pass through a very severe process indeed, in order that he might learn himself. But, oh, the power and preciousness of those words, "*I have prayed for thee!*" Here assuredly lay the secret — here was the procuring cause of Simon's restoration. The prayer of Jesus sustained the soul of His erring servant in that terrible hour when the enemy would fain have crushed him to powder. What could Satan do in opposition to the all-powerful intercession of Christ? Nothing. That wonderful prayer was the ground of Peter's safety, when, to human view, all seemed hopelessly gone.

And for what did our Lord pray? Was it that Peter might not commit the awful sin of denying Him? Was it that he might not curse and swear? Clearly no. What then? I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."

Can aught exceed the grace that shines here? That gracious, loving, faithful Lord, in view of Peter's terrible sin — knowing all he was about to do, all the sad forgetfulness — could actually plead for him that, spite of all, his confidence might not give way — that he might not lose the sense of the eternal stability of that grace which had taken him up from the depth of his ruin and guilt.

Matchless grace! Nothing can surpass it in brightness and blessedness. Had it not been for this prayer, Peter's confidence must have given way. He never could have survived the awful struggle through which his soul passed when thinking of his dreadful sin. When he came to himself, when he reflected upon the whole scene, his expressions of devotedness, "Though all should deny Thee, yet will I never deny Thee" — "Though I should die with Thee, yet will

I not deny Thee" — "I am ready to go with Thee to prison and to death" — to think of all these words, and yet that he should deny his beloved Lord with cursing and swearing, was overpowering.

It is a dreadful moment in the soul's history when one wakes up to the consciousness of having committed sin — sin against light, knowledge, and privilege — sin against divine grace and goodness. Satan is sure to be specially busy at such a crisis. He casts in the most terrible suggestions — raises all manner of questions — fills the heart with legal reasonings, doubts, and fears — causes the soul to totter on the foundation.

But, thanks and praise to our God, the enemy cannot prevail. "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further." The all-prevailing intercession of our divine Advocate sustains the faith so sorely tried, carries the soul through the deep and dark waters, restores the broken link of communion, heals the spiritual wounds, lifts up the fallen one, brings back the wanderer, and fills the heart with praise and thanksgiving. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art restored, strengthen thy brethren." Here we have set before us in the most touching way *the procuring cause* of Simon Peter's restoration. We shall now look for a moment at

the producing means.

For this, too, we are indebted to the evangelist Luke. Indeed it is through him the inspiring Spirit has given us so much of what is exquisitely human — so much of what goes straight to our very hearts, in subduing power — so much of God coming out in loveliest human form.

We have already noticed Peter's gradual descent — his sad progress, from one stage to another, in moral distance and culpable decline — forgetting to watch and pray — following afar off — warming himself at the enemy's fire — the cowardly denial — the cursing and swearing. All this was down! down! down! shamefully and awfully down. But when the erring, straying, sinning one had reached the very lowest point, then comes out, with heavenly lustre, the grace that shines in the procuring cause and the producing means of his restoration. The former we have in Christ's *prayer*; the latter

in Christ's *look*. "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the Word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

Yes, here it is; "The Lord *looked*" "Peter remembered" — Peter wept — "wept bitterly." What a look! What a remembrance! What a weeping! What human heart can conceive, what tongue express, what pen portray, all that is wrapped up in that one look? We can well believe that it went right home to the very centre of Peter's soul. He will never forget that marvellous look, so full of mighty moral power — so penetrating — so melting — so soul-subduing.

"Peter went out, and wept bitterly." This was the turning point. Up to this all was darkly downward. Here divine light breaks in upon the deep moral gloom. Christ's most precious prayer is having its answer, His powerful look is doing its work. The fountain of the heart is broken up, and penitential tears flow copiously forth, demonstrating the depth, reality, and intensity of the work within.

Thus it must ever be, and thus it will ever be when the Spirit of God works in the soul. If we have sinned, we must be made to feel, to judge, and to confess our sin — to feel it deeply, judge it thoroughly, and confess it fully. It will not do merely to say, in levity, flippancy, or mere formality, "I have sinned." There must be reality, uprightness, and sincerity. God desires truth in the inward parts. There was nothing light, flippant, or formal about our beloved apostle in the hour of his fall and repentance. No, all was intensely real. It could not but be so with such a procuring cause, and such a producing means. The prayer and look of Peter's Lord displayed their precious results in Peter's restoration.

Now the reader will do well to notice that the prayer and look of our Lord Jesus Christ set forth, in a very striking and beautiful manner, the two grand aspects of Christ's present ministry as our Advocate with the Father. We have the value and prevalency of His intercession, and the power and efficacy of His Word in the hands of the Holy Ghost, that "other Advocate." Christ's *prayer* for Peter answers to His intercession for us. His *look* upon Peter answers to

His Word brought home to us in the power of the Holy Ghost. When we sin — as, alas! we do in thought and deed — our blessed and adorable Advocate speaks to God on our behalf. This is the procuring cause of our repentance and restoration. But He speaks to us on God's behalf. This is the producing means.

We shall not dwell upon the great subject of the advocacy here, having recently sought to unfold it in our papers on "The All-sufficiency of Christ." We shall close this paper with a brief reference to two or three of the moral features of Peter's restoration — features which, be it well remembered, must be looked for in every case of true restoration. In the first place there is

the state of the conscience.

Now, as to the full and complete restoration of Peter's conscience after his terrible fall, we have the most unquestionable evidence afforded in his after history. Take the touching scene at the sea of Tiberias, as given in John 21.* Look at that dear, earnest, thorough man, girding his fisher's coat around him, and plunging into the sea, in order to get to the feet of his risen Lord! He waits neither for the ship nor for his companions, but in all the lovely freshness and liberty of a divinely restored conscience, he rushes to his Saviour's feet. There is no tormenting fear, no legal bondage, no doubt, darkness, or distance. His conscience is perfectly at rest. The prayer and the look — the two grand departments of the work of advocacy — had proved effectual. Peter's conscience was all right, sound, and good; and hence he could find his home in the presence of his Lord — his holy, happy home.

{*We have no record of Peter's first meeting with his Lord, after the resurrection.}

Take another striking and beautiful evidence of a restored conscience. Look at Peter in Acts 3. There he stands in the presence of assembled thousands of Jews, and boldly charges them with having "denied the Holy One and the Just" — the very thing which he himself had done though under circumstances very different. How could Peter do this? How could he have the face to speak so? Why not leave it to James or John to prefer this heavy charge? The

answer is blessedly simple. Peter's conscience was so thoroughly restored, so perfectly at rest, because perfectly purged, that he could fearlessly charge the house of Israel with the awful sin of denying the Holy One of God. Was this the fruit of moral insensibility? Nay, it was the fruit of divine restoration. Had any one of the congregation gathered in Solomon's porch undertaken to challenge our apostle as to his own shameful denial of his Lord, we can easily conceive his answer. The man who had "wept bitterly" over his sin would, we feel assured, know how to answer such a challenge. Not that his bitter weeping was the meritorious ground of his restoration; nothing of the kind, it only proved the reality of the work of repentance in his soul. Moral insensibility is one thing, and a restored conscience, resting on the blood and advocacy of Christ, is quite another.

But there is another thing involved in a true work of restoration, and that is

the state of the heart.

This is of the very utmost importance in every instance. No restoration can be considered divinely complete which does not reach the very depths of the heart. And hence, when we turn back to the scenes on the shore of the sea of Tiberias, we find the Lord dealing very closely and very powerfully with the state of Peter's heart. We cannot attempt to expatiate, much as we should like to do so, on one of the most affecting interviews in the entire volume of God. We can do little more than quote the inspired record, but that is quite enough.

It is deeply interesting to notice that there is no allusion — not the most remote — to past scenes, during that wonderful dinner, provided, cooked, and dispensed by the risen Lord! But "when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" Here Simon is recalled by the words of his faithful Lord to his self-confident profession. He had said, "Though all shall be offended, yet will not I." Then the searching question, three times repeated, evidently calls back the threefold denial.

Peter's *heart is* touched — the moral *root* of the whole matter is reached. This was absolutely necessary in Peter's case, and it is absolutely necessary in every case. The work of restoration can never be thorough unless the roots of things are reached and judged. Mere surface work will never do. It is of no use to crop the sprouts; we must get down to the depths, the hidden springs, the moral sources, and judge them in the very light of the divine presence.

This is the true secret of all genuine restoration. Let us ponder it deeply. We may rest assured it demands our most solemn consideration. We are all too apt to rest satisfied with cropping off the sprouts that appear above the surface of our practical daily life, without getting at the roots; and the sad consequence is that the sprouts quickly appear again, to our sorrow and shame, and the dishonour of our Lord's name. The work of self-judgement must be more profound if we would really make progress. We are terribly shallow, light, and flippant. We greatly lack depth, seriousness, and moral gravity. We want more of that heart-work which was wrought in Simon the son of Jonas on the shore of the sea of Tiberias. "Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Lovest thou Me?" The knife of the divine Operator had reached the root of the moral disease, and that was enough. It was needful, but it was enough; and the grieved and self-judged Simon Peter has only to fall back upon the great fact that his Lord knew all things. "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." It is as though he had said, "Lord, it demands the eye of Omniscience itself to discern in the heart of the poor erring one a single spark of affection for Thee."

This truly is real work. We have before us a thoroughly restored soul — restored in conscience, restored in heart. And if it be asked, "What remains?" the answer is, We see a servant

restored to his work.

Some would tell us that if a man falls, he can never recover his position; and no doubt, under *government*, we must reap as we sow. But *grace is* another thing altogether. Government drove Adam out of Eden, and never replaced him there, but grace announced the victorious Seed of the woman. Government kept Moses out of

Canaan, but grace conducted him to Pisgah's top. Government sent a perpetual sword upon David's house, but grace made the son of Bathsheba the wisest and wealthiest of Israel's kings.

This distinction must never be lost sight of. To confound grace and government is to commit a very grave mistake indeed. We cannot attempt to enter upon this weighty subject here, having done so in one of our earlier volumes. But let the reader seek to understand it, and bear it ever in mind.

As to Simon Peter, we not only see him restored to the work to which he was called at the first, but to something even higher. "Feed My lambs — shepherd My sheep" — is the new commission given to the man who had denied his Lord with an oath. Is not this something beyond "catching men"? "When thou art restored, strengthen thy brethren." Can anything in the way of service be more elevated than shepherding sheep, feeding lambs, and strengthening brethren? There is nothing in all this world nearer or dearer to the heart of Christ than His sheep, His lambs, His brethren: and hence He could not have given Simon Peter a more affecting proof of His confidence than by committing to his care the dearest objects of His deep and tender love.

And then mark the closing words, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast *young*, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be *old*, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake He, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, *Follow Me.*"

What weighty words are these! Who can tell their depth, power, and significance? What a contrast between Simon, "*young*," restless, forward, blundering, boastful, self-confident; and Peter, "*old*," subdued, mellowed, passive, crucified! What a difference between a man walking whither he would, and a man following a rejected Lord along the dark and narrow pathway of the cross, home to glory!

Conclusion

We could not close this series of papers without glancing, however cursorily, at the way in which our apostle discharged his various commissions. We see him "catching men"; opening the kingdom of Heaven to the Jew and to the Gentile; and, finally, feeding and shepherding the lambs and sheep of the flock of Christ.

Elevated services these, for any poor mortal to be called to, and more especially for one who had fallen so deeply as Simon Peter. But the remarkable power with which he was enabled to fulfil his blessed service proved beyond all question the reality and completeness of his restoration. If, at the close of the Gospels, we see Peter restored in heart and conscience, in the Acts and in his Epistles we can see him restored to his work.

We cannot attempt to go into details; but a point or two must be briefly noticed. There is something uncommonly fine in Peter's address in the third chapter of Acts. We can only quote a sentence or two: "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and *denied Him* in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But *ye denied the Holy One and the Just.*"

What a splendid evidence we have here of Peter's complete restoration! It would have been utterly impossible for him to charge his audience with having denied the Holy One if his own soul had not been fully and blessedly restored. Alas! he, too, had denied his Lord; but he had repented, and wept bitterly. He had been down in the depths of self-judgement, just where he desired to see every one of his hearers. He had been face to face with his Lord, just where he longed to see them. He had been given to taste the sweetness, the freeness, the fullness, of the pardoning love of God, to prove the divine efficacy of the atonement and the prevalency of the advocacy of Christ. He was pardoned, healed, restored; and as such he stood in their presence a living and striking monument of that grace which he was unfolding to them, and which was amply sufficient for them as it had proved for him. "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

Who could more distinctly and emphatically utter such precious words than the erring, restored and forgiven Peter? If any

one of his audience had ventured to remind the preacher of his own history, what would he have said in reply? Doubtless he would have had little to say about himself, but much, very much, to say about that rich and precious grace which had triumphed — over all his sin and failure — much, very much, about that precious blood which had cancelled forever all his guilt, and given perfect peace to his conscience — much, very much, about that all-prevailing advocacy to which he owed his full and perfect restoration.

Peter was just the man to unfold to others those glorious themes in which he had so thoroughly learnt to find his strength, his comfort, and his joy. He had proved in no ordinary way the reality and stability of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was no mere empty theory, no mere doctrine or opinion, with him. It was all intensely real to him. His very life and salvation were bound up in it. He knew the heart of Christ in a very intimate way. He knew its infinite tenderness and compassion, its unswerving devotedness in the face of many stumbles, shortcomings, and sins; and hence he could bear the most distinct and powerful testimony to the whole house of Israel to the power of the name of Jesus, the efficacy of His blood, and the deep and infinite love of His heart. "His name, through faith in His name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know; yea, the faith which is by Him hath given him *this perfect soundness* in the presence of you all."

What power in these words! How refreshing is the testimony to the peerless name of Jesus! It is perfectly delightful at all times, but specially so in this infidel day in which our lot is cast — a day so marked by the determined and persistent effort of the enemy to exclude the name of Jesus from every department.

Look where you will, whether it be in the domain of science, of religion, of philanthropy, or moral reform, and you see the same sedulous and diligently pursued purpose to banish the name of Jesus. It is not said so in plain terms, but it is so nevertheless. Scientific men, the professors and lecturers in our universities, talk and write about "the forces of nature" and the facts of science in such a way as practically to exclude the Christ of God from the whole field of nature. Scripture tells us, blessed be God, that by the Son of His love "All things were created that are in heaven, and that

are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and *by Him all things consist*. "And again, speaking of the Son, the inspiring Spirit says, "Who being the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person, and *upholding all things by the word of His power*, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Col. 1, Heb. 1).

These splendid passages lead us to the divine root of the matter. They speak not of "the forces of nature," but of the glory of Christ, the power of His hand, the virtue of His Word. Infidelity would rob us of Christ, and give us, instead, "the forces of nature." We vastly prefer our own beloved Lord. We delight to see His name bound up, indissolubly, with creation in all its vast and marvellous fields. We vastly prefer the eternal record of the Holy Ghost to all the finely-spun theories of infidel professors. We rejoice to see the name of Jesus bound up in every department of religion and philanthropy. We shrink with ever-increasing horror from every system, every club, every order, every association, that dares to shut out the glorious name of Jesus from its schemes of religion and moral reform. We do solemnly declare that the religion, the philanthropy, the moral reform, which does not make the name of Jesus its Alpha and its Omega, is the religion, the philanthropy and the moral reform of hell. This may seem strong, severe, ultra, and narrow-minded, but it is our deep and thorough conviction, and we utter it fearlessly, in the presence of all the infidelity and superstition of the day.

But we must return to our apostle's discourse, which has wakened up those glowing sentiments in the very depths of the soul.

Having charged home their terrible sin upon the consciences of his hearers, he proceeds to apply the healing, soothing balm of the gospel, in words of marvellous power and sweetness: "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets that Christ should suffer, *He hath so fulfilled*. " Nothing can exceed the grace of this. It recalls the words of Joseph to his troubled brethren: "It was not you that sent me hither, but

God." Such is the exquisite grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, such the infinite love and goodness of our God.

"Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the time of refreshing shall come from (or by) the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God had spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul which will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. *Unto you first* God, having raised up His Son Jesus, *sent Him to bless you*, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."

Thus did this dear and honoured apostle, in the power of the Holy Ghost, throw wide open the kingdom of Heaven to the Jews, in pursuance of his high commission as recorded in Matthew 16. It is what we may well call a splendid testimony, from first to last. Most gladly would we linger over it; but our limited space forbids. We can only commend it to the earnest study of the reader, and pass on, for a few moments, to Acts 10 which records the opening of the kingdom to the Gentile.

We assume that the reader understands the truth in reference to the keys of the kingdom of Heaven being committed to Peter. We shall not therefore occupy his time or our own in combating the ignorant superstition which attributes to our apostle what we may rest assured he would have rejected with intense and holy horror, namely, the power to let souls into Heaven. Detestable folly! which, while it obstinately refuses Christ, who is God's only way to Heaven, will blindly build upon some poor sinful mortal like ourselves who himself was a debtor to the sovereign grace of God

and the precious blood of Christ for his entrance into the Church on earth and into Heaven above.

But enough of this. All intelligent Christians understand that the apostle Peter was commissioned, by his Lord and ours, to open the kingdom of Heaven to both Jew and Gentile. To him were committed the keys, not of the Church, nor yet of Heaven, but of "the kingdom of heaven"; and we find him using them in Acts 3 and Acts 10.

But he was by no means so alert in taking up the latter as he was in taking up the former. Prejudice — that sad hindrance then, now, and always — stood in the way. He needed to have his mind enlarged to take in the divine purpose in respect to the Gentiles. To one trained amid the influences of the Jewish system, it seemed one thing to admit Jews into the kingdom, and quite another to admit Gentiles. Our apostle had to get further instruction in the school of Christ ere his mind could take in the "no difference" doctrine. "Ye know," he said to Cornelius, "how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or come unto one of another nation." Thus had it been in days gone by; but now all was changed. The middle wall was broken down — the barriers were swept away; "God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean." He had seen, in a vessel which came from Heaven, and returned thither, *all manner* of four footed beasts," and a voice from Heaven had commanded him to slay and eat. This was something new to Simon Peter. It was a wonderful lesson he was called to learn on the housetop of Simon the tanner. He was there, for the first time, taught that "God is no respecter of persons," and that what God hath cleansed no man may call common.

All this was good and healthful for the soul of our apostle. It was well to have his heart enlarged to take in the precious thoughts of God — to see the old barriers swept away before the magnificent tide of grace flowing from the heart of God over a lost world — to learn that the question of "clean" or "unclean" was no longer to be decided by an examination of hoofs and habits (Lev. 11) — that the same precious blood of Christ which could cleanse a Jew could cleanse a Gentile also; and, moreover, that the former needed it just as much as the latter.

This, we repeat, was most valuable instruction for the heart and understanding of Simon Peter; and if the reader wants to know how far he took it in and appreciated it, he has but to turn to Acts 15 and read the apostle's own commentary upon the matter. The Church had reached a solemn crisis. Judaizing teachers had begun their terrible work. They would fain bring the Gentile converts under the law. The occasion was intensely interesting and deeply important — yea, solemnly momentous. The very foundations were at stake. If the enemy could but succeed in bringing the Gentile believers under the law, all was gone.

But, all praise to our ever-gracious God, He did not abandon His Church to the power or wiles of the adversary. When the enemy came in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord raised up a standard against him. A great meeting was convened — not in some obscure corner, but at Jerusalem, the very centre and source of all the religious influence of the moment — the very place, too, from whence the evil had emanated. God took care that the great question should not be decided at Antioch by Paul and Barnabas, but at Jerusalem itself, by the unanimous voice of the apostles, elders, and the whole Church, governed, guided and taught by God the Holy Ghost.

At this great meeting our apostle delivered himself in a style that stirs the very deepest springs of our spiritual life. Hear his words: "And when there had been much disputing" — Alas! how soon the miserable disputing began — "Peter rose up and said unto them, Men, brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost even as He did unto us, and put *no difference between us and them*, purifying their hearts by faith. Now, therefore, *why tempt ye God* to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved *even as they*."

This is uncommonly fine, indeed it is morally grand. He does not say, "They shall be saved even as we." No; but "We shall be saved even as they" — on the same ground, after the same model, in

the same way. The Jew comes down from his lofty dispensational position, only too thankful to be saved, just like the poor Gentile, by the precious grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How those words of the apostle of the circumcision must have refreshed and delighted the heart of Paul as he sat at this never-to-be-forgotten meeting! Not that Paul sought in any way the countenance, the support, or authority of man. He had received his gospel and his commission, not from Peter, but from Peter's Lord; and from Him, too, not as the Messiah on earth, but as the risen and glorified Son of God in Heaven. Still, we cannot doubt that the testimony of his beloved fellow-labourer was deeply interesting and cordially welcome to the apostle of the Gentiles. We can only say, Alas! that there should have been aught in the after-course of that fellow-labourer in the smallest degree inconsistent with his splendid testimony at the conference. Alas! that Peter's conduct at Antioch should vary so much from his words at Jerusalem. See Gal. 2.

But such is man, even the best of men, if left to himself. And the higher the man is, the more mischief he is sure to do if he makes a stumble. We shall not, however, dwell on the sad and painful scene at Antioch, between those two most excellent servants. They are both now in Heaven, in the presence of their beloved Lord, where the remembrance of past failure and sin only enhances the value of that blood which cleanseth from all sin, and of that grace which reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. The Holy Ghost has thought proper to record the fact that our apostle failed in frankness and integrity at Antioch; and further, that the blessed apostle of the Gentiles had to withstand him to the face; but we are not going to expatiate upon it. We would profit by it, as well we may, for it is full of deep instruction and solemn warning. If such a one as the apostle Peter, after all his experience, his fall and restoration, his long course of service, his intimate acquaintance with the heart of Christ, all the instruction he had received, all his gifts and knowledge, all his powerful preaching and teaching — if such a one as this could, after all, dissemble through fear of man, or to hold a place in man's esteem, what shall we say for ourselves? Simply this:

O Lamb of God, still keep me close to Thy pierced side;

Tis only there in safety and peace I can abide.

When foes and snares surround me, when lusts and fears
within,

The grace that sought and found me, alone can keep me clean.

May the Lord greatly bless to our souls our meditation on the
history of Simon Peter! May his life and its lessons be used of the
Holy Ghost to deepen in our souls the sense of our own utter
weakness and of the matchless grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

John 1 – 3

John the Baptist — only "a voice"

Questions and how to meet them.

I have been very much interested of late in looking at the excellent way in which John the Baptist met the various questions which came before him; for, alas! there were questions in his day, as there are in ours.

What I specially refer to now is presented to us in John 1 and John 3.

The first question which this dear and honoured servant of Christ was called to answer had respect to himself, and of this he makes very short work indeed. "This is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?"

It is ever welcome to any right-minded person to be asked to speak about himself. So, I doubt not, John found it. He readily told them that he was not the Messiah, that he was not Elias; yea, that he was not even the prophet. But they would have a positive answer. "They said unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?" Little indeed had he to say of himself. "I" had a very small place in John's thoughts. "A voice." Was this all? Yes; this was all. The Spirit in the prophet had spoken; John quotes the words, and there he leaves it. Blessed servant! Honoured witness! Would we had more of thy excellent spirit! — more of thy method of answering questions!

But these Pharisees were not satisfied. John's self-hiding spirit was entirely beyond them. "They asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not the Christ, nor Elias, neither the prophet?"

Here again the Baptist makes short work "John answered them, saying, I baptize with water; but there standeth one among

you whom ye know not. He it is who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."

Thus, as to himself, he was merely a voice. And, as to his work, he baptised with water, and he was only too glad to retire behind that blessed One whose shoe's latchet he felt himself utterly unworthy to unloose.

This is uncommonly fine. I feel assured that the lovely spirit displayed by this most illustrious servant of Christ is to be coveted. I do long to know more and more of this self-hiding — this losing sight of self and its doings — this retiring spirit. Truly it is much needed in this day of egotistical boast and pretension.

But turn with me for a moment to John 3. Here we have another kind of question. It is not now about himself or his work, but about purifying. "There arose a question among some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came to John, and said unto him, Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all come to Him."

Now this was a mistake, for "Jesus Himself baptised not, but His disciples." But this is not the point here. What strikes me is John's mode of settling all questions, right or wrong. He finds a perfect solution for all in the presence of his Lord. "John answered and said, A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven."

How true! How simple! How perfectly obvious! What a complete settlement of every question! If a man has anything at all, whence did it, whence could it, come? Surely only from Heaven. What a perfect cure for strife, envy, jealousy, and emulation! "Every good gift and every perfect gift is *from above*, and *cometh down* from the Father of lights. What a tale this tells of earth and of man! What a record it bears to Heaven and to God! Not one atom of good on earth but what comes from Heaven. Not an atom of good in man but what comes from God. Why, then, should any one boast, or be jealous, or envious? If all goodness is from above, let there be an

end of all strife, and let all hearts go up in praise to "the Father of lights."

Thus it was the Baptist met the questions of his day. He let all the questioners know that their questions had but little interest for him. And, more than that, he let them know where all his interests lay. This blessed servant found all his springs in the Lamb of God, in His precious work — in His glorious Person. The voice of the Bridegroom was enough for him, and, having heard that, his joy was full. The question of purifying might be interesting enough in its place, and no doubt, like all other questions, it had its right and its wrong side; but for John, the Bridegroom's voice was enough. In His presence he found a divine answer to every question — a divine solution to every difficulty. He looked up to Heaven, and saw every good thing coming from thence. He looked into the Bridegroom's face, and saw every moral glory centred there. This was enough for him. Why trouble him with questions of any kind — questions about himself or his work, or about purifying? He lived far beyond the region of questions, in the blessed presence of his Lord and there he found all his heart could ever need.

Now it seems to me that you and I would do well to take a leaf out of John's book as regards all this. I need not remind you that in this our day there are questions agitating men's minds. Yes, and some of us are called to account for not expressing ourselves more decidedly on some at least of these questions. But, for my part, I believe the devil is doing his utmost to alienate our hearts from Christ and from one another by questions. We ought not to be ignorant of his devices. He does not come openly, and say, "I am the devil, and I want to divide and scatter you by questions." Yet this is precisely what he is seeking to do.

Now, it matters not whether the question be right or wrong in itself; the devil can make use of a right question just as effectively as of a wrong one, provided he can succeed in raising that question into undue prominence, and causing it to come between our souls and Christ, and between us and our brethren. I can understand a difference in judgement, on various minor questions. Christians have differed about such for many long centuries, and they will continue to differ until the end of time. It is human weakness. But

when any question is allowed to assume undue prominence, it ceases to be mere human weakness, and becomes a wile of Satan. I may have a very decided judgement on any given point, and so may you. But what I long for now is a thorough sinking of all questions, and a rejoicing together in hearing the Bridegroom's voice, and going on together in the light of His blessed countenance. This will confound the enemy. It will effectually deliver us from prejudice and partiality, from cliques and coteries. We shall then measure one another, not by our views of any particular question, but by our appreciation of the Person of Christ, and our devotion to His cause.

In a word, my beloved and valued friend, what I long for is that you and I, and all our dear brethren throughout the whole world, may be characterized by a deep-toned, thorough, devotion to the name and truth, and cause of Christ. I long to cultivate broad sympathies, that can take in every true lover of Christ, even though we see not eye to eye on all minor questions. At best "we know but in part"; and we can never expect people to agree with us about questions. But if Christ be our one absorbing object, all other things will assume their right place, their relative value, their proper proportions. "Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect [as many as have Christ for their one object], be thus minded: and if in *anything* ye be otherwise [or differently, *eteros*] minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. *Nevertheless*, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by *the same rule* [Christ], and mind the same thing" (Christ). The moment anything else but Christ is introduced as a rule to walk by, it is simply the work of the devil. Of this I am as sure as that I hold this pen in my hand.

May the Lord keep us all close to Himself, walking together, not in sectarianism, but in true brotherly love, seeking the blessing and prosperity of all who belong to Christ and promoting in every possible way His blessed cause, until He come!

John 3:3-7; 1 Peter 1:23

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again (John 3:3-7)

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Peter 1:23).

Regeneration: What is it?

There are few subjects which have given rise to more difficulty and perplexity than that of regeneration, or the new birth. Very many who are, themselves, the subjects of this new birth are at a loss to know what it is, and filled with doubt as to whether they have ever really experienced it. Many there are who, were they to clothe their desire in words, would say, "Oh! that I knew for certain, that I had passed from death unto life. If only I were sure that I was born again, I should be happy indeed." Thus they are harassed with doubts and fears, from day to day, and from year to year. Sometimes they are full of hope that the great change has passed upon them; but, anon, something springs up within them which leads them to think their former hopes were a delusion. Judging from feeling and experience, rather than from the plain teaching of the word of God, they are, of necessity, plunged in uncertainty and confusion as to the whole matter.

Now I would desire to enter in company with my reader. Upon an examination in the light of scripture, of this most interesting subject. It is to be feared that very much of the misapprehension

which prevails in reference thereto, arises from the habit of preaching regeneration and its fruits instead of Christ. The effect is put before the cause, and this must always produce derangement of thought.

Let us, then, proceed to consider this question. What is regeneration? How is it produced? What are its results?

1. And, first, what is regeneration? Very many look upon it as a change of the old nature, produced, no doubt, by the influence of the Spirit of God. This change is gradual in its operation, and proceeds from stage to stage, until the old nature is completely brought under. This view of the subject involves two errors, namely, first, an error as to the real condition of our old nature; and, secondly, as to the distinct personality of the Holy Ghost. It denies the hopeless ruin of nature; and represents the Holy Ghost more as an influence than as a Person.

As to our true state by nature, the word of God presents it as one of total and irrecoverable ruin. Let us adduce the proofs. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that *every* imagination of the thoughts of his heart was *only* evil *continually*." (Gen. 6:5) The words "*every*" "*only*" and "*continually*" set aside every idea of a redeeming feature in man's condition before God. Again, "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are *all* gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy; there is *none* that doeth good, *no, not one*." (Ps. 14:2, 3) Here, again, the expressions "*all*" — "*none*" — "*no, not one*" — preclude the idea of a single redeeming quality in man's condition, as judged in the presence of God. Having thus drawn a proof from Moses and one from the Psalms, let us take one or two from the prophets. "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the *whole* head is sick, and the *whole* heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it." (Isa. 1:5, 6) "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? *All* flesh is grass, and *all* the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field." (Isa. 40:6) "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? " (Jer. 17:9)

The above will suffice from the Old Testament. Let us, now, turn to the New. "Jesus did not commit himself, because he knew all, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." (John 2:24, 25) "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." (John 3:6) Read, also, Romans 3:9-19. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be." (Rom. 8:7) "Having no hope, and without God in the world." (Eph. 2:12) These quotations might be multiplied, but there is no need. Sufficient proof has been adduced to show forth the true condition of nature. It is "lost" — "guilty" — "alienated" — "without strength" — "evil only" — "evil continually."

How, then, we may lawfully inquire, can that which is spoken of in such a way, ever be changed or improved? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?" "That which is crooked cannot be made straight." The fact is, the more closely we examine the word of God, the more we shall see that it is not the divine method to improve a fallen, ruined thing, but to bring in something entirely new. It is precisely thus in reference to man's natural condition. God is not seeking to improve it. The gospel does not propose as its object, to better man's nature, but to give him a new one. It seeks not to put a new piece upon an old garment, but to impart a new garment altogether. The law looked for something in man, but never got it. Ordinances were given, but man used them to shut out God. The gospel, on the contrary, shows us Christ magnifying the law and making it honourable; it shows Him dying on the cross, and nailing ordinances thereto, it shows Him rising from the tomb and taking His seat as a Conqueror at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens; and, finally, it declares that all who believe in His name are partakers of His risen life, and are one with Him. (See, carefully, the following passages: John 20:31; Acts 13:39; Rom. 6:4-11; Eph. 2:1-6; Eph. 3:13-18; Col. 2:10-15.)

It is of the very last importance to be clear and sound as to this. If I am led to believe that regeneration is a certain change in my old nature, and that this change is gradual in its operation, then, as a necessary consequence, I shall be filled with continual anxiety and apprehension, doubt and fear, depression and gloom, when I

discover, as I surely shall, that nature is nature, and will be naught else but nature to the end of the chapter. No influence or operation of the Holy Ghost can ever make the flesh spiritual. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" and can never be ought else but "flesh;" and "all flesh is as grass" — as withered grass. The flesh is presented in scripture not as a thing to be improved, but as a thing which God counts as "dead," and which we are called to "mortify" — subdue and deny, in all its thoughts and ways. In the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, we see the end of everything pertaining to our old nature. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24) He does not say "They that are Christ's are improving, or trying to improve the flesh". No; but they have crucified it. It is utterly unimprovable. How can they do this! By the energy of the Holy Ghost, acting not *on* the *old* nature, but *in* the new, and enabling them to keep the old nature where the cross has put it, namely, in the place of death. God expects nothing from the flesh; neither should we. He looks upon it as dead; so should we. He has *put* it out of sight, and we should *keep* it so. The flesh should not be allowed to show itself. God does not own it. It has no existence before Him. True, it is in us, but God gives us the precious privilege of viewing and treating it as dead. His word to us is, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6:11)

This is an immense relief to the heart that has struggled for years in the hopeless business of trying to improve nature. It is an immense relief, moreover, to the conscience which has been seeking a foundation for its peace in the gradual improvement of a totally unimprovable thing. Finally, it is an immense relief to any soul that may, for years, have been earnestly breathing after holiness, but has looked upon holiness as consisting in the improvement of that which hates holiness and loves sin. To each and all of such it is infinitely precious and important to understand the real nature of regeneration. No one who has not experienced it can conceive the intensity of anguish and the bitterness of the disappointment which a soul feels, who, vainly expecting some improvement in nature, finds, after years of struggling, that nature is nature still. And just in proportion to the anguish and disappointment will be the joy of discovering that God is not looking for any improvement in nature — that He sees it

as dead, and us as alive in Christ — one with Him, and accepted in Him for ever. To be led into a clear and full apprehension of this, is divine emancipation to the conscience, and true elevation for the whole moral being.

Let us, then, see clearly what regeneration is. It is a new birth — the imparting of a new life — the implantation of a new nature — the formation of a new man. The old nature remains in all its distinctness; and the new nature is introduced in all its distinctness. This new nature has its own habits, its own desires, its own tendencies, its own affections. All these are spiritual, heavenly, divine. Its aspirations are all upward. It is ever breathing after the heavenly source from which it has emanated. As in nature, water always finds its own level; so in grace, the new, the divine nature always tends towards its own proper source. Thus regeneration is to the soul what the birth of Isaac was to the household of Abraham. (Gen. 21) Ishmael remained the same Ishmael; but Isaac was introduced. So the old nature remains the same, but the new is introduced. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." It partakes of the nature of its source. A child partakes of the nature of its parents; and the believer is made "a partaker of the divine nature." (2 Peter 1:4) "*Of His own will* begat he us." (James 1)

In a word, then, regeneration is God's own work, from first to last. God is the Operator, man is the happy, privileged subject. His cooperation is not sought in a work which must ever bear the impress of one almighty hand. God was alone in creation — alone in redemption — and he must be alone in the mysterious and glorious work of regeneration.

2. Having endeavoured to show, from various passages of scripture, that regeneration, or the new birth, is not a change of man's fallen nature, but the imparting of a new — a divine nature, we shall now, in dependence upon the blessed Spirit's teaching, proceed to consider how the new birth is produced — how the new nature is communicated. This is a point of immense importance, inasmuch as it places the word of God before us as the grand instrument which the Holy Ghost uses in quickening dead souls. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made;" and by the word of the Lord are dead souls called into new life. The word of the Lord is

creative and regenerating. It called worlds into existence; it calls sinners from death to life. The same voice which of old said "Let there be light," must in every instance say "Let there be life."

If my reader will turn to the third chapter of John's Gospel, he will find, in our Lord's interview with Nicodemus, much precious instruction in reference to the mode in which regeneration is produced. Nicodemus held a very high place in what would be termed the religious world. He was "a man of the Pharisees" — "a ruler of the Jews" — "a master of Israel." He could hardly have occupied a more elevated or influential position. But yet, it is very evident that this highly-privileged man was ill at ease. Despite of all his religious advantages, his heart felt a restless craving after something which neither his Pharisaism, nor yet the entire system of Judaism could supply. It is quite possible he might not have been able to define what he wanted; but he wanted something, else he never would have come to Jesus by night. It was evident that the Father was drawing him, by a resistless though most gentle hand, to the Son; and the way He took of drawing him was by producing a sense of need which nothing around him could satisfy. This is a very common case. Some are drawn to Jesus by a deep sense of guilt — some by a deep sense of need. Nicodemus, obviously, belongs to the latter class. His position was such as to preclude the idea of anything like gross immorality; and, hence, it would not, in his case, be so much guilt on his conscience as a void in his heart. But it comes to the same in the end. The guilty conscience and the craving heart must both be brought to Jesus, for He alone can perfectly meet both the one and the other. He can remove, by His precious sacrifice, every stain from the conscience; and He can fill up, by His peerless Person, every blank in the heart. The conscience which has been purged by the blood of Jesus is perfectly clean; and the heart which is filled with the Person of Jesus is perfectly satisfied.

However, Nicodemus had, like many beside, to unlearn a great deal, ere he could really grasp the knowledge of Jesus. He had to lay aside a cumbrous mass of religious machinery, ere he could apprehend the divine simplicity of God's plan of salvation. He had to descend from the lofty heights of Rabbinical learning and traditional religion, and learn the alphabet of the gospel, in the school of Christ.

This was very humiliating to a "man of the Pharisees" — "a ruler of the Jews" — "a master of Israel." There is nothing of which man is so tenacious as his religion and his learning; and, in the case of Nicodemus, it must have sounded passing strange upon his ear when "a teacher come from God" declared to him "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Being by *birth* a Jew, and, as such, entitled to all the privileges of a son of Abraham, it must have involved him in strange perplexity, to be told that he must be born again — that he must be the subject of a *new birth*, in order to see the kingdom of God. This was a total setting aside of all his privileges and distinctions. It called him down, at once from the very highest to the very "lowest step of the ladder." A Pharisee, a ruler, a master. was not one whit nearer to, or fitter for, this heavenly kingdom, than the most disreputable of the children of men. This was deeply humbling. If he could carry all his advantages and distinctions with him, so as to have them placed to his credit in this new kingdom, it would be something. This would secure for him a position in the kingdom of God far above that of a harlot or a publican. But, then, to be told that he must be born again, left him nothing to glory in. This, I repeat, was deeply humbling to a learned, religious, and influential man.

But it was puzzling as well as humbling. "Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Surely not. There would be no more gained by a second natural birth than by a first. If a natural man could enter, ten thousand times, into his mother's womb and be born, he would be naught but a natural man after all; for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." Do what you will with flesh — with nature, and you cannot alter or improve it. Nothing could change flesh into spirit. You may exalt it? the rank of Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, a master of Israel — and you could hardly make it higher — but it will be flesh, notwithstanding. If this were more generally and clearly apprehended, it would prove the saving of fruitless labour to hundreds. Flesh is of no value whatever. In itself, it is but withered grass; and as to its most pious endeavours, its religious advantages and attainments, its works of righteousness, they have been pronounced by the pen of inspiration to be as filthy rags. (Isa. 64:6)

But let us see the mode in which our blessed Lord replies to the "how?" of Nicodemus. It is peculiarly interesting. Jesus answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:5-8) Here we are distinctly taught that regeneration, or the new birth, is produced by "water and the Spirit." A man must be born of water and of the Spirit ere he can see the kingdom of God, or enter into its profound and heavenly mysteries. The keenest mortal vision cannot see the kingdom of God, nor the most gigantic human intellect "enter" into the deep secrets thereof. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2:14) "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

It may be, however, that many are at a loss to know what is meant by being "born of water." Certainly, the expression has been made the ground of very much discussion and controversy. It is only by comparing scripture with scripture that we can ascertain the real sense of any particular passage. It is a special mercy for the unlettered Christian — the humble student of the inspired volume, that he need not travel outside the covers of that volume, in order to interpret any passage contained therein.

What, then, is the meaning of being "born of water?" We must reply to this question by quoting two or three passages from the word. In the opening of John's Gospel, we read, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even *to them that believe on His name: which were born*, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of *God*." (John 1:11-13.) From this passage, we learn that every one who believes on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is born again — born of God, This is the plain sense is the passage. All who by the power of God the

Holy Ghost, believe on God the Son, are born of God the Father. The source of the testimony is divine; the object of the testimony is divine; the power of receiving the testimony is divine; the entire work of regeneration is divine. Hence, instead of being occupied with myself, and inquiring, like Nicodemus, how can I be born again, I have simply to cast myself, by faith, on Jesus; and thus I am born again. All who put their trust in Christ have gotten a new life, are regenerated.

Again, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, *he that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me*, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life." (John 6:47) "But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, *believing, ye might have life through his name*." (John 20:31) All these passages go to prove that the only way in which we can get this new and everlasting life is by simply receiving the record concerning Christ. All who believe that record, have this new, this eternal life. Mark, it is not those who merely say they believe, but those who actually do believe, according to the sense of the word in the foregoing passages. There is life-giving power in the Christ whom the word reveals, and in the word that reveals Him. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." And then, lest ignorance should marvel, or scepticism sneer, at the idea of dead souls hearing, it is added, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth — they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:25, 28, 29) The Lord Christ can make dead souls, as well as dead bodies, hear His quickening voice. It is by His mighty voice that life can be communicated to either body or soul. If the infidel or the sceptic reasons and objects, it is simply because he makes his own vain mind the standard of what ought to be, and thus entirely shuts out God. This is the climax of folly.

But the reader may feel disposed to inquire, "What has all this to do with the meaning of the word "water," in John 3:5?" It has to do with it, inasmuch as it shows that the new birth is produced, the new life communicated, by the voice of Christ — which is, really, the word of God, as we read in the first chapter of James, "of his own will begat he us *with the word of truth.*" (Ver. 18) So also, in first Peter, "*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever* (1 Peter 1:23) In both these passages, the word is expressly set forth as the instrument by which the new birth is produced. James declares that we are begotten "by the word of truth;" and Peter declares that we are "born again by the word of God." If, then, our Lord speaks of being "born of water," it is obvious that He represents the word under the significant figure of "water" — a figure which "a master of Israel" might have understood, had he only studied aright Ezekiel 36:25-27.

There is a beautiful passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians in which the word is presented under the figure of water. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the *washing of water by the word.*" (Eph. 5:25, 26) So also in the Epistle to Titus: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:5-7)

From all these quotations, we learn that the word of God is the grand instrument of which the Holy Ghost makes use in calling dead souls into life. This truth is confirmed, in a peculiarly interesting manner, by our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus, for, instead of replying to the repeated inquiry, "How can these things be?" He sets this "master of Israel" down to learn the simple lesson taught by "the brazen serpent." The bitten Israelite of old was to be healed by simply *looking* at the serpent of brass on the pole. The dead sinner now is to get life by simply looking at Jesus on the cross, and Jesus on the throne. The Israelite was not told to look at his wound,

though it was the sense of his wound that made him look. The dead sinner is not told to look at his sins, though it is the sense of his sins that will make him look. One look at the serpent healed the Israelite; one look at Jesus quickens the dead sinner. The former had not to look a second time to be healed; the latter has not to look a second time to get life. It was not the way he looked, but the object he looked at, that healed the Israelite; it is not the way he looks, but the object he looks at, that saves the sinner, "*Look unto me*, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

Such was the precious lesson which Nicodemus was called to learn — such the reply to his "how?" If a man begins to reason about the new birth, he must be confounded; but if he believes in Jesus, he is born again. Man's reason can never understand the new birth; but the word of God produces it. Many are astray as to this. They are occupied with the process of regeneration, instead of the word which regenerates. Thus are they perplexed and confounded. They are looking at self, instead of at Christ; and as there is an inseparable connection between the object at which we look and the effect of looking at it, we can easily see what must be the effect of looking in upon oneself. What would an Israelite have gained by looking at his wound? Nothing. What did he gain by looking at the serpent? Health. What does a sinner gain by looking at himself? Nothing. What does he gain by looking at Jesus? "Everlasting life."

3. We come, now, to consider, in the third and last place, the results of regeneration — a point of the deepest interest. Who can estimate aright the glorious results of being a child of God? Who can unfold those affections which belong to that high and hallowed relationship in which the soul is placed by being born again? Who can fully explain that precious fellowship which the child of God is privileged to enjoy with his heavenly Father? "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: there fore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3:1-3) "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God,

they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and *joint-heirs* with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified *together*." (Rom. 8:14-17)

It is most important to understand the distinction between *life* and *peace*. The former is the result of being linked with Christ's *Person*; the latter is the result of His *work*. "He that hath the Son hath *Life*." (1 John 5:12) But, "being *justified* by faith we have peace." (Rom. 5: 1) "Having made peace through the blood of his cross." (Col. 1:20) The very moment a man receives into his heart the simple truth of the gospel, he becomes a child of God. The truth which he receives is the "incorruptible seed" of "the divine nature." (1 Peter 1:23; 2 Peter 1:4) Many are not aware of all that is involved in thus simply receiving the truth of the gospel. As in nature, the child of a nobleman may not know the varied results of the relationship, so it is, likewise, in grace. I may be ignorant both as to the relationship and its results; but I am in it, notwithstanding; and being in it, I have the affections which belong to it, and I ought to cultivate them, and allow them to entwine themselves artlessly around their proper object, even Him who has begotten me by the word of truth. (James 1:18) It is my privilege to enjoy the full flow of parental affection emanating from the bosom of God, and to reciprocate that affection, through the power of the indwelling Spirit. "Now *are* we the sons of God." He has made us such. He has attached this rare and marvellous privilege to the simple belief of the truth. (John 1:12) We do not reach this position "by works of righteousness which we have done," or could do; but simply "according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. That, being justified by his grace, we should be *made heirs* according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:5-7) We are "*called sons*," and "*made heirs*;" and all this, simply by the belief of the truth of the gospel, which is God's "incorruptible seed."

Take the case of the very vilest sinner who, up to this moment, has been living a life of gross wickedness. Let that person receive into his heart the pure gospel of God; let him heartily believe "that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures;" and he there, then, and thus, becomes a child of God, a thoroughly saved, perfectly justified and divinely accepted person. In receiving into his heart the simple record concerning Christ, he has received new life. Christ is the truth and the life, and when we receive the truth we receive Christ; and, when we receive Christ, we receive life. "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life." (John 3:36) When does he get this life? The very moment he believes. "*Believing* ye might have life through his name." (John 20:31) The truth concerning Christ is the seed of eternal life, and when that truth is believed, life is communicated.

Observe, this is what the word of God declares. It is a matter of divine testimony, not merely of human feeling. We do not get life by *feeling* something in ourselves, but by *believing* something about Christ; and that something we have on the authority of God's eternal word — "the holy scriptures." It is well to understand this. Many are looking *in*, for evidences of the new life, instead of looking *out* at the object which imparts the life. It is quite true that, "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1 John 5:10); but, be it remembered, it is "the witness" of a life which is received by "*believing* on the Son of God," not by looking in upon oneself; and the more undividedly I am occupied with Christ, the more distinct and satisfactory will be "the witness" in myself. If I make the witness my object, I shall be plunged in doubt and uncertainty; but if I make Christ my object, I have the witness in all its divine integrity and power. There is special need of clearness as to this, because of the strong tendency of our hearts to make something *within* the ground of our peace and contentment, instead of building, absolutely and exclusively, upon Christ. The more simply we cling to Christ, apart from all beside, the more peaceful and happy we shall be; but directly we take the eye off Him, we become unhinged and unhappy.

In a word, then, my reader should seek to understand, with scriptural accuracy, the distinction between *life* and *peace*. The former is the result of the connection with Christ's *Person*; the latter is the result of believing in His finished *work*. We very frequently meet with quickened souls who are in sad trouble and disquietude as to their acceptance with God. They really do believe on the name of the Son of God, and, believing, they have life; but from not seeing the fullness of the work of Christ, as to their sins, they are troubled in conscience, they have no mental repose. Take an illustration. If you place a hundredweight upon the bosom of a dead man he does not feel it. Place another, and another, and another, he is wholly unconscious. Why? Because there is no *life*. Let us suppose for a moment, the entrance in of life, and what will be the result? A most distressing sensation occasioned by the terrible weight upon the bosom. What, then, will be needful in order to the full enjoyment of the life which had been imparted? Clearly, the removal of the burden. It is somewhat thus with the sinner who receives life by believing on the Person of the Son of God. So long as he was in a state of spiritual death he had no spiritual sensations, he was unconscious of any weight pressing upon him. But the entrance in of spiritual life has imparted spiritual sensibilities, and he now feels a burden pressing upon his heart and conscience, which he knows not exactly how to get rid of. He sees not as yet all that is involved in believing on the name of the only-begotten Son of God. He does not see that Christ is, at once, his righteousness and his life. He needs a simple view of the finished atonement of Christ, whereby *all* his sins were plunged in the waters of eternal oblivion, and he himself introduced into the full favour of God. It is this, and this alone, that can remove the heavy burden off the heart, and impart that profound mental repose which nothing can ever disturb.

If I think of God as a judge, and myself as a sinner, I need the blood of the cross to bring me into His presence, in the way of righteousness. I must fully understand that every claim which God, the righteous Judge, had upon me, a guilty sinner, has been divinely answered, and eternally settled, by "the precious blood of Christ." This gives my soul peace. I see that, through that blood, God can be "just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Rom. 3:29) I learn that, in the cross, God has been glorified about my sins; yea,

that the whole question of sin was fully gone into and perfectly settled between God and Christ, amid the deep and awful solitudes of Calvary. Thus my load is taken off, my weight removed, my guilt cancelled; I can breathe freely; I have perfect peace; there is literally nothing against me; I am as free as the blood of Christ can make me. The Judge has declared himself satisfied as to sin, by raising the sinner's Surety from the dead, and placing Him at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

But, then, there comes another thing of immense value. I not only see myself as a guilty sinner provided with a way of access to God, as a righteous Judge; but I see God, in pursuance of His eternal counsels of electing love, begetting me through the word of truth, making me His child, adopting me into His family, and setting me before Him in such a way as that I can enjoy communion with Him as my Father, in the midst of all the tender endearments of the divine family circle. This is, obviously, another phase of the believer's position and character. It is no longer a question of his coming to God in the full and settled consciousness that every just claim has been met; This, in itself, is ineffably precious to every sin-burdened heart. But there is far more than this. God is my Father, and I am His child. He has a Father's heart, and I can count on the tender affections of that heart in the midst of all my feebleness and need. He loves me, not because of what I am enabled to do, but because I am His child.

Look at yonder tottering babe, the object of ceaseless care and solicitude, wholly unable to promote his father's interests in any one way, yet so loved by the father that he would not exchange him for ten thousand worlds; and if it be thus with an earthly father, what must it be with our heavenly Father? He loves us, not for ought that we are able to do, but because we are His children. He has begotten us, of His own will, by the word of truth. (James 1:18) We could no more earn a place in the heart of the Father than we could satisfy the claims of the righteous Judge. All is of free grace. The Father has begotten us; and the Judge has found a ransom. (Job 33:24) We are debtors to grace for both the one and the other.

But, be it remembered, while we are wholly unable to earn, by our works, a place in the Father's heart, or to satisfy the claims of the

righteous Judge, we are, nevertheless, responsible to "believe the record which God has given of His Son." (1 John 5:9-11) I say this, lest by any means, my reader should be one of those who entrench themselves behind the dogmas of a one sided theology, while refusing to believe the plain testimony of God. Many there are — intelligent people, too — who, when the gospel of the grace of God is pressed upon their acceptance, are ready to reply, "I cannot believe unless God gives me power to do so; nor shall I ever be endowed with that power unless I am one of the elect If I belong to the favoured number I *must* be saved — if not I *can't*."

This is a thoroughly one-sided theology; and not only so, but its one side is turned the wrong way; yea, it is so turned as to wear the form of an absurd but most dangerous fatalism, which completely destroys man's responsibility, and casts dishonour upon God's moral administration. It sends man forth upon a wild career of reckless folly, and makes God the author of the sinner's unbelief. This is, in good truth, to add insult to injury. It is, first, to make God a liar, and then charge Him with being the cause of it. It is to reject His proffered love, and blame Him for the rejection. This is, indeed, the most daring wickedness, though based, as I have said, upon a one-sided theology.

Now, does any one imagine that an argument so flimsy will hold good, for a single moment, in the presence of the king of terrors, or before the judgment seat of Christ? Is there a soul throughout the gloomy regions of the lost that would ever think of charging God with being the author of its eternal perdition? Ah! no; it is only upon earth that people argue thus. Such arguments are never breathed in hell. When men go to hell they blame themselves. In heaven they praise the Lamb. All who are lost will have to thank *self*; all who are saved will have to thank *God*. It is when the impenitent soul has passed through the narrow archway of time into the boundless ocean of eternity, that it will enter into the full depth and power of those solemn words,

"I would, but ye would not."

In truth, human responsibility is as distinctly taught in the word of God as is divine sovereignty. Man finds it impossible to frame a

system of divinity which will give each truth its proper place; but he is not called upon to frame systems, but to believe a plain record, and be saved thereby.

Having said thus much by way of caution, to any who may be in danger of falling under the power of the above line of argument, I shall proceed to unfold a little further the results of regeneration, as seen in the matter of the discipline of the Father's house.

As the children of God, we are admitted to all the privileges of His house, and, in point of fact, the discipline of the house is as much a privilege as anything else. It is on the ground of the relationship in which God has set us, that He acts in discipline towards us. A father disciplines his children because they are his. If I see a strange child doing wrong, I am not called upon to chasten him. I am not in the relationship of a father to him, and, as a consequence, I neither know the affections nor the responsibilities of that relationship. I must be in a relationship in order to know the affections which belong to it. Now, as our Father, God, in His great grace and faithfulness, looks after us in all our ways; He will not suffer ought upon us, or about us, which would be unworthy of Him, and subversive of our real peace and blessedness. " Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." (Heb. 12:9, 10) Thus the discipline is a positive privilege, inasmuch as it is a proof of our Father's care, and has for its object our participation in the divine holiness.

But, then, we must ever bear in mind that the discipline of our Father's hand is to be interpreted in the light of our Father's countenance, and the deep mysteries of His moral government to be contemplated through the medium of His tender love. If we lose sight of this, we shall be sure to get into a spirit of bondage as respects ourselves, and a spirit of judgment as respects others, both of which are in direct opposition to the spirit of Christ. All our Father's dealings with us are in perfect love. When He furnishes us with bread, it is in love, and when He takes down the rod, it is in love also. "*God is love.*" It may frequently happen that we are at a

loss to know the why and the wherefore of some special dispensation of our Father's hand. It seems dark and inexplicable. The mist, which enwraps our spirits, is so thick and heavy as to prevent our catching the bright and cheering beams from our Father's countenance. This is a trying moment — a solemn crisis in the soul's history. We are in great danger of losing the sense of divine love, through inability to understand the profound secrets of divine government. Satan, too, is sure to be busy at such a time. He will ply his fiery darts, and throw in his dark and diabolical suggestions. Thus, between the filthy reasonings which spring up within, and the horrible suggestions which come from without, the soul is in danger of losing its balance, and of getting away from the precious attitude of artless repose in divine love, let the divine government be what it may.

Thus much, with reference to our own souls, while under any special visitation of the hand of God. The effect as to others is equally bad. How often may we have detected ourselves in the habit of cherishing a spirit of judgment, in reference to a child of God whom we found in circumstances of trial, either of "mind, body, or estate." This should be carefully guarded against. we ought not to imagine that every visitation of the hand of God must necessarily be on account of some special sin in the person. This would be an entirely false principle. The dealings of God are preventive as well as corrective.

Take a case in point. My child may be in the room with me enjoying all the sweet intimacies which belong to our relationship. A person enters who I know will utter things which I do not wish my child to hear. I, therefore, without assigning any reason, tell my child to go to his room. Now, if he has not the fullest confidence in my love, he may entertain all manner of false notions about my act. He may reason about the why and wherefore to such a degree as almost to question my affection. However, directly the visitor takes his leave, I call the child into my presence and explain the whole matter to him; and, in the renewed experience of a father's love, he gets rid of the unhappy suspicions of a few dark moments.

Thus it is often with our poor hearts, in the matter of the divine dealings both with ourselves and others. We reason when we ought

to repose: we doubt when we ought to depend. Confidence in our Father's love is the true corrective in all things.

We should ever hold fast the assurance of that changeless, infinite, and everlasting love which has taken us up in our low and lost estate, made us "sons of God," and will never fail us, never let us go, until we enter upon the unbroken and eternal communion of our Father's house above. May that love dwell more abundantly in our hearts, that so we may enter more fully into the meaning and power of regeneration — what it is — how it is produced — and what are its results. God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

C. H. M.

John 3: 16

Glad Tidings

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3: 16).

There are some passages in Holy Scripture which seem to contain in a line or two, an entire volume of most precious truth. The verse which we have just penned is one of such. It is part of our Lords memorable discourse with Nicodemus, and it embodies, in a condensed form, a very full statement of Gospel truth — a statement which may well be termed “Glad Tidings.”

It should ever be born in mind, both by preachers, and those to whom they preach, that one grand object of the gospel is to bring God and the sinner together in such a way as to secure the sinners eternal salvation. It reveals a *Saviour God* to a *lost man*. In other words it presents God to the sinner in the very character that the sinner needs. A Saviour is precisely what suits the lost, just as a lifeboat suits a drowning man, or a physician a sick man, or bread a hungry man. They are fitted the one for the other, and when God as a Saviour, and man as a lost sinner, meet together, the whole question is settled for ever. The sinner is saved, because God is a Saviour. He is saved according to the perfection which belongs to God, in every character He wears, in every office He fills, in every relationship He sustains. To raise a question as to the full and everlasting salvation of a believing soul, is to deny that God is a Saviour. So it is in reference to justification. God has revealed Himself as a Justifier, and hence the believer is justified according to the perfection which attaches to God in that character. If a single flaw could be detected in the title of the very weakest believer, it would be a dishonour to God as a Justifier. Grant me but this, that God is my Justifier, and I argue, in the face of every opposer and every accuser, that I am, and must be, perfectly justified.

And, on the same principle, grant me but this, that God has revealed Himself as a Saviour, and I argue, with unclouded

confidence and holy boldness, that I am, and must be, perfectly saved. It does not rest upon aught in me, but simply and entirely upon God's revelation of Himself. I know He is perfect in everything; and, therefore, perfect as my Saviour. Hence, I am perfectly saved, inasmuch as the glory of God is involved in my salvation. "There is no God else beside Me: a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside Me." What then? "*Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else*" (Isa. 45: 21-22). One believing *look* from a lost sinner to a just God and a Saviour, secures eternal salvation. "*Look!*" How simple! It is not "Work" — "Do" — "Pray" — "Feel" — no; it is simply "Look." And what then? Salvation — everlasting life. It must be so, because God is a Saviour; and the precious little word "look" fully implies all this, inasmuch as it expresses the fact that the salvation which I want is found in the One to whom I look. It is all there, ready for me, and one look secures it — secures it forever — secures it for *me*. It is not a thing of to-day or to-morrow; it is an eternal reality. The bulwarks of salvation behind which the believer retreats have been erected by God Himself — the Saviour-God, on the sure foundation of Christ's atoning work; and no power of earth or hell can ever shake them. "Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief Corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded" (Isa. 28: 16; 1 Peter 2: 6).

But let us now turn directly to the profound and comprehensive passage which forms the special subject of this paper. In it, most assuredly, we listen to the voice of a Saviour-God — the voice of Him who came down from Heaven to reveal God in such a way as He had never been revealed before. It is a marvellously blessed fact that God has been fully revealed in this world — revealed, so that we — the writer and the reader of these lines — may know Him, in all the reality of what He is — know Him, each for himself, with the utmost possible certainty, and have to do with Him, in all the blessed intimacy of personal communion.

Think of this! Think, we beseech you, of this amazing privilege. You may know God for yourself, as *your* Saviour, *your* Father, *your* own very God. You may have to do with Him; you may

lean upon Him, cling to Him, walk with Him, live and move and have your being in His own most blessed presence, in the bright sunshine of His loving countenance, under His own immediate eye.

This is life and peace. It is far more than mere theology or systematic divinity. These things have their value, but, be it remembered, a man may be a profound theologian, an able divine, and yet live and die without God and perish eternally. Solemn, awful, overwhelming thought! A man may go down to hell, into the blackness and darkness of an eternal night, with all the dogmas of theology at his fingers' ends. A man may sit in the professor's chair, stand in the pulpit and at the desk; he may be looked up to as a great teacher and an eloquent preacher: hundreds may sit at his feet and learn, thousands may hang on his lips and be enraptured, and, after all, he himself may descend into the pit, and spend a dismal, miserable eternity in company with the most profane and immoral.

Not so, however, with one who knows God as He is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. Such a one has gotten life eternal. "This," says Christ, "is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John 17: 3). It is not life eternal to know theology or divinity. A man may sit down to the study of these, as he would to study law or medicine, astronomy or geology, and all the while know nothing of God, and therefore be without divine life, and perish in the end.

So also as to mere religiousness. A man may be the greatest devotee in the world. He may most diligently discharge all the offices, and sedulously attend upon all the ordinances of systematic religion; he may fast and pray; hear sermons and say prayers; be most devout and exemplary; and all the while know nothing of God in Christ; yea, he may live and die without God, and sink into hell forever. Look at Nicodemus. Where could you find a better sample of religious human nature than in him? A man of the Pharisees, a ruler, of the Jews, a master in Israel; one, moreover, who seemed to discern in the miracles of our Lord the clear proofs of His divine mission; and yet the word to him was, "Ye must be born again." We have no need, surely, to go farther than this to prove that a man may be not only religious, but actually a guide and a teacher of others, and yet not have divine life in his soul.

But it is not so with one who knows God in Christ. Such a one has life and an object. He has God Himself for his priceless portion. This is divine. It lies at the very foundation of personal Christianity and true religion. It is above and beyond everything. It is not, we repeat, mere theology, divinity, or religiousness; it is God Himself, known, trusted, and enjoyed. It is a grand, unmistakable reality. It is the soul of theology, the groundwork of divinity, the life of true religion. There is nothing in all this world like it. It is something which must be *felt* in order to be known. It is acquaintance with God, confidence in Him, and enjoyment of Him.

Now, it may be that the reader is disposed to ask, "How can I possess this priceless treasure? How can I know God for myself, in this living, saving, powerful manner? If it be true that without this personal knowledge of God I *must* perish eternally, then how am I to obtain it? What am I to do, what am I to be, in order to know God?" The answer is, God has revealed Himself. If He had not, we may say with decision that nothing that we could do, nothing that we could be, nothing in us or of us, could possibly make us acquainted with God. If God had not manifested Himself, we should have remained forever in ignorance of Him and perished in our ignorance. But, seeing that He has come forth from the thick darkness and showed Himself, we may know Him according to the truth of His own revelation, and find, in that knowledge, everlasting life, and a spring of blessedness at which our ransomed souls shall drink throughout the golden ages of eternity.

We know of nothing which so clearly and forcibly proves man's utter incompetency to do aught towards procuring life, as the fact that the possession of that life is based upon the knowledge of God: and this knowledge of God must rest upon the *revelation* of God. In a word, to know God is life, to be ignorant of Him is death.

But where is He to be known? This is, in very deed, a grave question. Many a one has had to cry out, with Job, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him." Where is God to be found? Am I to look for Him in creation? Doubtless, His hand is visible there; but ah! that will not do for me. A Creator-God will not suit a lost sinner. *The hand of power* will not avail for a poor, guilty wretch like me. I want *a heart of Love*. Yes, I want a heart that can love me in all my

guilt and misery. Where can I find this? Shall I look into the wide domain of providence — the widely extended sphere of God's government? Has God revealed Himself there in such a way as to meet me, a poor lost one? Will providence and government avail for one who knows himself to be a hell-deserving sinner? Clearly not. If I look at these things, I may see what will perplex and confound me. I am short-sighted and ignorant, and wholly unable to explain the ins and outs, the bearings and issues, the why and the wherefore, of a single event in my own life, or in the history of this world. Am I able to explain all about the loss of *The London*? Can I account for the fact that a most valuable life is suddenly cut short, and an apparently useless one prolonged? There is a husband and the father of a large family; he seems perfectly indispensable to his domestic circle and yet, all in a moment, he is cut down, and they are left in sorrow and destitution; while, on the other hand, yonder lies a poor bed-ridden creature, who has outlived all her relations, and is dependent on the parish, or on individual benevolence. She has lain there for years, a burden to some, no use to any. Can I account for this? Am I competent to interpret the voice of Providence in this deeply mysterious dispensation? Certainly not. I have nothing in or of myself wherewith to thread my way through the mazes of the labyrinth of what is called providence. I cannot find a Saviour-God there.

Well, then, shall I turn to the law — to the Mosaic economy — the Levitical ceremonial? Shall I find what I want there? Will a Lawgiver, on the top of a fiery mount, wrapped in clouds and thick darkness, sending forth thunders and lightnings, or hidden behind a veil — will such a One avail for me? Alas! I cannot meet Him — I cannot answer His demands nor fulfil the conditions. I am told to love Him with all my heart, with all my mind, and with all my strength; but I do not know Him. I am blind and cannot see. I am alienated from the life of God, an enemy by wicked works. Sin has blinded my mind, blunted my conscience, and hardened my heart. The devil has completely perverted my moral being, and led me into a state of positive rebellion against God. I want to be renewed in the very source of my being ere I can do what the law demands. How can I be thus renewed? Only by the knowledge of God. But God is not revealed in the law. Nay, He is hidden — hidden behind an

impenetrable cloud, an unrent veil. Hence I cannot know Him there. I am compelled to retire from that fiery mount, and from that unrent veil, and from the whole economy of which these were the characteristic features, the prominent objects, still crying out, "Oh! that I knew where I might find Him." In a word, then, neither in creation, nor in providence, nor in the law, is God revealed as "a just God and a Saviour." I see a God of power in creation: a God of wisdom in providence; a God of justice in the law; a God of love *only* in the face of Jesus Christ. "*God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself*" (2 Cor. 5: 19).

To this stupendous fact we call the reader's earnest attention; that is, if he be one who does not yet know the Lord. It is of the very last possible importance that he be clear as to this. Without it there can be nothing right. To know God is the first step. It is not merely knowing some things about God. It is not unrenewed nature turning religious, trying to do better, endeavouring to keep the law. No; it is none of these things. It is God, known in the face of Jesus Christ. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This is the deep and blessed secret of the whole matter. The reader, so far as his natural condition is concerned, is in a state of darkness. There is not so much as a single ray of spiritual light. He is, spiritually and morally, just what creation was physically before that sublime and commanding utterance fell from the lips of the Almighty Creator, "Let there be light." All is dark and chaotic, for the "god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4: 4-6).

Here are two things; namely, the god of this world blinding the mind, and seeking to hinder the inshining of the precious, life-giving beams of the light of God's glory; and, on the other hand, God, in His marvellous grace, shining in the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Thus all hinges upon the grand reality of the knowledge of God. Is there light? It is because God is known. Is there darkness? It is because God is not known. No doubt there are various measures in the experience and

exhibition of this light: but there is light, because there is the knowledge of God. So also there may be various forms of darkness; some more hideous than others; but there is darkness because God is not known. The knowledge of God is light and life. Ignorance of God is darkness and death. A man may enrich himself with all the treasures of science and literature; but if he does not know God, he is in the darkness of primeval night. But, on the other hand, a man may be profoundly ignorant of all human learning; but if he knows God, he walks in broad day-light.

In the passage of Scripture which is engaging our attention, namely, John 3: 16, we have a very remarkable illustration of the character of the entire Gospel of John, and especially the opening chapters. It is impossible to meditate upon it without seizing this interesting fact. In it we are introduced to God Himself, in that wondrous aspect of His character and nature, as loving *the world* and giving His Son. In it, too, we find, not only the "world" as a whole, but the individual sinner, under that most satisfactory title of "whosoever." Thus God and the sinner are together — God, *loving* and *giving*; and the sinner, *believing* and *having*. It is not God judging and exacting; but God loving and giving. The former was law; the latter, grace; that was Judaism; this, Christianity. In the one, we see God demanding obedience in order to have life; in the other, we see God giving life as the only basis of obedience. In the one, we see man struggling for life, but never obtaining it; in the other, we see man receiving life as a free gift, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Such is the contrast between the two systems — a contrast which cannot be too deeply pondered. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1: 17).

But let us mark the way in which this is unfolded in our text. "God so loved the world." Here we have the wide aspect of the love of God. It is not confined to any particular nation, tribe, caste, or family. It embraces the whole world. God is love; and, being so, it is not a question of the fitness or worthiness of the object of His love. It is what He is. He is love, and He cannot deny Himself. It is the very energy and activity of His nature. The heart may have many a question, many an exercise as to its state and condition before God, and very right it should have them. The Spirit Himself may produce

such exercises and raise such questions; but, after all, the grand truth shines forth in all its lustre, "God is love." Whatever we are, whatever the world is, that is what God is; and we know that the truth as to God forms the deep and rich substratum which underlies the whole system of Christianity. The soul may pass through deep and sore conflict, under the sense of its own wretchedness; there may be many doubts say, and fears; many dark and heavy clouds; weeks, months, or years may be spent under the law, in one's inward self-consciousness, and that, moreover, long after the mere intellect has yielded its assent to the principles and doctrines of evangelical truth. But, after all, we must be brought into direct personal contact with God Himself — with what He is — with His nature and character, as He has revealed Himself in the gospel. We have to acquaint ourselves with Him, and He is love.

Observe, it does not say merely that God is loving, but that He is *love*. It is not only that love is an attribute of His character, but it is the very activity of His nature. We do not read that God is justice, or holiness; He is just and He is holy; but it would not express the full and blessed truth to say that God is loving; He is much more, He is love itself. Hence, when the sinner — "whosoever" he be, it matters not — is brought to see his own total and absolute ruin, his hopeless wretchedness, his guilt and misery, the utter vanity and worthlessness of all within and around him, (and there is nothing in the whole world that can satisfy his heart, and nothing in his heart that can satisfy God, or satisfy even his own conscience) when these things are opened in any measure to his view, then is he met by this grand substantial truth that "God is love," and that He so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son.

Here is life and rest for the soul. Here is salvation, full, free, and everlasting, for the poor, needy, guilty, lost one; — salvation resting not upon anything in man or of man, upon aught that he is or can be, aught that he has done or can do, but simply upon what God is and has done. God *loves* and *gives*, and the sinner *believes* and *has*. This is far beyond creation, government, or law. In creation, God spake and it was done. He called worlds into existence by the word of His mouth. But we hear nothing, throughout the entire record of creation, of God loving and giving.

So as to government, we see God ruling in unsearchable wisdom, amid the armies of Heaven, and among the children of men: but we cannot comprehend Him. We can only say as to this subject, that:

God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

Finally, as to the law, it is, from beginning to end, a perfect system of command and prohibition — a system perfect in its action as testing man, and making manifest his entire alienation from God. "The law worketh wrath." And again, "By the law is the knowledge of sin." But what could such a system do in a world of sinners? Could it give life? Impossible. Why? Because man could not fulfil its holy requirements. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, then verily, righteousness should have been by the law." But no; the law was a ministration of death and condemnation. (See 2 Cor. 3.) The only effect of the law, to anyone who is under it, is the pressure of death upon the soul, and of guilt and condemnation upon the conscience. It cannot possibly be otherwise with an honest soul under the law.

What, then, is needed? Simply this, the knowledge of the love of God, and of the precious gift which that love has bestowed. This is the eternal groundwork of all. Love, and the gift of love. For, be it observed and ever remembered, that God's love could never have

reached us save through the medium of that gift. God is holy, and we are sinful. How could we come near Him? How could we dwell in His holy presence? How could sin and holiness ever abide in company? Impossible. Justice demands the condemnation of sin; and if love will save the sinner, it must do so at no less a cost than the gift of the only-begotten Son. Darius loved Daniel, and laboured hard to save him from the lions' den; but his love was powerless because of the unbending law of the Medes and Persians. He spent the night in sorrow and fasting. He could weep at the mouth of the den; but he could not save his friend. His love was not mighty to save. If he had offered himself to the lions instead of his friend, it would have been morally glorious; but he did not. His love told itself forth in unavailing tears and lamentations. The law of the Persian kingdom was more powerful than the love of the Persian king. The law, in its stern majesty, triumphed over an impotent love which had nothing but fruitless tears to bestow upon its object.

But the love of God is not like this — eternal and universal praise to His name! His love is mighty to save. It *reigns* through righteousness. How is this? Because "God *so* loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." The law had declared in words of awful solemnity. "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Was this law less stern less majestic, less stringent, than the law of the Medes and Persians? Surely not. How then, was it to be disposed of? It was to be magnified and made honourable, vindicated and established. Not one jot or tittle of the law could ever be set aside. How, then, was the difficulty to be solved? Three things had to be done: the law had to be magnified; sin condemned; the sinner saved. How could these grand results be reached? We have the answer in two bold and vivid lines from one of our own poets:

“On Jesus' cross this record's graved,

Let sin be damned, and sinners saved.

Precious record! May many an anxious sinner read and believe it! Such was the amazing love of God, that He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. His love cost Him nothing less than the Son of His bosom. When it was a question of creating worlds, it cost Him but the word of His mouth: but when it was a

question of loving a world of sinners, it cost His only-begotten Son. The love of God is a holy love, a righteous love, a love acting in harmony with all the attributes of His nature, and the claims of His throne. "Grace *reigns*, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Christ Jesus our Lord." The soul can never be set at liberty till this truth be fully laid hold of. There may be certain vague hopes in the mercy of God, and a measure of confidence in the atoning work of Jesus, all true and real so far as it goes; but true liberty of heart cannot possibly be enjoyed until it is seen and understood that God has glorified Himself in the manner of His love toward us. Conscience could never be tranquillised, nor Satan silenced, if sin had not been perfectly judged and put away. But "God *so* loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." What depth and power in the little word "so"!

It may here be needful to meet a difficulty which often occurs to anxious souls, in reference to the question of appropriation. Thousands have been harassed and perplexed by this question, at some stage or other of their spiritual history; and it is not improbable that many who shall read these pages may be glad of a few words on the subject. Many may feel disposed to ask, "How am I to know that this love, and the gift of love, are intended for *me* ? What warrant have I for believing that 'everlasting life' is for *me*? I know the plan of salvation; I believe in the all-sufficiency of the atonement of Christ for the forgiveness and justification of all who truly believe. I am convinced of the truth of all that the Bible declares. I believe we are all sinners, and moreover, that we can do nothing to save ourselves — that we need to be washed in the blood of Jesus, and to be taught and led by the Holy Ghost, ere we can please God here, and dwell with Him hereafter. All this I fully believe, and yet I have no assurance that I am saved, and I want to know on what authority I am to believe that my sins are forgiven and that I have everlasting life."

If the foregoing be, in any measure, the language of the reader — if it be, at all, the expression of his difficulty, we would, in the first place, call his attention to two words which occur in our precious text (John 3:16), namely, "*world*" and "*whosoever*." It seems utterly impossible for anyone to refuse the application of

these two words. For what, let us ask, is the meaning of the term "*world*"? What does it embrace? or, rather, what does it not embrace? When our Lord declares that "God so loved the world," on what ground can the reader exclude himself from the range, scope, and application of this divine love? On no other ground whatever, unless he can show that he alone belongs not to the world, but to some other sphere of being. If it were declared that "the world" is hopelessly condemned, could anyone making a part of that world avoid the application of the sentence! Could he exclude himself from it? Impossible. How then can he — why should he — exclude himself, when it is a question of God's free love, and of salvation by Christ Jesus?

But, further, we would ask, What is the meaning, what is the force of the familiar word, "*whosoever*"? Assuredly it means "*anybody*", and if anybody, why not the reader? It is infinitely better, infinitely surer, and more satisfactory to find the word "whosoever" in the gospel than to find my own name there, inasmuch as there may be a thousand persons in the world of the same name; but "whosoever" applies to me as distinctly as though I were the only sinner on the face of the earth.

Thus, then, the very words of the gospel message — the very terms used to set forth the glad tidings, are such as leave no possible ground for a difficulty as to their application. If we listen to our Lord in the days of His flesh, we hear such words as these: "God so loved the *world* that He gave His only-begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Again, if we listen to Him after His resurrection, we hear these words, "Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to *every creature*" (Mark 16). And lastly, if we listen to the voice of the Holy Ghost sent from a risen, ascended, and glorified Lord, we hear such words as these: "The same Lord over all is rich unto *all* that call upon Him. For *whosoever* shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10: 12-13).

In all the above-cited passages we have two terms used, one general, the other particular, and both together so presenting the message of salvation as to leave no room whatever for anyone to refuse its application. If "all the world" is the scope, and "every

creature" is the object of the precious gospel of Christ, then, on what ground can anyone exclude himself? Where is there authority for any sinner out of hell to say that the glad tidings of salvation are not for him? There is none. Salvation is as free as the air we breathe — free as the dewdrops that refresh the earth — free as the sunbeams that shine upon our pathway; and if any attempt to limit its application, they are neither in harmony with the mind of Christ, nor in sympathy with the heart of God.

But it may be that some of our readers would, at this stage of the subject, feel disposed to ask us, "How do you dispose of the question of election?" We reply, "Very simply, by leaving it where God has placed it, namely, as a landmark in the inheritance of the spiritual Israel, and not as a stumbling-block in the pathway of the anxious inquirer." This we believe to be the true way of dealing with the deeply important doctrine of election. The more we ponder the subject, the more thoroughly are we convinced that it is a mistake on the part of the evangelist or preacher of the gospel to qualify his message, hamper his subject, or perplex his hearers, by the doctrine of election or predestination. He has to do with lost sinners in the discharge of his blessed ministry. He meets men where they are, on the broad ground of our common ruin, our common guilt, our common condemnation. He meets them with a message of full, free, present, personal, and eternal salvation — a message which comes fresh, fervent, and glowing from the very bosom of God. His ministry is, as the Holy Ghost declares in 2 Cor. 5, "a ministry of reconciliation," the glorious characteristics of which are these, "God in Christ" . . . "reconciling the world unto Himself" . . . "not imputing their trespasses"; and the marvellous foundation of which is, that God has made Jesus who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Does this trench, in the smallest degree, upon the blessed and clearly established truth of election? By no means. It leaves it, in all its integrity and in its full value, as a grand fundamental truth of Holy Scripture exactly where God has placed it; not as a preliminary question to be settled ere the sinner comes to Jesus, but as a most precious consolation and encouragement to him when he has come. This makes all the difference. If the sinner be called upon to settle

beforehand the question of his election, how is he to set about it? Whither is he to turn for a solution? Where shall he find a divine warrant for believing that he is one of the elect? Can he find a single line of Scripture on which to base his faith as to his election? He cannot. He can find scores of passages declaring him to be lost, guilty and undone — scores of passages to assure him of his total inability to do aught in the matter of his own salvation — hundreds of passages unfolding the free love of God, the value and efficacy of the atonement of Christ, and assuring him of a hearty welcome to come *Just as he is*, and make God's blessed salvation his own. But if it be needed for him to settle the prior question of his predestination and election, then is his case hopeless, and he must, in so far as he is in earnest, be plunged in black despair.

And is it not thus with thousands at this moment through the misapplication of the doctrine of election? We fully believe it is, and hence our anxiety to help our readers by setting the matter in what we judge to be the true light before their minds. We believe it to be of the utmost importance for the anxious inquirer to know that the standpoint from which he is called to view the cross of Christ is not the standpoint of election, but of conscious ruin. The grace of God meets him as a lost, dead, guilty sinner; not as an elect one. This is an unspeakable mercy, inasmuch as he knows he is the former, but cannot know that he is the latter until the gospel has come to him in power. "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." How did he know it? "Because our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (1 Thess. 1: 4-5). Paul preached to the Thessalonians as lost sinners; and when the gospel had laid hold of them as lost, he could write to them as elect.

This puts election in its right place. If the reader will turn for a moment to Acts 17, he will there see how Paul discharged his business as an evangelist amongst the Thessalonians: "Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that

this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ." So, also, in that passage at the opening of 1 Cor. 15: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures" (ver. 1-4).

From this passage, and many others which might be quoted, we learn that the apostle preached not merely a doctrine, but a person. He did not preach election. He taught it to saints, but never preached it to sinners. This should be the evangelist's model at all times. We never once find the apostles preaching election. They preached Christ — they unfolded the goodness of God — His loving-kindness — His tender mercy — His pardoning love — His gracious readiness to receive all who come in their true character and condition as lost sinners. Such was their mode of preaching, or, rather, such was the mode of the Holy Ghost in them; and such, too, was the mode of the blessed Master Himself. "*Come unto Me*, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will *give you rest*." "If *any man* thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." "Him that cometh to Me I will *in no wise* cast out" (Matt. 11; John 6-7).

Here are no stumbling-blocks in the way of anxious inquirers — no preliminary questions to be settled — no conditions to be fulfilled — no theological difficulties to be solved. No, the sinner is met on his own ground — met as he is — met just now. There is rest for the weary, drink for the thirsty, life for the dead, pardon for the guilty, salvation for the lost. Do these free invitations touch the doctrine of election? Assuredly not. And what is more, the doctrine of election does not touch them. In other words, a full and free gospel leaves perfectly untouched the grand and all-important truth of election; and the truth of election, in its proper place, leaves the gospel of the grace of God on its own broad and blessed base, and in all its divine length, breadth, and fullness. The gospel meets us as lost, and saves us; and then, when we know ourselves as saved, the precious doctrine of election comes in to establish us in the fact that

we can never be lost. It never was the purpose of God that poor anxious souls should be harassed with theological questions or points of doctrine. No; blessed forever be His name, it is His gracious desire that the healing balm of His pardoning love, and the cleansing efficacy of the atoning blood of Jesus, should be applied to the spiritual wounds of every sin-sick soul. And as to the doctrines of predestination and election, He has unfolded them in His Word to comfort His saints, not to perplex poor sinners. They shine like precious gems on the page of inspiration, but they were never intended to lie as stumbling-blocks in the way of earnest seekers after life and peace. They are deposited in the hand of the teacher to be unfolded in the bosom of the family of God; but they are not intended for the evangelist, whose blessed mission is to the highways and hedges of a lost world. They are designed to feed and comfort the children, not to scare and stumble the sinner. We would say, and that with real earnestness, to all evangelists, Do not hamper your preaching with theological questions of any sort or description. Preach Christ. Unfold the deep and everlasting love of a Saviour-God. Seek to bring the guilty, conscience-smitten sinner into the very presence of a pardoning God. Thunder, if you please, if so led, at the conscience — thunder loud at sin — thunder forth the dread realities of the great white throne, the lake of fire, and everlasting torment; but see that you aim at bringing the guilt-stricken conscience to rest in the atoning virtues of the blood of Christ. Then you can hand over the fruits of your ministry to the divinely qualified, to be instructed in the deeper mysteries of the faith of Christ. You may rest assured that the faithful discharge of your duty as an evangelist will never lead you to trespass on the domain of sound theology.

And to the anxious inquirer we would say with equal earnestness, Let nothing stand in your way in coming this moment to Jesus. Let theology speak as it may, you are to listen to the voice of Jesus, who says, "*Come unto Me.*" Be assured there is no hindrance, no difficulty, no hitch, no question, no condition. You are a lost sinner, and Jesus is a full Saviour. Put your trust in Him, and you are saved forever. Believe in Him, and you will know your place amongst the "elect of God" who are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son." Bring your sins to Jesus and

He will pardon them, cancel them by His blood, and clothe you in a spotless robe of divine righteousness. May God's Spirit lead you now to cast yourself simply and entirely upon that precious, all-sufficient Saviour!

We will now notice, very briefly, three distinct evils resulting from a wrong application of the doctrine of election, namely:

1. The discouragement of really earnest souls, who ought to be helped on in every possible way. If such persons are repulsed by the question of election, the result must be disastrous in the extreme. If they are told that the glad tidings of salvation are only for the elect — that Christ died only for such, and hence only such can be saved — that unless they are elect they have no right to apply to themselves the benefits of the death of Christ: if, in short, they are turned from Jesus to theology — from the heart of a loving, pardoning God to the cold and withering dogmas of systematic divinity, it is impossible to say where they may end; they may take refuge either in superstition on the one hand, or in infidelity on the other. They may end in high church, broad church, or no church at all. What they really want is Christ, the living, loving, precious, all-sufficient Christ of God. He is the true food for anxious souls.

2. But, in the second place, careless souls are rendered more careless still by a false application of the doctrine of election. Such persons, when pressed as to their state and prospects, will fold their arms and say, "You know I cannot believe unless God give me the power. If I am one of the elect, I must be saved; if not, I cannot. I can do nothing, but must wait God's time." All this false and flimsy reasoning should be exposed and demolished. It will not stand for a moment in the light of the judgement-seat of Christ. Each one will learn there that election furnished no excuse whatever, inasmuch as it never was set up by God as a barrier to the sinner's salvation. The word is "*Whosoever* will, let him take the water of life *freely*." The very same form of speech and style of language which removes the stumbling-block from the feet of the anxious inquirer snatches the plea from the lips of the careless rejecter. No one is shut out. All are invited. There is neither barrier on the one hand, nor a plea on the other. All are made welcome; and all are responsible. Hence, if any one presumes to excuse himself for refusing God's salvation, which

is as clear as a sunbeam, by urging God's decrees, which are entirely hidden, he will find himself fatally mistaken.

3. And now, in the third and last place, we have frequently seen with real sorrow of heart the earnest, loving, large-hearted evangelist damped and crippled by a false application of the truth of election. This should be most carefully avoided. We hold that it is not the business of the evangelist to preach election. If he is rightly instructed, he will *hold* it; but if he is rightly directed, he will not *preach* it.

In a word, then, the precious doctrine of election is not to be a stumbling-block to the anxious — a plea for the careless — a damper to the fervent evangelist. May God's Spirit give us to feel the adjusting power of truth!

Having thus briefly endeavoured to clear away any difficulty arising from the misuse of the precious doctrine of election, and to show the reader, "whosoever" he be, that there is no hindrance whatever to his full and hearty acceptance of God's free gift, even the gift of His only-begotten Son, it now only remains for us to consider the result, in every case, of this acceptance, as set forth in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Here, then, we have the result in the case of every one who believes in Jesus. He shall never perish, but possesses everlasting life. But who can attempt to unfold all that is included in this word "perish"? What mortal tongue can set forth the horrors of the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched"? We believe, assuredly, that none but the One who used the Word, in speaking to Nicodemus, can fully expound it to anyone; but we feel called upon to bear our decided and unequivocal testimony as to what He has taught on the solemn truth of eternal punishment. We have occasionally referred to this subject, but we believe it demands a formal notice; and inasmuch as the word "*perish*" occurs in the passage which has been occupying our thoughts, we cannot do better than call the reader's attention to it.

It is a serious and melancholy fact that the enemy of souls and of the truth of God is leading thousands, both in Europe and America, to call in question the momentous fact of the everlasting punishment of the wicked. This he does on various grounds, and by various arguments, adapted to the habits of thought and moral condition and intellectual standpoint of individuals. Some he seeks to persuade that God is too kind to send anyone to a place of torment. It is contrary to His benevolent mind and His beneficent nature to inflict pain on any of His creatures.

Now, to all who stand, or affect to stand, upon this ground of argument, we would suggest the important inquiry, "What is to be done with the sins of those who die impenitent and unbelieving?" Whatever there may be in the idea that God is too kind to send sinners to hell, it is certain that He is too holy to let sin into Heaven. He is "of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on iniquity" (Hab. 1: 13). God and evil cannot dwell together. This is plain. How, then, is the case to be met? If God cannot let sin into Heaven, what is to be done with the sinner who dies in his sins? He must perish! But what does this mean? Does it mean annihilation — that is, the utter extinction or blotting out of the very existence of body and soul? Nay, this cannot be. Many would like this, no doubt. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," would, alas, suit many thousands of the sons and daughters of pleasure who think only of the present moment, and who roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongue. There are millions on the surface of the globe who are bartering their eternal happiness for a few hours of guilty pleasure, and the crafty foe of mankind seeks to persuade such that there is no such place as hell, no such thing as the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; and in order to obtain a footing for this fatal suggestion, he bases it upon the plausible and imposing notions of the kindness of God.

Do not believe the arch-deceiver. Remember, God is holy. He cannot let sin into His presence. If you die in your sins you must perish, and this word "perish" involves, according to the clear testimony of Holy Scripture, eternal misery and torment in hell. Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ saith, in His solemn description of the judgement of the nations: "Then shall the King say also to them

on His left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into *everlasting* fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). And while you harken to these awfully solemn accents, remember that the word translated "everlasting" occurs seventy times in the New Testament, and is applied as follows: "Everlasting fire" — "eternal life" — "everlasting punishment" — "eternal damnation" — "everlasting habitations" — "the everlasting God" — "eternal weight of glory" — "everlasting destruction" — "everlasting consolation" — "eternal glory" — "eternal salvation" — "eternal judgement" — "eternal redemption" — "the eternal Spirit" — "eternal inheritance" — "everlasting kingdom" — "eternal fire."

Now, we ask any candid, thoughtful person, upon what principle can a word be said to mean *eternal* when applied to the Holy Ghost or to God, and only *temporary* when applied to hell-fire or the punishment of the wicked? If it means eternal in the one case, why not also in the other? We have just glanced at a Greek concordance, and we should like to ask, Would it be right to mark off some half-dozen passages in which the word "everlasting" occurs, and write opposite to each these words: "Everlasting here only means for a time"? The very thought is monstrous. It would be a daring and blasphemous insult offered to the volume of inspiration. No, be assured of it, you cannot touch the word "everlasting" in one case without touching it also in all the seventy cases in which it occurs. It is a dangerous thing to tamper with the Word of the living God. It is infinitely better to bow down under its holy authority. It is worse than useless to seek to avoid the plain meaning and solemn force of that word "perish" as applied to the immortal soul of man. It involves, beyond all question, the awful, the ineffably awful reality of burning forever in the flames of hell. This is what Scripture means by "perishing." The votary of pleasure, or the lover of money, may seek to forget this. They may seek to drown all thought of it in the glass or in the busy mart. The sentimentalist may rave about the divine benevolence; the sceptic may reason about the possibility of eternal fire; but we are intensely anxious that the reader should rise from this paper with the firm and deeply wrought conclusion and hearty belief that the punishment of all who die in their sins will be eternal in hell as surely as the blessedness of all who die in the faith of Christ will be eternal in the

heavens. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost would most assuredly have used a different word, when speaking of the former, from that which He applies to the latter. This, we conceive, is beyond all question.

But there is another objection urged against the doctrine of eternal punishment. It is frequently said, "How can we suppose that God would inflict eternal punishment as a penalty for a few short years of sin?" We reply, It is beginning at the wrong end to argue in this way. It is not a question of time as viewed from man's standpoint, but of the gravity of sin itself as looked at from God's standpoint. And how is this question to be solved? Only by looking at the Cross. If you want to know what sin is in God's sight, you must look at what it cost Him to put it away. It is by the standard of Christ's infinite sacrifice, and by that alone, that you can rightly measure sin. Men may compare their few years with God's eternity; they may compare their short span of life with that boundless eternity that stretches beyond; they may seek to put a few years of sin into one scale, and an eternity of woe and torment into the other, and thus attempt to reach a just conclusion: but it will never do to argue thus. The question is, Did it require an infinite atonement to put away sin? If so, the punishment of sin must be eternal. If nothing short of an infinite sacrifice could deliver from the consequences of sin, those consequences must be eternal.

In a word, then, we must look at sin from God's point of view, and measure it by His standard, else we shall never have a just sense of what it is or what it deserves. It is the height of folly for men to attempt to lay down a rule as to the amount or duration of the punishment due to sin. God alone can settle this. And, after all, what was it that produced all the misery and wretchedness the sickness and sorrow, the death and desolation, of well-nigh six thousand years? Just *one* act of disobedience — the eating of a forbidden fruit. Can man explain this? Can human reason explain how one act produced such an overwhelming amount of misery? It cannot. Well, then, if it cannot do this, how can it be trusted when it attempts to decide the question as to what is due to sin? Woe be to all those who commit themselves to its guidance on this most momentous point!

Ah, reader, you must see that God alone can estimate sin and its just deserts, and He alone can tell us all about it. And has He not

done so? Yes, verily, He has measured sin in the cross of His Son; and there, too, He has set forth in the most impressive manner what it deserves. What, think you, must that be that caused the bitter cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" If God forsook His only-begotten Son when He was made sin, must He not also forsake all who are found in their sins? But how can they ever get rid of them? We believe the conclusion is unavoidable. We consider that the infinite nature of the atonement proves unanswerably the doctrine of eternal punishment. That peerless and precious sacrifice is at once the foundation of our eternal life and of our deliverance from eternal death. It delivers from eternal wrath and introduces to eternal glory. It saves from the endless misery of hell and procures for us the endless bliss of Heaven. Thus, whatever side of the Cross we look at, or from whatever side we view it, we see eternity stamped upon it. If we view it from the gloomy depths of hell or from the sunny heights of Heaven, we see it to be the same infinite, eternal, divine reality. It is by the Cross we must measure both the blessedness of Heaven and the misery of hell. Those who put their trust in that blessed One who died on the cross obtain everlasting life and felicity. Those who reject Him must sink into endless perdition.

We do not by any means pretend to handle this question theologically, or to adduce all the arguments that might be advanced in defence of the doctrine of eternal punishment; but there is one further consideration which we must suggest to the reader as tending to lead him to a sound conclusion and that is the immortality of the soul. "God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." The fall of man in nowise touched the question of the soul's immortality. If, therefore, the soul is immortal, annihilation is impossible. The soul must live forever. Overwhelming thought! Forever! Forever! Forever! The whole moral being sinks under the awful magnitude of the thought. It surpasses all conception and baffles all mental calculation. Human arithmetic can only deal with the finite. It has no figures by which to represent a never-ending eternity. But the writer and the reader must live throughout eternity either in that bright and blessed world above or in that terrible place where hope can never come.

May God's Spirit impress our hearts more and more with the solemnity of eternity, and of immortal souls going down into hell. We are deplorably deficient in feeling as to these weighty realities. We are daily thrown in contact with people, we buy and sell and carry on intercourse in various ways with those who must live forever, and yet how rarely do we seek occasion to press upon them the awfulness of eternity and the appalling condition of all who die without a personal interest in the blood of Christ!

Let us ask God to make us more earnest, more solemn, more faithful, more zealous in pleading with souls, in warning others to flee from the wrath to come. We want to live more in the light of eternity, and then we shall be better able to deal with others.

It only remains for us now to ponder the last clause of the fruitful passage of Scripture which has been under consideration (John 3: 16). It sets forth the positive result, in every case, of simple faith in the Son of God. It declares, in the simplest and clearest way, the fact that every one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is a possessor of everlasting life. It is not merely that his sins are blotted out; that is blessedly true. Nor is it merely that he is saved from the consequences of his guilt, which is equally true. But there is more. The believer in Jesus has a new life, and that life is in the Son of God. He is placed upon a new footing altogether. He is no longer looked at in the old Adam condition, but in a risen Christ.

This is an immense truth, and one of deepest possible moment. We earnestly pray the reader's calm and prayerful attention while we seek, in some feeble way, to present to him what we believe to be wrapped up in the last clause of John 3: 16.

There is in the minds of many a very imperfect sense of what we get by faith in Christ. Some seem to view the atoning work of Christ merely as a remedial measure for the sins of our old nature — the payment of debts contracted in our old condition. That it is all this we need not say; blessed be God for the precious truth. But it is much more. It is not merely that the sins are atoned for, but the nature which committed them is condemned and set aside by the cross of Christ, and is to be "*reckoned*" dead by the believer. It is not merely that the debts contracted in the old condition are cancelled,

but the old condition itself is completely ignored by God, and is to be so accounted by the believer.

This great truth is doctrinally unfolded in 2 Cor. 5, where we read, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (ver. 17). The apostle does not say, "If any man be in Christ he is pardoned — his sins are forgiven — his debts paid." All this is divinely true; but the statement just quoted goes very much farther. It declares that a man in Christ is a new creation altogether. It is not the old nature pardoned, but completely set aside, with all its belongings, and a new creation introduced in which there is not a single shred of the old. "All things are become new; and all things are of God."

Now this gives immense relief to the heart. Indeed, we question if any soul can enter into the full liberty of the gospel of Christ until he lay hold, in some measure, of the truth of the "new creation." There may be a looking to Christ for pardon, a vague hope of getting to Heaven at the last, a measure of reliance on the goodness and mercy of God — there may be all this, and yet no just sense of the meaning of "everlasting life," no happy consciousness of being "a new creation" — no understanding of the grand fact that the old Adam nature is entirely set aside, the old condition in which we stood done away in God's sight.

But it is more than probable that some of our readers may be at a loss to know what is meant by such terms as "the old Adam nature" — "the old condition" — "the flesh" — "the old man," and such like. These expressions may fall strangely on the ears of those for whom we specially write; and we certainly wish to avoid shooting over the heads of our readers. As God is our witness, there is one thing we earnestly desire, one object which we would ever keep before our minds, and that is the instruction and edification of our readers; and therefore we would rather run the risk of being tedious than make use of phrases which convey no clear or intelligible idea to the mind. Such terms as "the old man" — "the flesh," and the like, are used in Scripture in manifold places: for example, in Rom. 6 we read, "Our *old man* is crucified with Him Christ], that *the body of sin* might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (ver. 6).

Now what does the apostle mean by the "old man"? We believe he means man as in that Adam nature which we inherited from our first parents. And what does he mean by "the body of sin"? We believe he means the whole system or condition in which we stood in our unregenerate, unrenewed, unconverted state. The old Adam, then, is declared to be crucified — the old condition of sin is said to be destroyed (annulled) — by the death of Christ. Hence the soul that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is privileged to know that he — his sinful, guilty self — is looked upon by God as dead and set aside completely. He has no more existence as such before God. He is dead and buried.

Observe, it is not merely that our sins are forgiven, our debts paid, our guilt atoned for; but the man in the nature that committed the sins, contracted the debts, and incurred the guilt, is put forever out of God's sight. It is not God's way to forgive us our sins and yet leave us in the same relations in which we committed them. No; He has, in His marvellous grace and vast plan, condemned and abolished forever, for the believer, the old Adam relationship, with all its belongings, so that it is no longer recognized by Him. We are declared, by the voice of holy Scripture to be "crucified" — "dead" — "buried" — "risen" with Christ. God tells us we are so, and we are to "*reckon*" ourselves to be so. It is a matter of faith, and not of feeling. If I look at myself from *my* standpoint, or judge by my feelings, I shall never, can never understand this truth. And why? Because I feel myself to be just the same sinful creature as ever. I feel that there is sin in me; that in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing; that my old nature is in nowise changed or improved; that it has the same evil tendencies as ever, and, if not mortified and kept down by the gracious energy of the Holy Spirit, it will break out in its true character.

And it is just here, we doubt not, that so many sincere souls are perplexed and troubled. They are looking at themselves, and *reasoning* upon what they see and feel, instead of resting in the truth of God, and *reckoning* themselves to be what God tells them they are. They find it difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile what they feel in themselves with what they read in the Word of God — to make their inward self-consciousness harmonise with God's

revelation. But we must remember that faith takes God at His Word. It ever thinks with Him on all points. It believes what He says because He says it. Hence, if God tells me that my old man is crucified, that He no longer sees me as in the old Adam state, but in a risen Christ, I am to believe, like a little child, what He tells me, and walk in the faith of it from day to day. If I look in at myself for evidences of the truth of what God says, it is not faith at all. Abraham "considered not his own body, now dead, when he was about an hundred years old; neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom. 4: 19-20).

This is the great principle which underlies the whole Christian system. "Abraham believed God," not something about God, but God Himself. This is faith. It is taking God's thoughts in place of our own. It is, in short allowing God to think for us.

Now, when we apply this to the subject before us, it makes it most simple. He that believeth in the Son of God hath everlasting life. Mark, it is not he that believeth something about the Son of God. No, it is he that believeth in Himself. It is a question of simple faith in the person of Christ; and everyone that has this faith is the actual possessor of everlasting life. This is the direct and positive statement of our Lord in the Gospels. It is repeated over and over again. Nor is this all. Not only does the believer thus possess eternal life, but by the further light which the Epistles throw upon this grand question he may see that his old self — that which he was in nature — that which the apostle designates "the old man" — is accounted by God dead and buried. This may be difficult to understand; but the reader must remember he must believe not because he understands, but because it is written in God's Word. It is not said, "Abraham understood God." No; but he "believed God." It is when the heart believes that light is poured in upon the understanding. If I wait till I understand in order to believe, I am leaning to my own understanding, instead of committing myself in childlike faith to God's Word.

Reader, ponder this! You may say you cannot understand how your sinful self can be looked upon as dead and gone while you feel its workings, its heavings, its tossings, its tendencies, continually

within you. We reply, or rather God's eternal Word declares, that if your heart believes in Jesus, then is all this true for you, namely, you *have* eternal life; *you are* justified from all things; you *are* a new creation; old things *are* passed away; *all* things *are* become new; and *all* things *are* of God. In a word, you are "*in Christ,*" and "*as He is, so are you in this world*" (1 John 4: 17).

And is not this a great deal more than the mere pardoning of your sins, the cancelling of your debts, or the salvation of your soul from hell? Assuredly it is. And suppose we were to ask you on what authority you believe in the forgiveness of your sins. Is it because you feel, realize, or understand? Nay; but because it is written, "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10: 43). "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1: 7). Well, then, upon precisely the same authority you are to believe that your old man has been crucified, that you are not in the flesh, not in the old creation, not in the old Adam relation; but that, on the contrary, you are viewed by God as actually in a risen and glorified Christ — that He looks upon you as He looks upon Christ.

True it is — alas, how true! — the flesh is in you, and you are still here, as to the fact of your condition, in this old world, which is under judgement. But then, hear what your Lord saith, when speaking about you to His Father: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." And again, "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."

Hence, therefore, if you will just bow to God's Word, if you will reason not about what you see in yourself, and feel in yourself, and think of yourself, but simply *believe* what God says, you will enter into the blessed peace and holy liberty flowing from the fact that you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; not in the old creation, but in the new; not under law, but under grace; not of the world, but of God. You have passed clean off the old platform which you occupied as a child of nature and a member of the first Adam, and you have taken your place on a new platform altogether as a child of God and a member of Christ.

All this is vividly prefigured by the deluge and the ark, in the days of Noah. (See Gen. 6 - 8.) "And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, *The end of all flesh is come before Me*; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth." Here, then, was, in type, the end of the old creation. All was to pass under the waters of judgement. What then? "Make thee an ark of gopher wood." Here we have set forth a figure of the new thing. That ark, floating peacefully over the dark abyss of waters, was a type of Christ, and the believer in Him. The old world, together with man, was buried beneath the waves of judgement, and the only object that remained was the ark — the vessel of mercy and salvation, riding in safety and triumph over the billows. Thus it is now, in truth and reality. There is nothing before the eye of God but a risen, victorious and glorified Christ, and His people linked with Him. The end of *all* flesh has come before God. It is not a question of some very gross forms of "flesh" or of nature, of that merely which is "vile and refuse." No; it is "the *end of all*." Such is the solemn, sweeping verdict; and then — what? A risen Christ. Nothing else. All in Him are seen by God as He is seen. All out of Him are under judgement. It all hinges upon this one question. "Am I in or out of Christ?" What a question!

Are you in Christ? Do you believe in His name? Have you given Him the confidence of your heart? If so, you have "eternal life" — you are "a new creature" — "old things are passed away." God does not see a single shred of the old thing remaining for you. "All things are become new, and all things are of God." You may say you do not *feel* that old things are all passed away. We reply, God says they are, and it is your happy privilege to *believe* what He says, and "*reckon*" yourself to be what He declares you are. God speaks according to that which is true of you in Christ. He does not see you in the flesh, but in Christ. There is absolutely nothing before the eye of God but Christ: and the very weakest believer is viewed as part of Christ, just as your hand is a part of your body. You have no existence before God apart from Christ — no life — no righteousness - no holiness — no wisdom — no power. Apart from Him, you have nothing, and can be nothing. In Him you have all and

are all, He says; you are thoroughly identified with Christ. Marvellous fact! Profound mystery! Most glorious truth! It is not a question of attainment or of progress. It is the settled and absolute standing of the feeblest member of the Church of God. True, there are various measures of intelligence, experience, and devotedness; but there is only one life, one standing, one position before God, and that is Christ. There is no such thing as a higher or lower Christian life. Christ is the believer's life, and you cannot speak of a higher or a lower Christ. We can understand the higher stages of Christian life; but there is no spiritual intelligence in speaking of a higher Christian life.

This is a grand truth, and we earnestly pray that God the Spirit may open it fully to the mind of the reader. We feel assured that a clearer understanding thereof would chase away a thousand mists, answer a thousand questions, and solve a thousand difficulties. It would not only have the effect of giving settled peace to the soul, but also of determining the believer's position in the most distinct way. If Christ is my life — if I am in Him and identified with Him, then not only do I share in His acceptance with God, but also in His rejection by this present world. The two things go together. They form the two sides of the one grand question. If I am in Christ and as Christ before God, then I am in Christ and as Christ before the world: and it will never do to accept the result of this union before God and refuse the result of it as regards the world. If we have the one, we must have the other likewise.

All this is fully unfolded in John 17. There we read on the one hand, "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and *hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me*" (ver. 22-23). And, on the other hand, we read, "I have given them Thy Word; and *the world hath hated them*, because they are not of this world, even as I am not of the world" (ver. 14). This is as plain and positive as anything can be. And be it remembered that, in this wondrous Scripture, our Lord is not speaking merely of the apostles, but, as He says, of "them also who shall believe on Me through their word," that is, of all believers. Hence it follows that all who believe

in Jesus are one with Him as accepted above, and one with Him as rejected below. The two things are inseparable. The Head and the members share in one common acceptance in Heaven, and in one common rejection upon earth. Oh that all the Lord's people entered more into the truth and reality of this! Would that we all knew a little more of the meaning of fellowship with a Heaven-accepted, earth-rejected Christ!

John 3: 36.

Eternal Punishment vs Universalism and Annihilationism.

I have been thinking a good deal of late, on the last verse of the third chapter of John. It seems to me to furnish a most powerful answer to two of the leading heresies of this our day, namely, *Universalism* on the one hand, and *Annihilationism*, on the other: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, *shall not see life*; but *the wrath of God abideth on him.*"

The deniers of eternal punishment, as you know, are divided into two classes, differing from each other very materially. The one professes to believe that all will ultimately be restored and brought into everlasting felicity; these are the *Universalists*. The other is of the opinion that all who die out of Christ are annihilated, soul and body — made an end of thoroughly — will perish like the beast.

I think you will agree with me that John 3: 36 completely demolishes both these fatal errors. It meets the Universalist by the sweeping and conclusive statement that the unbeliever "shall not see life." It entirely sets aside the notion of all being restored and eternally saved. Those who refuse to believe the Son, shall die in their sins, and never see life.

But, were this all, the Annihilationist might say, "Exactly so; that is just what I believe. None but those who believe in the Son shall live eternally. Eternal life is only in the Son, and hence, all who die out of Christ shall perish — soul and body shall be made an end of."

Not so, says the Holy Spirit. It is quite true they shall not see life; but — tremendous fact! "The wrath of God *abideth on him.*" This, beyond all question, gives a flat contradiction to annihilationism. If the wrath of God is to abide upon the believer, it is utterly impossible he can be made an end of. Annihilation and abiding wrath are wholly incompatible. We must either erase the

word "abiding" from the inspired page, or abandon completely the notion of annihilation. To hold the two is out of the question.

Of course, I am merely now referring to this one passage of Holy Scripture; and truly it is enough of itself to settle any mind that simply bows to the voice of God, as to the solemn question of eternal punishment. But here is just the point. Men will not submit to the teaching and authority of Holy Scripture. They presume to sit in judgement upon what is and what is not worthy of God to do. They imagine that people may live in sin, in folly, in rebellion against God, and in the neglect of His Christ, and after all go unpunished. They take upon them to decide that it is inconsistent with their idea of God to allow such a thing as eternal punishment. They attribute to the government of God what we should consider a weakness in any human government, namely, an inability to punish evil-doers.

But the Word of God is against them. It speaks of "*unquenchable* fire" — of an "*undying* worm" — of a "*fixed* gulf" — of "*abiding* wrath" What, I would ask, is the meaning of such words, in the judgement of any honest, unprejudiced mind? It may be said that these are figures. Granted that the "fire," the "worm," and the "gulf" are figures, but figures of what? Of something ephemeral — something which must, sooner or later, have an end? Nay; but something which is eternal, if anything is eternal.

If we deny eternal punishment, we must deny an eternal anything, inasmuch as it is the same word which is used in every instance to express the idea of endless continuance. There are about seventy passages in the Greek New Testament where the word "everlasting" occurs. It is applied, amongst many other things, to the life which believers possess, and to the punishment of the wicked, as in Matthew 25: 46. Now, upon what principle can any one attempt to take out the six or seven passages in which it applies to the punishment of the wicked, and say that in all these instances it does not mean for ever; but that in all the rest it does? I confess this seems to be perfectly unanswerable. If the Holy Ghost, if the Lord Jesus Christ Himself had thought proper to make use of a different word, when speaking of the punishment of the wicked, from what

He uses when speaking of the life of believers, I grant there might be some basis for an objection.

But no; we find the same word invariably used to express what everybody knows to be endless; and therefore if the punishment of the wicked be not endless, nothing is endless. They cannot, consistently, stop short with the question of punishment, but must go on to the denial of the very existence of God Himself.

Indeed, I cannot but believe that here lies the real root of the matter. The enemy desires to get rid of the Word of God, of the Spirit of God, the Christ of God, and God Himself; and he craftily begins by introducing the thin end of his fatal wedge, in the denial of eternal punishment; and when this is admitted, the soul has taken the first step on the inclined plane which leads down to the dark abyss of atheism.

This may seem strong, harsh, and ultra; but it is my deep and thorough conviction; and I feel most solemnly impressed with the necessity of warning all our young friends against the danger of admitting into their minds the very shadow of a question or doubt as to the divinely established truth of the endless punishment of the wicked in hell. The unbeliever cannot be restored, for Scripture declares "he shall not see life." Moreover, he cannot be annihilated, for Scripture declares that "the wrath of God abideth upon him."

How much better and wiser and safer it would be for our fellow men to flee from the wrath to come than to deny that it is coming; or that, when it does come, it will be eternal.

John 3.

The Two Musts.

In our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus He twice makes use of the word "must" — a word of immense depth and moral power in both cases. Let us ponder it for a few moments; for, though but a word of one syllable, it contains a volume of most precious evangelical truth in whichever light we view it.

1. And first, then, we read, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Here we have the total setting aside of man in his very best estate. If I must be born again, if I must have a new life, a new nature then it matters not in the smallest degree what I can or cannot boast of. Man, as born of a woman, enters this world with the image of his fallen parent stamped upon him. Man, as he came from the hand of his Creator, was made in the "image of God." Man, as he issues from the womb of his mother, bears the image and likeness of a fallen creature. Hence the force of our Lord's expression, "Ye *must* be born again." It is not said, Ye must mend, ye must try and be better, ye must alter your mode of living, ye must turn over a new leaf. Had it been thus, Nicodemus would never have asked, "How can these things be?" A man of the Pharisees would have understood any or all of these things. A change of conduct, a change of character, any moral reform, any self-improvement, is perfectly intelligible to a Pharisee of every age; but to be told "Ye *must* be *born* again" can only be understood by one who has reached the end of himself and his doings; who has been brought to see that in him, that is in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing; who sees himself as a thorough bankrupt without a certificate, who can never again set up on his own account. He must get a new life to which the verdict of bankruptcy cannot apply, and he must trade in the wealth of another, on which creditors have no possible claim.

There is immense power in this little word "*must*." It bears upon all alike. It speaks to the drunkard, and says, "You must be born again." It addresses the most rigid teetotaller, and says, "You must be born again." It speaks to every class, to every condition, to every grade and shade of character, to man in every rank and every

clime, to every creed and every denomination, in its own clear, emphatic, sweeping style, and says, "You *must* be born again." It bears down with far more weight upon the conscience than any appeal that could be made on the ground of moral conduct. It does not interfere in the least with the question of moral reform, in any one of its many phases. It allows as broad a margin as any philanthropist or moral reformer may desire. It does not disturb the various distinctions which society, public opinion, law or equity has established. It leaves all these things perfectly untouched, but it raises its clear and commanding voice above them all, and says to the sinner — to man as born of a woman — to the worst and to the best of men, "You *must* be born again." It demands not reformation, but regeneration; not amendment, but a new life.

2. What then, it may be asked, are we to do? Whither are we to turn? How are we to get this new life? Our Lord's second "must" furnishes the reply. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever *believeth* in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." This makes all plain. A second Man has entered the scene. There are two *men* and two *musts*. As to the first man, he must be born again, and as to the second Man, He must be lifted up. In a word, the Cross is the grand solution of the difficulty, the divine answer to the "How?" Am I completely struck down by the first "must"? Am I overwhelmed by the insuperable difficulty which it proposes to me? Am I on the very verge of despair as I contemplate the apparent impossibility of what, nevertheless, *must* be? Oh then, with what power does the second "must" fall on my heart! "The Son of man must be lifted up." Why must He? Because I must have new life, and this life is in the Son, but it could only be mine through His death. The death of the second Man is the only ground of life to the first — life to *me*. One look at Christ, as lifted up for me, is life eternal. The soul that simply believes on the Son of God, as dead and risen, is "born of water and of the Spirit;" he *hath* everlasting life — he *is* passed from death unto life, from the old creation into the new, from the first man to the Second, from guilt to righteousness, from condemnation to favour, from darkness to light, from Satan to God. May God the Spirit unfold to the reader's heart the beauty and

power, the depth, the comprehensiveness, and moral glory of the two "musts."

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3: 5-7).

John 7: 37-38

“RIVERS OF LIVING WATER”

“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7: 37-38).

The feast referred to in this lovely scripture was “the feast of tabernacles,” called at the opening of the chapter, “The Jews' feast.” This stamped its character. It could no longer be called, as in Leviticus 23, “A feast of Jehovah.” The Lord could not own it. It had become an empty formality, a powerless ordinance, a piece of barren routine — something in which man could boast himself while God was entirely shut out.

This is nothing uncommon. There has ever been a strong tendency in the human mind to perpetuate forms when the power is gone. Power may clothe itself in a certain form, and so long as the form is the expression of the power, it is all right and good. But the danger lies in going on with the mere outward form without a single particle of inward power. Thus it was with Israel of old, and thus it is with the professing Church now. We have all to watch against this snare of the devil. He will use a positive ordinance of God as a means of deceiving the soul and shutting out God altogether. But where faith is in lively exercise, the soul has to do with God in the ordinance, whatever it is, and thus the power and freshness are duly maintained.

The reader may have noticed that in the opening chapters of John's Gospel, the inspired writer invariably designates the feasts as *feasts of the Jews*. Not only so, but we find the Lord Jesus displacing one after another of these feasts and offering Himself as an object for the heart. Thus at the opening of John 7 we read, “After these things Jesus walked in Galilee, for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.” Terrible anomaly! Deadly delusion! Seeking to murder the Son of God, and yet keeping the feast of

tabernacles! Such is religious man without God. "His brethren therefore said unto Him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that Thy disciples also may see Thy works that Thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world. For neither did His brethren believe on Him."

Near as His brethren were to Him according to the flesh, they knew Him not, they believed not on Him. They wanted Him to make a display of Himself before the world. They knew not His object. He had not come from heaven to be gazed at and wondered after. "All the world will wonder after the beast" by-and-by, but the blessed Son of God came to serve and to give. He came to hide Himself, to glorify God and to serve man.

He therefore refused to exhibit Himself at the feast. "Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but Me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet to this feast, for My time is not yet fully come. When He had said these words unto them, He abode still in Galilee. But when His brethren were gone up, then went He also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret."

And for what did He go up? He went up to serve. He went up to glorify His Father and to be the willing Servant of man's necessity. "Now about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews marveled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, saying, My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me." Here His moral glory, as the self-hiding Servant, shines out. "My doctrine is not Mine." Such was His answer to those who wondered where He got His learning. Alas! they knew Him not. His motives and His objects lay beyond the reach of carnal and worldly-minded men. They measured Him by their own standard; hence all their conclusions were utterly false. "If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of Myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory, but He that seeketh His glory that sent Him, the same is true and no unrighteousness is in Him."

The blessed One did not speak from Himself, as if He were independent of the Father, but as One who lived in absolute and complete dependence and in unbroken communion, drawing all His springs from the living God, doing nothing, saying nothing, thinking nothing apart from the Father.

We have the same truth with reference to the Holy Spirit in John 16. “Howbeit, when He the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth, for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come.” The Holy Spirit did not speak from Himself as independent of the Father and the Son, but as One in full communion with them.

We must turn to the words which form the special subject of this paper. “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.” Here we have set before us a truth of infinite preciousness and immense practical power. The Person of Christ is the divine spring of all freshness and spiritual energy. It is in Him alone the soul can find all it really needs. It is to Him we must go for all our personal refreshment and blessing. If at any time we find ourselves dull, heavy and barren, what are we to do? Make efforts to raise the tone? No, this will never do. What then? Let him “Come unto Me and drink.”

Mark the words. It is not, “Come unto Me and draw.” We may draw for others and be dry ourselves, but if we drink, our own souls are refreshed with “rivers of living water.”

Nothing is more miserable than the restless efforts of a soul out of communion. We may be very busy; our hands may be full of work; our feet may run here and there; the head may be full of knowledge; but if the heart is not livingly occupied with the Person of Christ, it will — it must be — all barrenness and desolation so far as we are personally concerned. Also, there will be no “rivers of living water” flowing out for others. If we are to be made a blessing to others, we must feed upon Christ for ourselves. We do not “drink” for other people; we drink to satisfy our thirst, and as we drink, the rivers flow. Show us a man whose heart is filled with

Christ and we will show you a man whose hands are ready for work and his feet ready to run, but unless we begin with heart communion, our running and our doing will be a miserable failure. There will be no glory to God, no rivers of living water.

Yes, reader, we must begin in the very innermost circle of our own moral being and there be occupied by faith with a living Christ, else all our service will prove utterly worthless. If we want to influence others, if we would be made a blessing in our day and generation, if we desire to bring forth any fruit to God, if we would shine as lights amid the moral gloom around, if we would be a channel of blessing in the midst of a sterile desert, then we must hearken to our Lord's words in John 7: 37. We must drink at the fountain head. And what then? Drink still, drink always, drink largely, and then the rivers must flow. If I say, "I must try and be a channel of blessing to others" I shall only prove my own folly and weakness. But if I bring my empty vessel to the fountain-head and get it filled there, then without the smallest effort, the rivers will flow.

John 8: 1-11.

ALONE WITH JESUS

The more closely and prayerfully we study the four Gospels, the more clearly do we see the distinct design of the Holy Spirit in each, and the perfect way in which He has pursued and carried out that design even in the most minute details. The grand theme of each is Christ, but in no two of the Gospels is He presented in the same way. In Matthew we have Him as the Messiah, Son of Abraham, Son of David, a Jew, heir of the promises made to the fathers, heir of the throne of David, fulfiller of the prophecies, presented to Israel according to their own Scriptures and deliberately rejected.

Such is the distinct object of the Holy Spirit in Matthew — such is His marked design. This He pursues throughout with unswerving faithfulness. To this end everything is made subservient. With a view to this He culls, groups and arranges His materials. For this, chronological order is set aside without hesitation and without apology. Scenes and circumstances, separated by many months, are grouped together by the skillful hand of the Holy Spirit for the specific purpose of presenting His subject in perfect keeping with the scope and design of the entire Gospel, from which He never diverges the breadth of a hair. In a word, Matthew groups *for dispensational ends* what we may call the great dispensational Gospel.

In Mark we have our blessed Lord as the Servant, the perfect Workman, the divine Minister, the diligent Preacher and Teacher whose days were given to work and His nights to prayer. He could hardly find time to eat or sleep — the most laborious Worker who ever worked in God's great harvest field. Mark tells us by the Holy Spirit what the Savior did and how He did it. His gospel is a marvelous record of *work* from first to last. We have no record of our Lord's birth — no genealogical chain stretching back to David, to Abraham or to Adam. There was no need to trace the pedigree of One who came to serve, to work, to toil night and day. The question in Mark is not so much who He was as *what He did*. We are simply told He was “Jesus Christ the Son of God.” Then the inspired

penman plunges into his subject and gives a rapid survey of a life of unparalleled labor — a path of service pursued with unflinching decision from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary, and resumed in resurrection and carried on from the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. See Mark 16: 19-20.

Thus much as to Mark who observes throughout the strict historical order. It is important for the reader to note this, as it will enable him to see the instances in which both Matthew and Luke depart from strict chronological sequence.

Luke gives us “The *Man* Christ Jesus.” Such is preeminently his theme. Hence he gives us the pedigree traced up, not merely to David and Abraham, but to Adam and to God. It is not the Messiah nor the Jew nor the worker, but the Man. All that which is exquisitely human we have in Luke, just as we have all that is purely Jewish in Matthew and all that is directly ministerial in Mark. Luke groups for *moral ends* as Matthew for *dispensational purposes*. Mark does not group; he simply records *in historic order* the facts of our Lord's marvelous ministry.

Now, before turning to that gospel from which the subject of this paper is selected, we would request the reader's earnest attention to what we have stated in reference to the three *synoptic Gospels* as they have been called. We would ask him to study the Gospels for himself, to compare the passages diligently, to seek to understand why Matthew or Luke departs in any given case from the exact order of time, to ask God to teach him by His Holy Spirit the true reason for every such departure. In this way we feel persuaded he will reap a rich harvest of blessing. He will obtain a deeper insight into the infinite wisdom that dictated those peerless documents. He will rise from his study with a more profound faith in the complete inspiration of these wonderful narratives.

Furthermore, he will see that those very passages in which the rationalist, the skeptic or the infidel has sought to find flaws and discrepancies, present the most striking and exquisite proofs of divine wisdom and marked design. He will be convinced that there is no standing-ground between these two conclusions, that the evangelists were either divinely inspired or they were the most

senseless narrators that ever put pen to paper. That they were divinely inspired is proved in every page, in every paragraph, in every line. The internal evidence is irresistible. Hence it follows that these inspired writers could no more clash one with another than two heavenly bodies while pursuing their divinely appointed orbits, could come into collision. If there seems to be a discrepancy, it is simply because of our ignorance. Let us devoutly own this and wait for further light.

We shall now proceed with our immediate theme.

The Gospel of John has a character uniquely its own. In it the Holy Spirit unfolds to our view the Person of the Son of God, the Word, the Eternal Life, the true God. It is not the Messiah as in Matthew — not the Minister as in Mark — not the social Man as in Luke, but *the Son* — what He was in Himself from all eternity; what He was though rejected by Israel and the world at large; what He was to any poor way-worn, heavy laden, sin-burdened creature who crossed His blessed path.

Such is the lofty theme of the divinely inspired John. And what is so uniquely touching is that while John gives us the very highest possible view of the Blessed One — the most glorious revelation of the Person of the Son — he nevertheless continually shows Him to us alone with the sinner. This surely is a fact full of sweetness, comfort and divine power for us.

Let us look at the opening paragraph of John 8, a paragraph that bears upon its every clause the stamp of divine inspiration. Our blessed Lord, having spent His night on the lonely mountain top, is found early in the morning at His post, teaching the people in the temple. Into His holy and gracious presence, the scribes and Pharisees bring a poor convicted sinner — one respecting whom there could be no possible mistake, one who had openly and flagrantly broken the law of Moses. They quote the law against her. “Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned, but what sayest Thou?”

Here then was a case. These men, no doubt, thought to involve our Lord in a dilemma. They wanted to bring Him into collision

with Moses — to make it appear that He was throwing the law overboard. This might seem very clever, but what is cleverness in the presence of God? Still their purpose was obvious. If He had said, “Stone her,” they might pronounce Him no better than Moses. If He had said, “You must not stone her,” then He was making void the law. But He said neither. “The law was given by Moses,” and the Lord allows it to stand in all its majesty, in all its stringency, in all its force. He came not to destroy the law, but to magnify it in the very highest possible manner, both in His life and in His death.

It is a very grave error indeed to suppose the law is set aside. So far from this, the apostle in 1 Timothy declares that “The law is good if a man use it lawfully.” If the law were dead or set aside, it could not be said to be good for anything, for that which is dead is good for nothing. What then is the law good for? Not for justification, but for conviction — not as a rule of life, but as a rule of death.

It is thus our Lord uses it in the scene now before us. He turns the sharp edge of the law right back against the men who had quoted it against a poor fellow sinner. With those men He could have no sympathy whatever. They had conducted this woman into His presence to have judgment pronounced and executed upon her. But He had not come to judge, but to save. Yet, as He says at verse 16, if He judged, His judgment was true: oh! how true in the case of the scribes and Pharisees! They had accused the sinner and were eager to accuse the Savior, but He makes them accuse themselves. “Jesus stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground.” There was the great Lawgiver Himself, the very One whose finger wrote on the ground. There was the great Lawgiver Himself, the very One whose finger had written the first set of tables. How little they knew this! They were quoting the law against a fellow sinner to find occasion against the Lawgiver. What a position for men to find themselves in! In the presence of the Lawgiver, quoting the law, themselves guilty before Him!

There is something very interesting here. Indeed there is not such a scene anywhere else in the sacred canon. It is unique! Little did these men know what they were doing for the poor convicted one and for untold millions besides, when they led her into the

presence of Jesus. Her very best friends could not have done better for her. Let us pursue the marvelous narrative.

“So, when they continued asking Him, He lifted up Himself and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” They were determined to have an answer, and truly He let them have one. If they would place Him, before the time, in the judgment seat, He must judge all. He could not give a partial judgment. He could not judge one and let another pass. In point of fact, He judged no man. The object of His blessed mission to a world of sinners was not judgment but salvation. He came not to cast a stone at a poor guilty sinner. They could never get Him to engage in such work, blessed forever be His glorious name. How could a divine Savior cast the stone of judgment at a lost convicted sinner? Impossible. If there was a sinless one among them, let him proceed to do the work of judgment. No doubt the sinner was guilty and the sentence of Moses was as distinct as possible, but where was the executioner? This was the puzzling question. Who would dare to lift the first stone?

What a complete turning of the tables! What becomes of all the cleverness! What an intensely interesting moment! What principle was at stake? There is the sinner; there is the law; there too is the Lawgiver; but who will presume in His presence to execute the sentence? This is the point. “And again He stopped down and wrote on the ground.” Does this remind us of the writing of the second set of tables that were enclosed in the ark and covered with the mercy seat? Is there anything significant, anything suggestive in these two writings on the ground? One thing is clear — conscience was set to work. “They which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, unto the last: and Jesus was left alone and the woman standing in the midst.”

Nothing can exceed the moral power of all this. These scribes and Pharisees are driven out by the intense power of the light that was shining upon them. They could not stand it. Neither human cleverness nor human righteousness can stand the test of the divine presence. These men were wrapped up in the cloak of their own fancied sanctity. Hence they could not endure the light. To be able to abide in the presence of God, we must take our true place as

utterly lost, guilty and undone — no cloak, no righteousness, no holiness, no wisdom, not one jot or tittle of anything good in ourselves. But the scribes and Pharisees were not on this ground at all. They were men of character, men of weight, men of reputation in the world. But the light of what God is — God in Christ — was shining in full blaze upon them, and they dare not say they were without sin. All that remained was for them to make their escape as speedily as possible from the action of a light that was reading them through and through.

Why did they begin with the eldest? Why was he the first to retreat? Because he had the greatest reputation to maintain, the character of highest standing to support! No one who has a reputation to maintain — a name or a character to keep up among his fellows — can stand for a moment in the light of the presence of God. Such an one can do well enough in the presence of his fellows. He can get on in the world inasmuch as *there*, such are highly esteemed. A man of character is respected among men. But let us remember these solemn and salutary words, “That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.” God values a broken heart, a contrite spirit, a lowly mind. “To this man will *I* look, even to him who is of a broken and contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word.” Now the scribes and Pharisees were the direct opposite of all this. Hence they could find no place in the presence of Jesus.

“They went out,” not in a crowd, but “one by one.” Conscience is an individual thing. Had they remained, they must strip off their cloaks and cry out, “Just as I am without one plea.” For this they were not prepared. They were thoroughly confounded and went about their business. The Light of the world was shining in the full luster of His heavenly beams, and these muffled men could not endure His brightness. So they went out and left the poor sinner alone with Jesus.

Blessed moment for her! The whole scene cleared. No answer, no sentence, no executioner — not a single stone of judgment. How was this? Was she not a sinner? Yes, a flagrant one. Was not the law against her? No doubt. How was it then? Jesus was there — the divine embodiment of “grace and truth,” and He was not going to

stone a poor convicted sinner. It was not for such an object that He had left that bright and blessed world above. Had it been only a question of stoning the sinner, Moses could have managed that. There was no need for Moses' Master to come down into this world to do that.

But oh! there was grace in the heart of Jesus — yes, grace and truth and truth and grace. Both shine out with unique luster in this truly unequaled scene. “Truth” in its mighty moral force had driven the accusers from the scene. Now “grace” in all its sweetness and soothing power, rises with healing in its wings upon the soul of the poor trembling sinner and sounds in her ears these precious words, “Neither do I condemn thee.” Precious words! sweet, wonderfully sweet to a broken heart and contrite spirit! They are gladdening beyond expression to one who had, a moment before, been expecting the stones of judgment to fall thick upon her guilty head. Mercy rejoices over judgment and grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Yes, that blessed One knew what it would cost Him to speak such words in the ear of a sinner. It was to cost Him His life. That woman deserved to die. There was no question about that. “The soul that sinneth shall die” was the stern sentence of God's law, the solemn enactment of His government. Was Jesus going to reverse this sentence? No, but He was going to bear it in the sinner's stead. He, the sinless One who alone had the right to cast the stone at the sinner, was to expose Himself to the stroke of justice and have the stone cast at Him.

Such is the solid basis on which the glorious ministry of reconciliation rests — the atoning death of Christ, His giving Himself the Just for the unjust. It will perhaps be said that there is nothing about *atonement* in John 8. True. The great subject of the entire Gospel of John is the *Person*, not the atoning work of the Son. But it is essential for us to know the ground on which our blessed Lord could speak those words of balm and consolation in a sinner's ear, “Neither do I condemn thee.” That ground is His sacrificial atoning death. In no other way, on no other ground, could sin be passed, remitted or blotted out. “Without shedding of blood is no

remission.” Solemn yet glorious words! Solemn, as letting us know what sin is; glorious, as letting us know what remission is.

But let us carefully mark the authority on which the woman knew she was not condemned. What was it? Simply the word of Jesus. She knew it because He said it. Blessed authority — nothing like it, none other but it. Christ's work is the basis, His word the authority. How simple! How solid! How satisfactory! Nothing can touch it. All the powers of earth and hell, of men and demons, cannot shake this foundation — the foundation of a divine work, a divine word — a foundation on which the reader who needs and desires it, may rest this moment and forever.

The scribes and Pharisees knew nothing of this ground or this authority. If they had met the woman on her way out from the Lord's presence and questioned her as to the outcome of her interview, how they would have scorned the idea of “no condemnation!” They would have sent her to a reformatory or a penitentiary, and after some years of moral reform they might begin to admit that there was some faint hope for such a wretched creature. But ah! what a sorry basis is moral reform! What a poor authority is a human certificate! No, reader, it will never do, never stand, never suit either for God or for your precious soul. It must be all divine. And so it is, blessed be God! Christ did the work, God speaks the word, faith believes and fills the heart with peace, and gives power over sin in all its workings. For let it never be forgotten that an indissoluble link binds together these two utterances, “No condemnation” and “Sin nor more.” Grace shines in the one, holiness breathes in the other.

John 9

The Blind Man, and the Pharisees who said "We see."

The moral effect of the mission of Christ is strikingly presented in John 9: 39 in this deeply interesting chapter. "And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind." The work which He had just performed upon the blind man may be regarded as a very beautiful illustration of this statement, inasmuch as it was an illustration of the work of the Cross. The remedy which was applied to the blind man was one which the human judgment would at once pronounce to be the most likely to deprive a man of sight. "He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay." This mode of acting was well calculated to confound human wisdom, and hence it leads one naturally to contemplate the great work of the Cross, in which we may behold the entire overthrow of all man's wisdom, and the full establishment of the wisdom of God upon its ruins. That a man crucified in weakness should be God's great ordinance of salvation to the believing soul — that this same man should, by death, destroy him that had the power of death — that He should, by being nailed to an accursed tree, become the foundation of eternal life to His Church, — all this involves a display of wisdom which, while it opens the eyes of poor blind sinners, and pours in the light of heavenly wisdom upon the dark understanding, only dazzles and confounds the learned and the wise of this world. "The foolishness of God is wiser than man."

But where are we to look for a manifestation of this "foolishness," which at once excels and confounds the wisdom of man? Assuredly to the Cross. "The preaching of the Cross is to the Greek foolishness." The proud sages of Greece, wrapped up in their schemes of philosophy, were but little prepared to understand or appreciate the preaching of the Cross, which called upon them to come down from their heights of fancied wisdom — to lay aside their philosophy as a vain and cumbrous mass of folly, and, as "poor and

miserable and blind and naked" sinners, betake themselves to Him who had been nailed to the tree, between two malefactors.

Then, again, "the preaching of the Cross is to the Jew, a stumbling-block." The Jew would despise or stumble over the Cross, just as much as the Greek, though he looked at it from a totally different point of view. The Greek looked at the doctrine of the Cross from the fancied elevation of "science falsely so called." The Jew looked at it from amid the dark and bewildering mists of a traditional religion. In both alike we behold the blinding power of the god of this age. Both alike were moving in a sphere which owned not "Christ crucified" as its centre.

Now, the Lord Jesus expressly tells the Pharisees in this chapter, that their sin was not their *real* blindness, but their *fancied* sight. "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now *ye say*, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." A blind man could have his eyes opened; but for one who professed to see, no remedy was needed. A sick man may be made whole, but one who professes to be whole needs neither balm nor physician. The most hopeless feature in the condition of the Jews was their imagining that all was right. So far had they gone in their fancied soundness and rectitude, that they "had agreed already that if any man did confess that He (Jesus) was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue." This was going very far. It was not that they had taken the trouble of investigating the claims of that blessed One who stood in their midst. No; without a question, they had made up their minds that no confessor of Christ should remain within the pale of *their* Church. *How* could they learn? What hope was there. left for men, who, when called upon to look at an object and own its merits, would rise up, and in blind obstinacy close the window-shutters, or put a bandage across their eyes? None whatever. "Now ye say, We see; *therefore* your sin remaineth." This is truly solemn. The permanence of sin is connected with a mere profession to see. What a principle for an age of religious knowledge!

But let us trace in the person of the blind man the progress of an honest soul upon whom the light of heaven had dawned.

From the moment that this man became the subject of the work of Christ, he was a marked man. "The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?" The marked change that had taken place was manifest to all who had known aught of his previous state. It was an important case, and one which needed to be submitted to the judgment of the Church. "They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind." Nothing could be accredited which wanted the stamp of the Church's approval. It was in vail, that a blind man had had his eyes opened to see the light of heaven. If the matter met not the approval of the Pharisees, it must go for nought. Now let us see how the Pharisees deal with the case. They were, we feel assured, ready to bear with anything save a clear, simple, emphatic testimony to the work of Christ; but this was the very thing which the man was about to lay before them. "How were thine eyes opened?" Mark the reply, "*He* put clay on mine eyes." How little the Pharisees knew, or cared to know, of this! They, no doubt, regarded the matter as an insult to common sense. It certainly was, in its way, "a stone of stumbling" to them.

But who did the man mean by "*He*?" Who was "*He*?" This was the point. The poor man was ignorant of this himself, though he was on the highway to intelligence about it. He knew the *work*, but not the *Person* of Christ. Yet how highly distinguished was he, in being led to a knowledge of the work of Christ; yea, in being himself the subject of it; for this is the true way in which to arrive at a knowledge of it. Intellectual accuracy in reference to the plan of salvation is but a poor, cold, unimportant thing, when not accompanied with the personal experience of its efficacy. We shall certainly never be able thereby to confound the logic of such as stand up merely for the defence of systematic religion, apart from, or in opposition to, Christ. We must be able to show, in our own persons, our character, our ways, the practical results of the work of Christ, or else all our accuracy will be little worth. "*He* put clay on mine eyes, and I washed, and do *see*." Here was the presentation of a living fact which was calculated to bear down with greater weight upon a Pharisee's conscience, than all the arguments that could be used. What could gainsay it? Men might reason as they pleased; they might even talk about giving glory to God; but this man could prove

in his own person, that the work of Christ had done that for him which the Jewish system, with its priesthood and its rites, never could. This was enough for him, and it would have been enough, too, for any who were not blinded by the power of system.

But, observe, how the heart of this poor man lingers about the work of Jesus. He never allows himself to be drawn away from it, in order to follow the puzzling arguments of the Pharisees. To all their questionings and reasonings his reply is "He put clay on mine eyes, and I washed and do see." Here was his solid ground, from which no logic could shake him. He kept to the simple fact of Christ's work, and reasoned not upon it, and this was his security. Had he reasoned upon it, they would have confounded him, for they were subtle men; but they could make nothing of his simple testimony to the fact of what Christ had done for him. "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." The connection between the two statements is very marked. "He put clay on mine eyes," and "now I see." When we can connect the work of Christ with positive results in our own case, the testimony is irresistible; but there is a feebleness and a shallowness in the testimony of such as merely apprehend intellectually the theory of the gospel, which, not being connected with any positive result in the character and conduct, is soon borne down by the enemies of truth. This is very perceptible in the case of the parents of the man. They, when questioned, could deliver but a poor cold testimony in the matter. So far as their son and his wretchedness were concerned, they could speak distinctly enough, "but by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not." In other words, they neither knew nor cared to know Christ or His work. They valued their position in connection with the accredited religion of the day, and were not prepared to bear the reproach of throwing in their lot with Christ and His followers. This, alas! is but too common. It requires no ordinary depth of truth in the soul, to enable a man to "go without the camp" to Jesus. It must be a personal question. The Grace of God as manifested in the cross must be experimentally known, else we never shall be able to witness a good confession. The name of Jesus never was, nor is it now, popular in the world. Religiousness may be, and doubtless will. But religiousness is one thing, and the faithful confession of Christ is quite another. The Pharisees and chief priests had plenty of religion;

yea, they were its guardians. They could say, "This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath-day;" and again, "Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner." All this sounded very religiously; but, my reader, we must ever bear in mind, that, to talk of giving glory to God, or of honouring His institutions, while Jesus is rejected, is the merest delusion. Jesus is God's great institution, and the cross of Jesus is that which makes His Person and work available to the sinner; hence, if he be rejected, we are destitute of the only true and divinely recognised basis of religion. One divine thought about God's anointed Saviour is better far than all the devout expressions of fleshy pietism. Where Jesus is known, there is the preparedness of heart to suffer for His name, and also the true desire to be identified with Him, and conformed to Him. But the parents of the man had not this preparedness of heart, and hence their testimony was characterized by all that so-called prudent caution which is ever observable in mere worldly religionists. "These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews; for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue." This was a serious affair. The Jewish system had, of course, a large place in the affections of every pious Jew, nor would any one lightly give up his position as a member of it; still less would he think of attaching himself to the person of one who was manifestly outside of all that which the world deemed reputable or desirable.

However, the man whose eyes were opened, "Could not but speak the thing he had seen and heard," and the consequence was, that the religious guides of the people could not endure the edge of his simple testimony — a testimony based throughout upon the work of Christ. He had received light, and this light had come into collision with the darkness. There could be no harmony — no fellowship — no rest. The light must be put out. So long as he had been a blind member of their system, it was well. They never raised a question; but since he had received light, and was not disposed to put it under a bushel, nor yet to put his conscience into their keeping, they had only to seek to get rid of him as best they could. "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out." They were the great depositaries of knowledge, and he was but a poor ignorant man, and should not presume to think for himself, or set up

his judgment in opposition to them. They, no doubt, regarded him as an obstinate heretic, for whom nothing was reserved save the thunders of the Church. "They cast him out." And why? Simply because he had had his eyes opened. How strange! But yet how like what we see around us! How often do we see, now, cases like this! Men go on living in vice and ignorance, yet tolerated by human religion; but the moment the holy light of Scripture dawns upon them, they are only deemed fit subjects for the rack and the stake. The vilest crimes are light, in the judgment of a corrupt religious system, when compared with the honest confession of the name of Christ.

We have already noticed the extent of this honest man's intelligence. It only extended to the work of Christ. He understood nothing of his Person as yet. This knowledge was reserved for him when cast forth without the pale of the synagogue. "Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered, *Who is He*, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" Now there is something very instructive in this progress in intelligence. He had been cast, by reason of his faithfulness, into a position of decided sympathy with the Son of God.

The Good Shepherd had, in tender mercy, visited the fold, and was now calling this His sheep by name, that He might lead him forth into a wide and wealthy place, wherein he might taste the blessedness of fellowship with that "one flock" which was about to be placed in the Father's Land for ever. "Who is He?" Precious inquiry of an honest heart! An inquiry speedily answered indeed. "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe, and he worshipped Him." Here, then, we may well leave this highly-favoured soul — favoured, though expelled from amid all that was highly esteemed amongst men. Truly happy was it for him to find himself outside a system which was rapidly crumbling to ruin, and to know his place as a worshipper at the feet of the Son of God. He had gone without the camp to Jesus, bearing His reproach, and is now seen offering the sacrifice of praise, even the fruit of his lips.

My reader, may we know and prove, in our own persons, the practical application of all this!

John 10:28

THE BELIEVER'S SECURITY

You must ever remember that Scripture cannot contradict itself. Hence, when you read in John 10 such words as “My sheep shall never perish,” your heart should rest in the full assurance of the eternal security of the very feeblest of Christ's blood-bought sheep. Many other scriptures establish the same precious truth. So 2 Peter 2: 20-22 cannot possibly clash with John 10 and similar passages. But what does it teach? Simply that when *professors* of religion return to their old habits, they are in a worse condition than if they had never made a profession at all. It is obvious that true Christians are not in question here. A “dog and a sow” cannot be looked upon as “sheep,” however they may profess “the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” We desire to render hearty thanks to God for what you say as to the blessing and help received through our writings. To Him be all the praise!

As to John 15: 2, the real secret of the difficulty felt by so many in this scripture is that they seek to make it a question of life and security, whereas it is simply a question of fruitbearing. If we do not abide in the vine we shall prove fruitless branches, and all such branches the gardener removes from the place of fruitbearing. The question of salvation is not touched.

You are perfectly right, because most thoroughly sustained by the Word of God, in saying to any soul, “Only believe God's testimony about His Son and you are eternally saved.” This is an absolutely scriptural statement. The passages of Scripture in which you find difficulty (Rom. 14: 15 and 1 Cor. 8: 11) do not refer to the question of salvation or eternal life at all. It is not in the power of anyone to destroy eternal life, but if I interfere with the action of a brother's conscience — if I cause him to do what he feels to be wrong — then, so far as in me lies, I destroy him and cause him to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. In both the above passages, it is a question of personal responsibility and the integrity of conscience before God. This is most solemn. No man can touch

the foundation on which a saved soul is built, but it is a most serious thing to wound any weak conscience. Let us therefore beware.

John 11 - 12.

Bethany

Part 1

Turn with us to John 11 and John 12 — and if we mistake not, you will find therein a very rare spiritual treat. In chapter 11, we see what the Lord Jesus was to the family of Bethany; and in chapter 12 we see what the family of Bethany was to Him. The entire passage is full of the most precious instruction.

In chapter 11 we have three great subjects presented to us, namely, first, our Lord's own path with the Father; secondly, His profound sympathy with His people; and, thirdly, His grace in associating us with Himself in His work, in so far as that is possible.

"Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto Him, saying, Lord, behold he whom Thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

The sisters, in their time of trouble, turned to their divine Friend: Jesus was a sure resource for them, as He is for all His tried ones wherever, however, or whoever they are. "Call upon Me in the time of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." We make a most serious mistake when, in any time of need or pressure, we turn to the creature for help or sympathy. We are sure to be disappointed. Creature streams are dry. Creature-props give way. Our God will make us prove the vanity and folly of all creature-confidences, human hopes, and earthly expectations. And on the other hand, He will prove to us, in the most touching and forcible manner, the truth and blessedness of His own Word, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me."

No, never! He, blessed be His name, never fails a trusting heart. He cannot deny Himself. He delights to take occasion from

our wants, our woes and weaknesses, to express and illustrate His tender care and loving-kindness, in a thousand ways. But He will teach us the utter barrenness of all human resources. "Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited."

Thus it must ever be. Disappointment, barrenness and desolation are the sure and certain results of trusting in man. But, on the other hand — and mark the contrast, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is: for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jer. 17: 5-8).

Such is the unvarying teaching of Scripture on both sides of this great practical question. It is a fatal mistake to look even to the very best of men, to betake ourselves, directly or indirectly, to poor human cisterns. But the true secret of blessing, strength and comfort is to look to Jesus — to betake ourselves at once, in simple faith, to the living God whose delight ever is to help the needy, to strengthen the feeble, and lift up those that are cast down.

Hence, the sisters of Bethany did the right thing, when in the hour of need and pressure they turned to Jesus. He was both able and willing to help them: yet that blessed One did not at once respond to their call. He did not see fit at once to fly to their relief, much as He loved them. He fully entered into their sorrow and anxiety. He took it all in and measured it perfectly. He was thoroughly with them in it. There was no lack of sympathy, as we shall see in the sequel. Yet He paused; and the enemy might cast in all sorts of suggestions; and their own hearts might conceive all sorts of reasonings. It might seem as though "The Master" had forgotten them. Perhaps their loving Lord and Friend was changed toward them. Something may have occurred to bring a cloud between them. We all know how the poor heart reasons and tortures itself at such times. But there is a divine remedy for all the heart's reasonings, and

a triumphant answer to all the enemy's dark and horrible suggestions. What is it? Unshaken confidence in the eternal stability of the love of Christ.

Here lies the true secret of the whole matter. Let nothing shake your confidence in the unalterable love of your Lord. Come what may — let the furnace be ever so hot; let the waters be ever so deep; let the shadows be ever so dark; let the path be ever so rough; let the pressure be ever so great — still hold fast your confidence in the perfect love and sympathy of the One who has proved His love by going down into the dust of death — down under the dark and heavy billows and waves of the wrath of God, in order to save your soul from everlasting burnings. Be not afraid to trust Him fully — to commit yourself, without a shadow of reserve or misgiving, to Him. Do not measure His love by your circumstances. If you do, you must, of necessity, reach a false conclusion. Judge not according to the outward appearance. Never reason from your surroundings. Get to the heart of Christ, and reason out from that blessed centre. Never interpret His love by your circumstances; but always interpret your circumstances by His love. Let the beams of His everlasting favour shine upon your darkest surroundings, and then you will be able to answer every infidel thought, no matter whence it comes. Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, But trust Him for His grace: Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face.

It is a grand thing to be able, ever to vindicate God; even if we can do nothing more, to stand as a monument of His unfailing faithfulness to all who put their trust in Him. What though the horizon around be dark and depressing — though the heavy clouds gather and the storm rage, God is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but will, with the temptation, make a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it.

Besides, we must not measure divine love by the mode of its manifestation. We are all prone to do so; but it is a great mistake. The love of God clothes itself in varied forms, and not infrequently the form seems to us, in our shallowness and short-sightedness, mysterious and incomprehensible. But, if only we wait patiently and in artless confidence, divine light will shine upon the dispensation of

divine providence, and our hearts shall be filled with wonder, love, and praise.

We leave it to Himself,

To choose and to command:

With wonder filled, we soon shall see

How wise, how strong, His hand.

We comprehend Him not;

Yet earth and heaven tell,

God sits as Sovereign on the throne

And ruleth all things well.

God's thoughts are not as our thoughts; nor His ways as our ways; nor His love as our love, If we hear of a friend in distress or difficulty of any kind, our first impulse is to fly to his help and relieve him of his trial, if possible. But this might be a great mistake. In place of rendering help, it might be doing serious mischief. We might actually be running athwart the purpose of God, and taking our friend out of a position in which divine government had placed him for his ultimate and permanent profit. The love of God is a wise and faithful love. It abounds toward us in all wisdom and prudence.

We, on the contrary, make the gravest mistakes, even when most sincerely desiring to do what is right and good. We are not competent to take in all the bearings of things, or scan the windings and workings of providence, or weigh the ultimate results of the divine dealings. Hence, the urgent need of waiting much on God; and, above all things, of holding fast our confidence in His unchanging, unfailling, unerring love. He will make all plain. He will bring light out of darkness, life out of death, victory out of seeming defeat. He will cause the deepest and darkest distress to yield the

very richest harvest of blessing. He will make all things work together for good.

But He is never in a hurry. He has His own wise ends in view, and He will reach them in His own time and way; and, moreover, out of what may seem to us to be a dark, tangled, inexplicable maze of providence, light will spring forth and fill our souls with praise and adoration.

The foregoing line of thought may help us to understand and appreciate our Lord's bearing towards the sisters of Bethany on hearing of their trouble. He felt there was much more involved in the case than the mere matter of relieving those whom He, nevertheless, deeply loved. The glory of God had to be considered. Hence, He says, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." He saw in this case an occasion for the display of the divine glory, and not merely for the exhibition of personal affection, however deep and real that might be — and with Him, surely, it was both deep and real, for we read, "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus."

But, in the judgement of our blessed and adorable Lord, the glory of God took precedence of every other consideration. Neither personal affection nor personal fear had the smallest sway over His movements. He was ruled, in all things, by the glory of God. From the manger to the cross, in life and in death, in all His words, and all His works, and all His ways, His devoted heart was set, with firm and unalterable purpose, upon the glory of God. Hence, though it might be a good thing to relieve a friend in distress, it was far better and higher to glorify God; and we may be sure, that the beloved family of Bethany sustained no loss by a delay which only made room for the brighter out-shining of the divine glory.

Let us all remember this in seasons of trial and pressure. It is an all-important point, and when fully apprehended, will prove a very deep and blessed source of consolation. It will help us marvellously to bear up under sickness, pain, death, bereavement, sorrow, and poverty. How blessed to be able to stand beside the sick bed of a friend and say, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God!" And this is faith's privilege. Yea, not only in the sick

chamber, but by the open grave, the true believer may see the beams of the divine glory shining forth over all.

No doubt the sceptic might cavil at the statement that "The sickness is not unto death." He might object and reason and argue on the ground of the apparent fact that Lazarus did die. But faith reasons not from appearances: it bring God in, and there finds a divine solution for all difficulties. Such is the moral elevation — the reality of a life of faith. It sees God above and beyond all circumstances. It reasons from God downward — not from circumstances upward. Sickness and death are nothing in the presence of divine power. All difficulties disappear from the pathway of faith. They are, as Joshua and Caleb assured their unbelieving brethren, simply bread for the true believer.

Nor is this all. Faith can wait God's time, knowing that His time is the best. It staggers not, even though He may seem to linger. It rests with calmness in the assurance of His unchanging love and unerring wisdom. It fills the heart with the sweetest confidence that if there be delay — if the relief be not sent all at once — it is all for the best, inasmuch as "all things work together for good to them that love God," and all must in the long run redound to the glory of God. Faith enables its happy possessor to vindicate God amid the greatest pressure, and to know and confess that divine love always does the very best for its object.

Part 2

It gives great rest to the heart to know that the One who has undertaken for us, in all our weakness, our need, and the exigencies of our path from first to last, has first of all secured, in every respect, the glory of God. That was His primary object in all things. In the work of redemption, and in all our history, the glory of God has the first place in the heart of that blessed One with whom we have to do. At all cost to Himself He vindicated and maintained the divine glory. To that end He gave up everything. He laid aside His own glory, humbled, emptied Himself. He surrendered Himself and yielded up His life, in order to lay the imperishable foundation of that glory which now fills all Heaven — and shall soon cover the earth, and shine through the wide universe for ever.

The knowledge and abiding sense of this must give profound repose to the spirit in reference to everything that concerns us, whether it be the salvation of the soul, the forgiveness of sins, or the needs for the daily path. All that could possibly be a matter of exercise to us, for time or for eternity, has been provided for, all secured on the selfsame basis that sustains the divine glory. We are saved and provided for; but the salvation and provision — all praise to our glorious Saviour and Provider! — are inseparably bound up with the glory of God. In all that our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us, in all that He is doing, in all that He will do, the glory of God is fully maintained.

And, further, we may add that in our trials, difficulties, sorrows, and exercises, if instant relief be not afforded, we have to remember there is some deep reason connected with the glory of God and our real good, why the desired relief is withheld. In seasons of pressure we are apt to think only of the one thing, namely, relief. But there is very much more than this to be considered. We should think of the glory of God. We should seek to know His object in putting us under the pressure. We should earnestly desire that His end might be gained, and His glory promoted. This would be for our fullest and deepest blessing, while the relief which we so eagerly desire might be the worst thing we could get. We must always remember that, through the marvellous grace of God, His glory and our true blessing are so inseparably bound up together, that when the former is maintained, the latter must be perfectly secured.

This is a most precious consideration, and one eminently calculated to sustain the heart in all seasons of affliction. All things must ultimately redound to the glory of God, and "all things work together for good to those that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." It may not, perhaps, be so easy to see this when the pressure is upon us. When anxiously watching by the sick-bed of a beloved friend; or when treading the chamber of sorrow; or when laid on a bed of pain and languishing ourselves; or when overwhelmed by sudden tidings of the loss of our earthly all: under such circumstances it may not be so easy to see the glory of God maintained, and our blessing secured; but faith can see it for all that; and as for "blind unbelief," it is always "sure to err."

If those beloved sisters of Bethany had judged by the sight of their eyes, they would have been sorely tried during those weary days and nights spent at the bedside of their much loved brother. And not only so, but when the terrible moment arrived, and they were called to witness the closing scene, many dark reasonings might have sprung up in their crushed and desolate hearts.

But Jesus was looking on. His heart was with them. He was watching the whole process, and that, too, from the very highest standpoint — the glory of God. He took in the entire scene, in all its bearings, its influences and its issues. He felt for those afflicted sisters — felt with them — felt as only a perfect human heart could feel. Though absent in person, He was with them in spirit, as they travelled through the deep waters. His loving heart perfectly entered into all their sorrow, and He only waited for "God's due time" to come to their aid, and light up the darkness of death and the grave with the bright beams of resurrection glory.

"When He had heard that Lazarus was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was." Things were allowed to take their course as we say; death was allowed to enter the much loved dwelling; but all this was for the glory of God. The enemy might seem to have it all his own way, but it was only in appearance; in reality death itself was but preparing a platform on which the glory of God was to be displayed. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

Such, then, was the path of our blessed Lord — His path with the Father. His every step, His every act, His every utterance, had direct reference to the claims of the Father's glory. Much as He loved the family of Bethany, His personal affection led Him not into the scene of their sorrow till the moment was come for the display of the divine glory, and then no personal fear could keep Him away. "Then after that He saith to His disciples, Let us go into Judea again. His disciples say unto Him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him."

Thus that blessed One walked, in the full blaze of the glory of God. His springs of action were all divine — all heavenly. He was a perfect stranger to all the motives and objects of the men of this world, who are stumbling along in the thick moral darkness that enwraps them — whose motives are all selfish, whose objects are earthly and sensual. He never did a single thing to please Himself. His Father's will, His Father's glory, ruled Him in all things. The stirrings of deep personal affection took Him not to Bethany, and no personal fear could keep Him away. In all He did, and in all He did not do, He found His motive in the glory of God.

Precious Saviour! teach us to walk in Thy heavenly footsteps! Give us to drink more into Thy spirit! This, truly, is what we need. We are so sadly prone to self-seeking and self-pleasing, even when apparently doing right things and ostensibly engaging in the Lord's work. We run hither and thither, do this and that, travel and preach and write, and all the while we may be pleasing ourselves, and not really seeking to do the will of God and promote His glory. May we study more profoundly our divine Exemplar! May He be ever before our hearts as the One to whom we are predestinated to be conformed! Thank God for the sweet and soul-sustaining assurance that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. It is but a little while and we shall be done forever with all that now hinders our progress and interrupts our communion. Till then may the blessed Spirit work in our hearts, and keep us so occupied with Christ, so feeding by faith on His preciousness, that our practical ways may be a more living expression of Himself, and that we may bring forth more abundantly the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

Part 3

We may now meditate for a few moments on the deeply interesting theme of Christ's sympathy with His people, so touchingly illustrated in His dealings with the beloved family of Bethany. He allowed them to go through the exercise, to wade through the deep waters, to be thoroughly tested, in order that "the trial of their faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory. Looked at from nature's standpoint, it might seem as though all hope

was gone and every ray of light faded away from the horizon. Lazarus was dead and buried. All was over. And yet the Lord had said, "This sickness is not unto death." How was this? What could He mean?

Thus nature might reason; but we must not listen to the reasonings of nature, which are sure to carry us down into the regions of the shadow of death. We must listen to the voice of Jesus; we must harken to His living, cheering, strengthening, encouraging accents. In this way we shall be able to vindicate and glorify God, not only at the sick-bed, but in the chamber of death, and at the very grave itself. Death is not death if Christ be there. The grave itself is but the sphere in which the glory of God shines out in all its power. It is when all that belongs to the creature is gone from the scene — when the platform is thoroughly cleared of all that is merely of man, it is then that the beams of the divine glory can be seen in all their brightness. It is when all is gone, or seems to be, that Christ can come in and fill the scene.

This is a grand point for the soul to get hold of and understand. It is only faith that can really enter into it. We are all so terribly prone to lean on some creature-prop, to sit beside some creature-stream, to trust in an arm of flesh, to cling to what we can see, to rest in the palpable and tangible. "The things that are seen and temporal" have oftentimes more weight with us than "the things which are unseen and eternal." Hence it is our ever-faithful Lord sees it right and good to sweep away our creature-props, and dry up our creature-streams, in order that we may lean on Himself, the eternal Rock of our salvation, and find all our springs in Himself, the living and exhaustless Fountain of all blessing. He is jealous of our love and confidence, and He will clear the scene of everything that might divide our hearts with Himself. He knows it is for our souls' full blessing to be wholly cast upon Himself, and hence He seeks to purify our hearts from every hateful idol.

And should we not praise Him for all this? Yes, truly; and not only so, but we should welcome whatever means He is pleased to use for the accomplishment of His wise and gracious end, even though, to nature's view, it may seem harsh and severe. He may

often have to say to us as He said to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

Yes, beloved reader, by and by we shall know and appreciate all His dealings. We shall look back upon the whole course from the light of His own blessed presence, and see and own that "the very heaviest stroke of His hand was the very strongest expression of His love at the time." Martha and Mary might wonder why death had been allowed to enter their dwelling. Doubtless they looked day after day, hour after hour, moment after moment, for their beloved Friend to enter; but instead of that He kept away, and death entered, and all seemed gone.

Why was this? Let Himself reply. "These things said He: and after that He saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." What touching affection! What gracious intimacy! What a tender linking of Himself with the family of Bethany on the one hand, and His disciples on the other! "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." It was but a gentle sleep. Death is not death in the presence of the Prince of life. The grave is but a sleeping place. "I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." Such words could not have been uttered had Lazarus been raised from a sick-bed. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity"; and we can see without difficulty that the grave afforded God a far better opportunity than a sick-bed.

This, then, was the reason why Jesus kept away from His beloved friends. He waited for the fitting moment, and that moment was when Lazarus had lain in the grave four days already; when every human hope had vanished; when all human agency was powerless and valueless. "I go" — not to raise him from a sick-bed, but "that I may awake him out of sleep." The platform was cleared of the creature in order that the glory of God might shine out in all its brightness.

And is it not well to have the scene thus cleared of the creature? is it not a mercy — not in disguise, as some people say, but a plain, positive, palpable mercy — to have every human prop gone? Faith says, "Yes" — unhesitatingly and emphatically. Nature says, "No!" The poor heart craves something of the creature to lean upon, something that the eye can see. But faith — that most

precious, priceless, divinely-wrought principle — find its true sphere in being called to lean absolutely and abidingly upon the living God.

But it must be a real thing. It is of little use talking about faith if the heart be a stranger to its power. Mere profession is perfectly worthless. God deals in moral realities. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he have faith?" He does not say, "What doth it profit though a man have faith?" Blessed be God, those who through grace have it, know that it profits much every way. By faith the sinner is brought in living relationship with God, is justified, and lives unto Him.

Faith glorifies God as nothing else can. It lifts the soul above the depressing influences of things seen and temporal. It tranquillises the spirit in a most blessed manner. It enlarges the heart, by leading us out of our own narrow circle of personal interests, Sympathies, cares and burdens, and connecting us livingly with the eternal, exhaustless spring of goodness. It works by love, and draws us out in gracious activity toward every object of need, but especially toward those who are of the household of faith.

It is faith alone that can move along the path where Jesus leads. To mere nature that path is dreadful. It is rough, dark, and lonely. Even those who surrounded our blessed Lord on the occasion of the death of Lazarus seemed wholly unable to comprehend His thoughts or follow intelligently in His footsteps. When He said, "Let us go into Judea again," they could think only of the Jews stoning Him. When He said, "I go, that I may awake him out of sleep," they replied, "If he sleep, he shall do well." When He spoke of his death, they thought that He had spoken of taking rest in sleep. When "He said unto them plainly, "Lazarus is dead: and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent that ye may believe," poor unbelieving nature, speaking through the lips of Thomas Didymus, said, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

In a word, we see total inability to take in the true bearing of the case, as viewed from a divine standpoint. Nature sees nothing but death and darkness, where faith basks in the sunlight of the divine presence. "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." Alas,

was this all that even a disciple had to say? How absurd are the conclusions of unbelief! Let us go with the Prince of life, that — what? "we may die with Him"! What blindness even while attached to the Lord! Should not Thomas have said: "Let us go, that we may behold His glory; that we may see His marvellous doings in the very region of the shadow of death; that we may share in His triumphs; that we may shout, at the very gates of the grave, our hallelujahs to His deathless name?"

Part 4

We have already noticed the three prominent subjects presented to us in John 11, namely, our Lord's own path with the Father; secondly, His profound sympathy with us; thirdly, His grace in linking us with Himself, in so far as that is possible, in all His blessed work. He ever walked with God, in calm, unbroken communion. He walked in the most implicit obedience to the will of God, and was ruled in all things by His glory. He walked in the day, and stumbled not. The will of God was the light in which the perfect workman ever carried on His work. He found His only motive for action in the divine will — His only object in the divine glory. He came down from Heaven, not to do His own will, but the will of the Father, in which He ever found His meat and drink.

But His great, loving heart flowed out in perfect sympathy with human sorrow. This we see attested in the most touching manner as He moved, in company with the afflicted sisters, to the tomb of their brother. If any question had arisen in their hearts during the season of trial, in the absence of their Lord, it was abundantly answered, yea, we may add, completely demolished, by the manifestation of His deep and tender affection as He moved toward the spot where the beams of the divine glory were so soon to shine out over the dreary region of death.

We do not here dwell upon the interesting interview between the two sisters and their beloved Lord, so full of teaching, so illustrative of His perfect mode of dealing with His people in their varied measures of intelligence and communion. We pass at once to the inspired statement in verse 33 of our chapter. "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came

with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept."

How wonderful! The Son of God groaned and wept. Let us never forget it. He, though God over all, blessed forever; though the Resurrection and the Life; though the Quickener of the dead; though the Conqueror of the grave; though on His way to deliver the body of His friend from the grasp of the enemy — sample of what He will soon do for all who belong to Him — yet, so perfectly did He enter into human sorrow, and take in all the terrible consequences of sin, all the misery and desolation of this sin-stricken world, that He groaned and wept! And those tears and groans emanated from the depths of a perfect human heart that felt as only a perfect human heart could feel — felt according to God — for every form of human sorrow and misery. Though perfectly exempt, in His own divine person, from sin and all its consequences — yea, because exempt — He could in perfect grace enter into it all and make it His own as only He could do.

"Jesus wept"! Wondrous, significant fact! He wept not for Himself, but for others. He wept with them. Mary wept. The Jews wept. All this is easily grasped and understood. But that Jesus should weep reveals a mystery which we cannot fathom. It was divine compassion weeping through human eyes over the desolation which sin had caused in this poor world, weeping in sympathy with those whose hearts had been crushed by the inexorable hand of death.

Let all who are in sorrow remember this. Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. His circumstances are changed, but His heart is not. His position is different, but His sympathy is the same. "We have not a high priest that can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, apart from sin." There is a perfect human heart on the throne of the Majesty of the heavens, and that heart sympathises with us in all our sorrows, in all our trials, in all our infirmities, in all our pressure and exercise. He perfectly enters into it all. Yea, He gives Himself to each one of His beloved members here upon earth as though He had only that one to look after.

How sweet and soothing to think of this! It is worth having a sorrow to be allowed to taste the preciousness of Christ's sympathy. The sisters of Bethany might say, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." But if their brother had not died, they would not have seen Jesus weeping, or heard His deep groan of sympathy with them in their sorrow. And who would not say that it is better to have the sympathy of His heart with us in our sorrow than the power of His hand in keeping or taking us out of it? Was it not much better, much higher, much more blessed, for the three witnesses in Dan. 3 to have the Son of God walking with them in the furnace than to have escaped the furnace by the power of His hand? Unquestionably.

And thus it is in every case. We have ever to remember that this is not the day for the display of Christ's power. By and by He will take to Himself His great power, and reign. Then all our sufferings, our trials, our tribulations, will be over forever. The night of weeping will give place to the morning of joy — the morning without clouds — the morning that shall never know an evening. But now it is the time of Christ's patience, the time of His precious sympathy; and the sense of this is most blessedly calculated to sustain the heart in passing through the deep waters of affliction.

And there are deep waters of affliction. There are trials, sorrows, tribulations, and difficulties. And not only so, but our God means that we should feel them. His hand is in them for our real good, and for His glory. And it is our privilege to be able to say, "We glory in tribulation also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us."

The Lord be praised for all this! But it were folly to deny that there are trials, sorrows and tribulations of all sorts. Nor would our God have us insensible to them. Insensibility to them is folly; glorying in them is faith. The consciousness of Christ's sympathy, and the intelligence of God's object in all our afflictions, will enable us to rejoice in them; but to deny the afflictions, or that we ought to feel them, is simply absurd. God would not have us to be stoics; He leads us into deep waters to walk with us through them; and when

His end is reached, He delivers us out of them, to our joy and His own everlasting praise.

"He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak then I am strong." At the first, Paul longed to be rid of the thorn in the flesh, whatever it was. He besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him. But the thorn in the flesh was better than pride in the heart. It was better far to be afflicted than puffed up — better to have Christ's sympathy with him in his temptation than the power of His hand in delivering him out of it.

Part 5

It is deeply touching to mark the two groans of our Lord, as He moved toward the tomb of His friend. The first groan was called forth by the sight of the weeping mourners around Him. "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled." The margin reads, "He troubled Himself."

How precious is the thought of this to the crushed and sorrowing heart! The sight of human tears drew forth a groan from the loving, sympathising heart of the Son of God. Let all mourners remember this. Jesus did not rebuke Mary for weeping. He did not rally her on account of her sorrow. He did not tell her she ought not to feel; that she ought to be above everything of that sort. Ah, no! this would not be like Him. Some heartless folk may talk in this style; but He knew better. He, though Son of God, was a real man; and hence, He felt as a man ought to feel, and He knew what man must feel, while passing through the dark vale of tears.

Some of us talk largely and loftily about being above nature, and not feeling the snapping of tender links, and much in that strain. But in this we are not wise. We are not in sympathy with the heart of the Man, Christ Jesus. It is one thing to put forth, in heartless flippancy, our transcendental theories, and it is quite another to pass

through the deep waters of grief and desolation with a heart exercised according to God. It will generally be found that those of us who declaim the loudest against nature, prove ourselves to be just like other people, when called to meet bodily sickness, sorrow of heart, mental pressure, or pecuniary loss.

The great point is to be real, and to go through the stern realities of actual life with theories will not stand the test of real sorrow trial, and difficulty; and nothing can be more absurd than to talk to people, with human hearts, about not feeling things. God means us to feel; and — precious, soothing, consolatory thought! — Jesus feels with us.

Let all the sons and daughters of sorrow remember these things for the consolation of their sorrowing hearts. "God comforts those that are cast down." If we were never cast down, we should not know His precious ministry. A stoic does not need the comfort of God. It is worth having a broken heart to have it bound up by our most merciful High Priest.

"Jesus groaned" — "Jesus wept." What power, what divine sweetness in these words! What a blank there would be were these words erased from the page of inspiration! Surely we could not do without them, and therefore our own most gracious God has, by His Spirit, penned these unspeakably precious words for the comfort and consolation of all who are called to tread the chamber of sorrow, or to stand at the grave of a friend.

But there was another groan evoked from the heart of our blessed Lord. Some of the Jews, when they heard His groan, and saw His tears, could not help exclaiming, "Behold how He loved him!" But alas! others only found, in such affecting proofs of true and profound sympathy, occasion for the display of heartless scepticism — and scepticism is always heartless. "Some of them said, could not this man, that opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"

Here the poor human heart lets itself out in its ignorant reasonings. How little did these sceptics understand either the person or the path of the Son of God! How could they appreciate the

motives that actuated Him either in what He did, or in what He did not do? He opened the eyes of the blind, in order that "the works of God might be made manifest in him." And He did not prevent the death of Lazarus, that God might be glorified thereby.

But what did they know about all this? Absolutely nothing. The Blessed One moved at far too high an elevation to be within the ken of worldly religionists and sceptical reasoners. "The world knew Him not." God understood and appreciated Him perfectly. This was enough. What were the thoughts of men to One who ever walked in calm communion with the Father? They were utterly incapable of forming a correct judgement either of Himself or of His ways. They carried on their reasonings in that thick moral darkness in which they dwelt.

Thus it is still. Human reasonings are begun, continued, and ended in darkness. Man reasons about God; reasons about Christ; reasons about Scripture; reasons about Heaven, about hell, about eternity; about all sorts of things. But all his reasonings are worse, far worse, than worthless. Men are no more capable of understanding or appreciating the written Word now, than they were of understanding or appreciating the living Word, when He was amongst them. Indeed, the two things must go together.

As the living Word and the written Word are one, so to know the one we must know the other; but the natural, the unrenewed, the unconverted man knows neither. He is totally blind, in utter darkness, dead; and when, without reality, he made a religious profession, he is "twice dead" — dead in nature and dead in his religion. What are his thoughts, his reasonings, his conclusions worth? They are baseless, false, ruinous.

Nor is there the slightest use in arguing with unconverted people. It only tends to deceive them by leading them to suppose that they can argue. It is always the best way to deal solemnly with them as to their own moral condition before God. We do not find our Lord taking any notice of the unbelieving reasonings of those around Him. He only again groans and goes on His way. "Jesus *therefore*, again groaning in Himself, cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it."

This second groan is deeply affecting. He groaned, at first, in sympathy with the mourners around Him. He groaned again over the hardness and dark unbelief of the human heart, and of the heart of Israel in particular. But, be it carefully noted, He does not attempt to explain His reasons for not having hindered the death of His friend, although He had opened the eyes of the blind.

Blessed, perfect Servant! It was no part of His business to explain or apologise. He had to work on in the current of the divine counsels, and for the promotion of the divine glory. He had to do the Father's will, not explain Himself to those who could not possibly understand the explanation.

This is a weighty point for us all. Some of us lose a quantity of time in argument, apology, and explanation, in cases where such things are not the least understood. We really do mischief. Better far pursue, in holy calmness of spirit, singleness of eye, and decision of purpose, the path of duty. That is what we have got to do, not to explain or defend ourselves, which is sorry work at best for any one.

But let us look a moment at the tomb of Lazarus, and there see with what lovely grace our adorable Lord and Master sought to associate His servants with Himself in His work, in so far as that was possible; though, even here, too, He is sadly intruded upon by the dark unbelief of the human heart. "Jesus said, Take ye away the stone." This they could do, and hence He graciously calls upon them to do it. It was all they could do, so far. But here unbelief breaks in and casts its dark shadows over the heart. "Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto Him, Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days."

And what of that? Could the humiliating process of decomposition, even if completed, stand for one moment in the way of Him who is the resurrection and the life? Impossible! Bring Him in, and all is clear and simple; leave Him out, and all is dark and impracticable. Let but the voice of the Son of God be heard, and death and corruption must vanish like the darkness of night before the beams of the rising sun.

"Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

How magnificent! What are death, the grave and decomposition in the presence of such power as this? Talk of being dead four days as a difficulty! Millions that have been mouldering in the dust for thousands of years, shall spring up in a moment into life, immortality, and eternal glory, at the voice of that blessed One to whom Martha ventured to offer her unbelieving and irrational suggestion.

Part 6

In our Lord's reply to Martha we have one of the most blessed utterances that ever fell on the human ear. "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" What living depth, what divine power, what freshness and comfort in these words! They present to us the very gist and marrow, the essential principle of the divine life. It is only the eye of faith that can see the glory of God. Unbelief sees only difficulties, darkness, and death. Faith looks above and beyond all these, and ever basks in the blessed beams of the divine glory. Poor Martha saw nothing but a decomposed human body, simply because she was under a spirit of dark and depressing unbelief. Had she been swayed by an artless faith she would have walked to the tomb in company with Him who is the resurrection and the life, assured that, instead of death and decomposition, she should see the glory of God.

This is a grand principle for the soul to grasp. It is utterly impossible for human language to overstate its value and importance. Faith never looks at difficulties, except indeed it be to feed on them. It looks not at the things that are seen, but at the things

that are unseen. It endures as seeing Him who is invisible. It takes hold of the living God. It leans on His arm; it makes use of His strength; it draws on His exhaustless treasury; it walks in the light of His blessed countenance, and sees His glory shining forth over the darkest scenes of human life.

The inspired volume abounds in striking illustrations of the contrast between faith and unbelief. Let us glance at one or two of them. Look, for example, at Caleb and Joshua, in contrast with their unbelieving brethren, in Num. 13. These latter saw only the difficulties which stood in their way "Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land" — not stronger than Jehovah, surely — "and the cities are walled, and very great" — not greater than the living God: — "and moreover we saw the children of Anak there."

It is very clear that they did not see the glory of God; indeed, they saw anything and everything but that. They were wholly governed by a spirit of unbelief, and hence they could only "bring up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and *all* the people that *we saw* in it are men of *great statutes* they did not *see* a single small man: they looked at everything through the magnifying-glass of unbelief. "There *we saw* the giants" — no doubt! — "the sons of Anak which come of the giants." Anything more? Ah, God was shut out; they could not see Him at all through the glasses they used. They could only see the terrible giants and towering walls: "and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were we in their sight."

But what of Jehovah? Alas, He was left out! Unbelief invariably leaves God out of its calculations. It can take a very full account of the difficulties, the hindrances, the hostile influences; but as for the living God, it sees Him not. There is a melancholy consistency in the utterances of unbelief, whether we listen to them in the wilderness of Kadesh, or, fourteen hundred years afterwards, at the tomb of Lazarus. Unbelief is always and everywhere the same; it begins, continues and ends with the absolute exclusion of the one living and true God. It can do naught save to cast dark shadows over the pathway of every one who will listen to its voice.

How different are the accents of faith Harken to Joshua and Caleb, as they seek to stem the rising tide of unbelief. "And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: and they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. *If the Lord delight in us*" — here lies the secret — "then He will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land — for *they are bread for us*" — faith actually feeds on the difficulties which terrify unbelief: — "their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not."

Glorious words! It does the heart good to transcribe them. "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Thus it is always. If there is a melancholy consistency in the utterances of unbelief, there is a glorious consistency in the accents of faith, wherever we harken to them. Caleb and Joshua saw the glory of God, and in the light of that glory what were giants and high walls? Simply nothing. If anything, they were bread for the nourishment of faith. Faith brings in God, and He dispels all difficulties. What walls or giants could stand before the Almighty God? "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Such is ever the artless but powerful reasoning of faith. It conducts its arguments and reaches its conclusions in the blessed light of the divine presence. It sees the glory of God. It looks above and beyond the heavy clouds which at times gather upon the horizon, and finds in God its sure and never failing resource. Precious faith! — the only thing in the world that really glorifies God and makes the heart of the Christian truly bright and happy.

Take another illustration. Turn to 1 Kings 17, and contrast the widow of Sarepta with Elijah the Tishbite. What was the difference between them? Just the difference that ever exists between unbelief and faith. Listen again to the utterances of unbelief. "And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may *eat of it, and die.*"

Here, truly, is a gloomy picture. An empty barrel, an exhausted cruse, and death! Was that all? That was all for blind unbelief. It is the old story of the giants and lofty walls over again. God is shut out, though she could say, "As the Lord thy God liveth." In reality she was out of His presence, and had lost the sense of His all-sufficiency to meet her need and that of her house. Her circumstances excluded God from the vision of her soul. She looked at things that were seen, not at the things which were unseen. She saw not the invisible One; she saw nothing but famine and death. As the ten unbelieving spies saw nothing but the difficulties; as Martha saw nothing but the grave and its humiliating results; so the poor Sareptan saw nothing but starvation and death.

Not so the man of faith. He looked beyond the barrel and the cruse. He had no thought of dying of hunger. He rested on the word of the Lord. Here was his precious resource. God had said, "I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." This was quite enough for him. He knew that God could multiply the meal and the oil to sustain him and her. Like Caleb and Joshua, he brought God into the scene, and found in Him the happy solution of every difficulty. They saw God above and beyond the walls and the giants. They rested on His eternal word. He had promised to bring His people into the a land, and hence, though there were nothing but walls and giants from Dan to Beersheba He would most surely fulfil His word.

And so with Elijah the Tishbite. He saw the living and almighty God above and beyond the barrel and the cruse. He rested upon that word which is settled forever in Heaven, and which never can fail a trusting heart. This tranquillised his spirit, and with this he sought to tranquillise the widow too. "And he said unto her, *Fear not*" precious, soul-stirring utterance of faith! — "go, and do as thou hast said.... For *thus saith the Lord God of Israel*, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth."

Here was the solid ground on which the man of God rested when he ventured to offer a word of encouragement to the poor, desponding widow of Sarepta. It was not in the light-heartedness, or blind recklessness, of nature that he spoke to her. He did not deny

that the barrel and cruse were almost empty, as the woman had said. This could have given her no comfort, inasmuch as she knew too well the facts of her case. But he brought the living God and His faithful Word before her aching heart; and hence he could say, "Fear not." He sought to lead her soul to the true resting-place where he himself had found repose, namely, the *Word of the living God* — blessed, unfailing, divine resting-place for every anxious soul!

Thus it was with Caleb and Joshua. They did not deny that there were giants and high walls: they brought God in, and sought to place Him between the hearts of their desponding brethren and the dreaded difficulties. This is what faith always does, and thus gives glory to God and keeps the soul in peace, let the difficulties be ever so great. It would be folly to deny there are obstacles and hostile influences in the way: and there is a certain style of speaking of such things which cannot possibly minister comfort or encouragement to a poor, troubled heart. Faith accurately weights the difficulties and trials, but, knowing that the power of God outweighs them all, it rests in holy calmness on His word, and in His perfect wisdom and everlasting love.

The reader's mind will no doubt recur to many other instances in which the Lord's people have been cast down by looking at circumstances, instead of looking at God. David, in a dark moment, could say, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." What a sad mistake! — the mistake of unbelief. What should he have said? Denied that the unrelenting hand of Saul was against him? Surely not. What comfort would that have given him, inasmuch as he knew too well that it was really so. But he should have remembered that the hand of God was with him, and that hand was stronger than ten thousand Sauls.

So with Jacob in his day of darkness and depression. "All these things," said he, "are against me." What should he have added? "But God is for me." Faith has its "*buts*" and "*ifs*" as well as unbelief; but faith's butts and ifs are all bright because they express the passage of the soul — its rapid passage — from the difficulties to God Himself. "*But* God who is rich," etc. And again, "*If* God be for us, who can be against us?" Thus faith ever reasons. It begins with God, it places Him between the soul and all its surroundings,

and thus imparts a peace which passeth all understanding, a peace which nothing can disturb.

But we must, ere closing this paper, return for a moment to the tomb of Lazarus. The rapid glance we have taken through the inspired volume will enable us to appreciate more fully those most precious words of our Lord to Martha, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Men tell us that seeing is believing; but we can say that believing is seeing. Yes, reader, get hold of this grand truth. It will carry you through and bear you above the darkest and most trying scenes of this dark and trying world. "Have faith in God." This is the mainspring of the divine life. "The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Faith knows, and is persuaded, that there is nothing too hard, nothing too great — yea, and nothing too small — for God. It can count on Him for everything. It basks in the very sunlight of His presence, and exults in the manifestations of His goodness, His faithfulness, and His power. It ever delights to see the platform cleared of the creature, that the glory of God may shine forth in all its lustre. It turns away from creature streams and creature props, and finds all its resources in the one living and true God.

Only see how the divine glory displays itself at the grave of Lazarus, even spite of the unbelieving suggestion of Martha's heart

for God, blessed be His name, delights at times to rebuke our fears as well as to answer our faith. "Then they took away the stone where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth! And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go."

Glorious scene! displaying our Jesus as the Son of God with power, by resurrection of the dead. Gracious scene! in which the Son of God condescends to use man in rolling away the stone and removing the grave clothes. How good of Him to use us in any little way! May it be our joy to be ever ready — in a holy readiness to be used, that God in all things may be glorified!

PART 7.

The opening paragraph of John 12 brings before us a scene of deepest interest, and full of most precious instruction. We feel we cannot do better than quote at full length the lovely record, for the spiritual benefit of the reader. There is nothing, after all, like the veritable language of holy scripture.

"Then Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper, and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."

Here we have illustrated, in the most striking and forcible manner, the three grand features which ought to characterise every Christian and every Christian assembly, namely, calm, intelligent *communion*, as seen in Lazarus seated at the table; holy *worship*, as seen in Mary at the feet of her Lord; and loving *service*, as seen in Martha, in her activities about the house. All three go to make up the Christian character, and all three should be exhibited in every Christian assembly. We consider it a very great moral mistake to set any one of these features in opposition to the others, inasmuch as each, in its proper place, is lovely; and, we may add, each should find its place in all. We should all of us know what it is to sit at table with our blessed Lord, in sweet communion. This will most assuredly lead to profound homage and adoration; and we may rest assured that, where there is the communion and the worship, there will not be lacking the loving activities of true service.

The reader will observe that, in the above beautiful scene, there is no record of any collision between Martha and Mary, Each had her place to fill. There was room for both. "Jesus loved Martha and her sister." Here Martha is put first. In verse 1, we read of "Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha." Looked at from a divine standpoint, there is no need why any one should in the smallest degree collide with another. And further, we may add, there is no necessity whatever for comparing the sphere of one with that of another. If Christ be our one absorbing object, there will be lovely harmony in action, though our line of things may vary.

Thus it was at Bethany. Lazarus was at the table, Mary at the Master's feet, and Martha was about the house. All was in beautiful order, because Christ was the object of each. Lazarus would have been entirely out of his place had he set about preparing the supper; and if Martha had sat at the table, there would have been no supper prepared. But both were in their right places, and we may rest assured that both would rejoice in the odour of Mary's ointment as she poured it on the feet of their ever-loving and beloved Lord.

Is not all this conveyed to us in that one sentence, "There *they* made him a supper?" It was not one more than another. All had part in the precious privilege of making a supper for the one peerless object Of their heart's affections; and, having Him in their midst, each fell naturally, simply, and effectively, into his and her proper place. Provided the beloved Master's heart was refreshed, it mattered not who did this, or who did that. Christ was the centre and each moved round Him.

Thus it should be always in the assembly of Christians, and thus it would be, if odious self were judged and set aside, and each heart simply occupied with Christ Himself. But, alas! here is just where we so sadly fail. We are occupied with ourselves, and our little doings, and sayings, and thinkings. We attach importance to work, not in proportion to its bearing upon the glory of Christ, but its bearing upon our own reputation. If Christ were our one object — as He surely will be throughout eternity, and ought to be now — we should not care the least who did the work, or who rendered the service, provided His name was glorified, and His heart refreshed. Hearken to the utterance of a truly devoted heart in reference to the

very subject before us. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world: holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. Yea, and if I be offered [or poured out] upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me." (Phil. 2: 14-18.)

This is uncommonly fine. The blessed apostle presents in this exquisite passage a true sample of self — forgetting devotedness. He expresses Himself as ready to be poured out as a drink-offering upon the sacrifice and service of his beloved Philippians, utterly regardless of himself. It mattered not to him who contributed the component parts of the sacrifice, provided only that the sacrifice was presented as a sweet odour to Christ. There was none of that contemptible littleness and self-occupation about that beloved servant of Christ which so often, alas! appear in us, and prevent our appreciation of another's service. We are all alive when any little service of our own happens to be on the tapes. We listen with intense interest to any one speaking or writing about our usefulness, or the result of our preachings or writings; but we hear with cold apathy and marked indifference the record of a brother's success. We are by no means ready to be poured out as a drink-offering upon the sacrifice and service of another's faith. We like to provide both meat-offering and drink-offering ourselves. In a word, we are deplorably selfish, and assuredly never is self more thoroughly contemptible than when it dares to mix itself up with the service of God.

Bustling self-importance in the work of Christ, or in the church of God, is about the most hideously ugly thing in all this world. Self-occupation is the death-blow to fellowship and to all true service. Nor this only; it is also the fruitful source of strife and division in the church of God. Hence the deep need of those faithful and most wholesome words of the blessed apostle, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy,

that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, Of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every one on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Here lies the grand remedy for the terrible malady of self-occupation in all its phases. It is having Christ before our hearts, and His lowly mind formed in us by the Holy Ghost. It is utterly impossible to drink into the spirit of Jesus, to breathe the atmosphere of His presence, and be occupied with self in any shape or form. The two things are in direct opposition. In proportion as Christ fills the heart, self and its belongings must be excluded; and if Christ occupies the heart, we shall rejoice to see His name magnified, His cause prospering, His people blessed, His gospel spread abroad, no matter who may be used as His instrument. We may rest assured that wherever there is envy, or jealousy, or strife, there self is uppermost in the heart. The blessed apostle could rejoice if Christ was preached, even though it was of contention.

But to return to the family of Bethany. We wish the reader to notice particularly the three distinct phases of Christian life exemplified in Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, namely, communion, worship and service. Should we not, each one of us, seek to realise and exemplify all the three? Is it not interesting and important to observe that in John 12. there is no question raised between Martha and Mary? Is not this accounted for by the fact that in this beautiful passage we have the divine and heavenly side of the subject?

In Luke 10 we have the human side. Here, alas! there is collision. Let us read the passage. "Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house" — it was Martha's house, and of course she had to manage it. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word" — blessed, privileged place!" But Martha was Numbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Here we find that Martha's self-occupation marred her service, and drew forth words of reproof from the lips of her loving, yet faithful, Lord — words, we may safely say, which would never have fallen upon her ear had she not interfered with her sister Mary. Her service had its place and its value, and her Lord knew well how to appreciate it; but, blessed be His name, He will not allow any one to interfere with another. Each had her own place, her own line of things. Jesus loved Martha and her sister, but if Martha will complain of her sister, she must learn that there is something more to be thought of than preparing a supper. Had Martha gone quietly on with her work, having Christ as her object in all that she was doing, she would not have had a rebuff; but she was evidently in a wrong spirit. She was not in communion with the mind of Christ; had she been so, she never could have used such words to her Lord, as "*Dost thou not care?*" Surely He does care about us, and He is interested in all our works and ways. The smallest service done to Him is precious to His loving heart, and will never be forgotten.

But we must not interfere with another's service, or intrude in any way upon his domain. Our blessed Lord will not suffer it. Whatever He gives us to do, let it be done simply to Him. This is the grand point. There is not the slightest necessity for jostling one another. There is ample space for all, and the very highest sphere is open to all. We may all enjoy intimate communion; we may all worship; we may all serve; we may all be acceptable. But the

moment we set about making invidious comparisons, we are clearly out of the current of the Master's mind. Martha, no doubt, thought her sister rather deficient in action. She was mistaken. The best preparation for action is sitting at the Master's feet to hear His word. Had Martha understood this, she would not have complained of her sister; but, inasmuch as she herself raised the question, and gave occasion for any comparison, she had to learn that a hearing ear, and a worshipping heart, are more precious by far than busy hands. Alas! our hands may be very busy, while the ear is heavy, and the heart far away! but if the heart be right, then the ear, the hands, the feet, yea, all will be right. "My son, give me thine heart."

We do not mean to imply that Martha's heart was not right in the main. Far from it. We feel assured it was. But there was an element which needed correction, as there is in all of us. She was a little occupied with her service. "Carest thou not that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she come and help me." This was all wrong. She ought to have known that service was not confined to cooking — that there was something higher than meat and drink. Ten thousand might be got to prepare a supper for one that would break an alabaster box. Not that our Lord undervalued the supper; but what would that supper have been to Him without the ointment, the tears, the hair? What is any act of service without the deep and true devotion of the heart? Nothing. But, on the other hand, where the heart is really engaged with Christ, the smallest act is precious to Him. "If there be *first* a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath."

Here lies the root of the whole matter. It is an easy thing to bustle about in so-called service, to run from house to house, and place to place, visiting and talking, and after all there may not be a single spark of genuine affection for Christ, but the mere worthless activity of a self-occupied mind, all unbroken will, the workings of a heart that has never known the constraining power of the love of Christ. The grand point is to find our place at the feet of our gracious Lord, in worship and adoration, and then we shall be ready for any sphere of action which He may see fit to open for us. If we make service our object, our service will become a snare and a hindrance.

If Christ be our object, we shall be sure to do the right thing, without thinking about ourselves or our work.

Thus it was with Mary. She was occupied with her Lord, and not with herself or her alabaster box. She sought not to interfere with any one else. She complained not of Lazarus at the table, nor of Martha with her household cares. She was absorbed with Christ and His position at the moment. The true instincts of love led her to see what was fitting for the occasion, and grateful to His heart, and she did that — did it with all her heart.

Yes, and her Lord appreciated her act. And not only so, but when Martha complained of her, He very soon taught her her mistake; and when Judas, with ill-concealed covetousness, talked of her act as being a waste, he too got his answer, Heartless man! hiding his covetousness under the cloak of caring for the poor. No one can have a true heart for the poor who does not love Christ. Judas — professor, and apostle, and all, as he was — loved money: alas! no uncommon love. He had no heart for Christ, although he may have preached and cast out devils in His blessed name. He could talk of selling the ointment for three hundred pence, and giving it to the poor; but, oh! the Holy Ghost, who measures everything by the one standard of the glory of Christ, lets us see the roots of things, and He it is who tells the full truth as to Judas. "This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein."

How truly awful! To be outwardly so near the Lord; to profess His name; to be an apostle; to talk about giving to the poor; and all the while to be a thief, and the betrayer of the Son of God!

Dear Christian reader, let us ponder these things. Let us seek to live very near to Christ, not in mere profession, but in reality. May we find our place ever in the moral shelter of His holy presence, there to find our delight in Him, and thus be fitted to serve Him, and witness for His name!

John 20: 19-21.

"Peace"

In the passage which stands at the head of this paper we have the word "peace," in a twofold sense, first, as applied to the inner life; and secondly, to the outer life of the Christian disciple. "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and saith unto them, *Peace unto you.* And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side."

Here we have peace in its blessed application to the inner life. All was finished. The battle was fought, the victory gained. The Conqueror was in their midst — the true David with the head of the Philistine in His hand. All possible ground for anxiety was for ever removed. Peace was made, and established on a foundation that could never be moved. It was utterly impossible that any power of earth or hell could ever touch the foundation of that peace which a risen Saviour was now breathing into the souls of His gathered disciples. He had made peace by the blood of His cross. He had met every foe. He had encountered the marshalled hosts of hell, and made a show of them openly. The full tide of Jehovah's righteous wrath against sin had rolled over Him. He had taken the sting from death, and spoiled the grave of its victory. In a word, the triumph was gloriously complete; and the blessed Victor at once presents Himself to the eyes and to the hearts of His beloved people, and sounds in their ears the precious word "*peace.*"

And then mark the significant action. "He showed them His hands and His side." He brings them into immediate contact with Himself. He reveals His Person to their souls, and shows them the unequivocal tokens of His cross and passion — the wondrous marks of accomplished atonement. It is a risen Saviour, bearing in His body the marks of that death through which He had passed for His people.

Now this is the secret of peace. It is a great deal more than knowing that our sins are forgiven, and that we are justified from all

things, blessed as all this assuredly is. It is having before our souls — before the eyes of our faith — the Person of a risen Christ, and receiving from His own lips the sweet message of "peace." It is having in our hearts that holy sense of deliverance which springs from having the Person of the Deliverer distinctly presented to our faith. It is not merely that we know we are forgiven and delivered, but our hearts are livingly engaged with the One who has done it all, and we gaze by faith upon the mysterious marks of His accomplished work. *This is peace for the inner life.*

But this is not all. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace unto you. As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." Here we have the outer life of the Christian. It is all, from first to last, wrapped up in this one grand fact, he is sent into the world, as Jesus was sent by the Father. It is not a question of what he has to do, or where he has to go. He is one sent by Jesus, even as Jesus was sent by the Father; and ere he starts on this high and holy mission, his risen Lord ensures him perfect peace as to every scene and circumstance of his whole career.

What a mission! What a view of the life of a Christian! Do we at all enter into it? Let no one suppose for a moment that all this applies only to apostles. This would be a grand mistake. The passage on which we are dwelling does not speak of apostles. It speaks of "disciples," a term which surely applies to all the children of God. The very feeblest disciple is privileged to know himself as one sent into this world as Jesus was sent of the Father. What a model to study! What a place it gives us! What an object to live for! How it settles everything! It is not a question of "views" — of opinions, dogmas, or principles — of ordinances or ceremonies. No, thank God; it is something quite different. It is life and peace — life in a risen Saviour, and peace for that life, both inward and outward. It is gazing upon a risen Saviour, and starting from His feet to serve Him in this world, as He served the Father.

And be it remembered that all this has a direct bearing upon the very youngest disciple in all the Church of God. We earnestly press this upon the reader, because some would have us to believe that it is something official, something which applied only to the

apostles. Those who urge this idea build much on verse 23. But the fact is, the apostles never undertook to forgive sins in an official way. This passage has no such bearing; it refers to the discipline of an assembly of disciples, acting by the Holy Ghost, in the name and on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, when the assembly at Corinth put away from among them the evil-doer, it was retaining of sins. And when they received him back, on the ground of his repentance, it was a remitting of sins.

Such is the simple meaning of John 20: 23. It does not touch the soul's eternal relation to God, but only its present relation to the assembly. Hence we should not allow ourselves to be robbed of the precious teaching of the entire passage through any false application of a particular clause.

John 20

Jesus Risen.

Deep and varied as are the necessities of the soul, they are all met by the death and resurrection of Christ. If it be a question of sin that affects the soul, the resurrection is the glorious proof of the complete putting away of it. The moment I see Jesus at the right hand of God, I see an end of sin; for I know He could not be there if sin was not fully atoned for. "He was delivered for our offences;" He stood as our Representative; He took upon Him our iniquities, and went down into the grave under the weight thereof. "But God raised Him from the dead;" and, by so doing, expressed His full approbation of the work of redemption. Hence we read, "He was raised again for our justification." Resurrection, therefore, meets the need of the soul, as regards the question of sin.

Then, again, when we proceed farther, and enter upon the trying and difficult path of Christian testimony, we find that Jesus risen is a sovereign remedy for all the ills of life. This is happily exemplified for us in John 20. Mary repairs to the sepulchre, early in the morning. And, as we learn from the parallel passage in Mark, her heart was not only sad at the loss of her gracious friend, but also tried by the difficulty of removing the stone from the mouth of the cave. The resurrection removed, at once, her *sorrow* and her *burden*. Jesus risen filled the blank in her desolated affections, and removed from her shoulders the load which she was unable to sustain. She found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre, and she found also her beloved Lord, whom death had for a season snatched from her view. Such mighty things could resurrection accomplish on behalf of a poor needy mortal.

Nor is it otherwise with us now. Have our hearts been broken and bereaved by the stern, rude hand of death? Has his cold breath chilled our affections? What is the remedy? Resurrection. Yes; resurrection, that great restorer, not merely of "tired" but of ruined nature, fills up all blanks — repairs all breaches — remedies all ills. If the conscience be affected by a sense of sin, resurrection sets it at rest, by the assurance that the Surety's work has been fully accepted.

If the heart be bowed down with sorrow, and torn by the ravages of death, resurrection heals, soothes and binds it up, by securing the restoration and reunion of all who have gone before; it tells us to "sorrow not as others which have no hope, for if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" (1 Thess. 4: 13, 14). It is commonly thought that time fills up all the blanks which death has made in the affections; but the spiritual mind could never regard time, with its sorrowful vicissitudes, as a substitute for resurrection and its immortal joys. The poor worldling may, perhaps, find, in passing circumstances, something to fill up the void which death makes, but not so the Christian; to him, resurrection is the grand object: to that he looks as the only instrumentality by which all his losses can be retrieved, and all his evils remedied.

So also in the matter of burden and pressure from present circumstances; the only relief is in resurrection. Till then we have but to toil on from day to day, bearing the burden and enduring the travail of the present sorrowful scene. We may, like Mary, feel dispose to cry out, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" Who? The risen Jesus. Apprehend resurrection, and you are raised above the influence of every burden. It is not that we may not have many a burden to carry; no doubt, we may; but our burdens shall not sink us into the dust, because our hearts are buoyed up by the blessed truth that our Head is risen from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of God, and, moreover, that our place is there with Him. Faith leads the soul upward, even into the holy serenity of the Divine presence — it enables us to cast our burden on the Lord, and to rest assured that He will sustain it for us. How often have we shrunk from the thought of some trial or burden which appeared, in the distance, like a dark cloud upon the horizon, and yet, when we approached it, we "found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre." The risen Jesus had rolled it away. He had removed the dark cloud, and filled up the scene with the light of His own gracious countenance. Mary had come to the sepulchre expecting to find a great stone between her and the object of her affections, but instead of that, she found Jesus risen between her and the dreaded difficulty. She had come to anoint a dead body, but arrived to be blessed and made happy, by a risen Saviour. Such is God's way — such the

power and value of resurrection. Sins, sorrows, and burdens all vanish, when we find ourselves in the presence of a living Lord. When John, in the island of Patmos, had fallen to the dust, as one dead, what was it that raised him up? Resurrection — the living Jesus; "I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." This set him on his feet. Communion with Him who had wrested life from the very grasp of death, removed his fears and infused divine strength into his soul.

In the case of Peter and John, too, we find another instance of the power of resurrection. In them it is not so much a question of sin, or sorrow, and burden, as of difficulty. Their minds are evidently puzzled by all that met their view at the sepulchre. To see grave-clothes so carefully arranged in the very tomb, was unaccountable. But they are only puzzled, because "as yet, they knew not the scripture that he must rise again from the dead." Nothing but resurrection could solve their difficulty. Had they known that, they would have been at no loss to account for the arrangement of the grave-clothes; they would have known that the Destroyer of death had been there, doing His mighty work, and had left behind Him the traces of His triumph. Such was the meaning of the scene at the tomb; at least it was calculated to teach that lesson. The Lord Jesus had calmly and deliberately passed through the conflict. He had exhibited no haste — no perturbation. He had taken time to set in order His grave-clothes and His tomb; He showed that it required no strained effort on His part to vanquish the power of death. However, Peter and John knew not this; and, therefore, they went away to their own home. The strength of Mary's affection made her linger still; love was more influential than knowledge; and though her heart was breaking, she remained at the sepulchre; she would rather weep near the spot where her Lord was laid, than go anywhere else. But resurrection settled everything. It filled up the blank in Mary's broken heart, and solved the difficulty in the minds of Peter and John. It dried up *her* tears and put a stop to *their* amazement. Jesus risen is, in good truth, the sovereign remedy for all evils, and nothing is needed but faith to use Him,

At ver. 19, we have a fresh illustration of the principle on which we are dwelling. "Then the same day at evening, being the

first day of the week, when *the doors were shut* where the disciples were *assembled for fear of the Jews*, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you." Here the closed door evidenced the fear of the disciples. They were afraid of the Jews. And what could remedy their fear? Nothing but communion with their risen Lord. Nor did He (blessed be His name!) leave them destitute of that remedy; He appeared amongst them — He pronounced His benediction upon them. "Peace be unto you," said He. "Peace," not because their door was secured, but because Jesus was risen. Who could harm them, while they had in their midst the mighty Vanquisher of death and hell?

There is unspeakable value in this word "peace," used by such an One, at such a time. The peace that flows from fellowship with the risen Son of God cannot be ruffled by the vicissitudes and storms of this world; it is the-peace of the inner sanctuary — the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Why are we so much troubled, at times, by the condition of things around us? Why do we betake ourselves, if not to the closed door, at least to some other human resource? Surely, because we are not walking with our eye steadily fixed on Him who was dead, but who is alive for evermore, who has all power in heaven and on earth. Did we but realize that our portion is in Him, yea that He Himself is our portion, we should be far less affected by the prospects of this poor world. The politics, the agriculture, the commerce of earth, would find their proper place in our hearts, if we could remember that "we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God." It is commonly said, that while we are here we must take an interest in the circumstances, the prospects, the destinies of earth. But then, "our citizenship is in heaven." We are not of earth at all. Those who are risen with Christ are no longer of earth. All that in us (I mean believers) which could have any affinity with earth — all that which can be called nature, is dead, and should be reckoned as dead, and our life is in heaven, where we are now in spirit and principle. No doubt, if we only see ourselves as earthly men, we shall be occupied with earthly things; but if we see ourselves as heavenly men, we shall, as a consequence, be occupied about heavenly things. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek *those things which are above*.

This is simple. "*Things above*" are those which we are commanded to seek, and that because we are "risen with Christ." The difference between Abraham, in his day, and a believer now, may be thus stated: Abraham was going from earth to heaven; the believer has come from heaven to earth; *i.e.*, in spirit, and by faith. Abraham was a pilgrim on earth, because *he sought a heavenly country*; the believer is a pilgrim on earth, because *he has gotten a heavenly country*. The Christian should regard himself as one who has come from heaven, to go through the scenes and engagements of earth. This would impart a high and heavenly tone to his character and walk here. The Lord grant that it may be more so with all who name the name of Jesus!

It may be remarked, in conclusion, that the Lord Jesus remedied the fear of His poor disciples by coming into their midst, and associating Himself with them in all their circumstances. It was not so much a question of actual deliverance from the matter that caused the fear, but rather raising their souls above it by fellowship with Himself. They forgot the Jews, they forgot their fear, they forgot everything, because their souls were occupied with their risen Lord. The Lord's way is often to leave His people in trial and to be with them therein. Paul might desire to get rid of the thorn, but the answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It is a far richer mercy to have the grace and presence of Jesus *in* the trial, than to be delivered *from* it. The Lord allowed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be cast into the furnace; but, if He did, He came down and walked with them therein. This was infinitely more gracious of Him, and more honourable to them, than if He had interposed on their behalf before they were cast in.

May it be our heart's desire to find ourselves in company with the risen Lord, as we pass through this trying scene, and then, whether it be the furnace of affliction, or the storm of persecution, we shall have peace; whether it be the bereavement of the heart, the burden of the shoulder, the difficulty of the mind, the fear or unbelief of the heart, all will be remedied by fellowship with Him who was raised from the dead.

John 21: 1-19

RESTORATION

A careful study of these verses will enable us to trace in them distinct kinds of restoration, namely restoration of conscience, restoration of heart and restoration of position.

The first of these, *restoration of conscience*, is all-important. It would be utterly impossible to over-estimate the value of a sound, clear, uncondemning conscience. A Christian cannot get on if there is a single blot on his conscience. He must walk before God with a pure conscience — a conscience without stain or sting. Precious treasure! May my reader ever possess it.

It is obvious that Peter possessed it in the touching scene “at the sea of Tiberias.” Yet he had fallen — shamefully, grievously fallen. He had denied his Lord with an oath, but he was restored. One look from Jesus had broken up the deep fountains of his heart and drawn forth floods of bitter tears. Yet it was not his tears, but the love that drew them forth, which formed the ground of his thorough restoration of conscience. It was the changeless and everlasting love of the heart of Jesus — the divine effectiveness of the blood of Jesus — and the all-prevailing power of the advocacy of Jesus that imparted to Peter's conscience the boldness and liberty so strikingly and beautifully exhibited on the memorable occasion before us.

The risen Savior is seen in these closing chapters of John's Gospel, watching over His poor, foolish, feeble, erring disciples, hovering about their path, presenting Himself in various ways before them — taking occasion from their very necessities to make Himself known in perfect grace to their hearts. Was there a tear to be dried, a difficulty to be solved, a fear to be hushed, a bereaved heart to be soothed, an unbelieving mind to be corrected? Jesus was present in all the fullness and variety of His grace to meet all these things. So also when, under the guidance of the ever-forward Peter, they had gone forth to spend a night in fruitless toil, Jesus had His eye upon them. He knew all about the darkness and the toil and the empty net,

and there He was on the shore to kindle a fire and prepare a dinner for them. Yes, the selfsame Jesus who had died on the cross to put away their sins, now stood on the shore to restore them from their wanderings, gather them round Himself and minister to all their need. “Have ye any meat?” developed the fruitlessness of their night's toil. “Come and dine” was the touching expression of the tender thoughtful, all-providing love of the risen Savior.

Let us note the evidences of a thoroughly restored conscience as exhibited by Simon Peter. “Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved, saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him (for he was naked) and did cast himself into the sea.” He could not wait for the ships or for his fellow disciples, so eager was he to get to the feet of his risen Lord. He did not say to John or to the others, “You know how shamefully I have fallen, and although I have since then seen the Lord and heard Him speak peace to my soul, yet I think it more becoming in one who has so fallen to keep back. You therefore go first and meet the blessed One and I shall follow after.” Rather, he flings himself boldly into the sea as much as to say, “I must be the very first to get to my risen Savior; none has such a claim on Him as poor, stumbling, failing Peter.”

Now, here was a perfectly restored conscience — a conscience without a single spot — a conscience basking in the sunlight of unchanging love. Peter's confidence in Christ was unclouded, and this, we may boldly affirm, was pleasing to the heart of Jesus. Love likes to be trusted. Let us always remember this. No one need imagine that he is honoring Jesus by standing afar off on the plea of unworthiness; yet it is very hard for one who has fallen or backslidden to recover his confidence in the love of Christ. Such an one can see clearly that a sinner is welcome to Jesus, no matter how great or many his sins may have been, but then he thinks the case of a backsliding or stumbling Christian is entirely different.

Should these lines be scanned by one who has backslidden or fallen, we would earnestly press upon him the importance of immediately returning to Jesus. “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.” What is the response to this pathetic appeal? “Behold, we come unto Thee; for Thou art the Lord

our God.” “If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto Me” (Jer. 3: 22; Jer. 4: 1). The love of the heart of Jesus knows no change. We change but He is “the same yesterday, today, and forever,” and He delights to be trusted. The confidence of Peter's heart was a rich feast to the heart of Christ. No doubt, it is sad to fall, to err, to backslide, but it is sadder still, when we have done so, to distrust the love of Jesus or His gracious readiness to take us to His bosom again.

Beloved reader, have you fallen? Have you erred? Have you backslidden? Have you lost the sweet sense of divine favor, the happy consciousness of acceptance with God? If so, what are you to do? Simply this, Return! This is God's own special word to the backslider. Return in self-judgment and in the fullest confidence in the boundless, changeless love of the heart of Christ. Do not, we beseech you, keep away in the distance of your own unbelief. Do not measure the heart of Jesus by your own thoughts. Let Him tell you what is in His heart toward you. You have sinned, you have failed, you have turned aside, and now, it may be, you are afraid or ashamed to turn your eyes toward the One whom you have grieved and dishonored. Satan also is suggesting the darkest thoughts, for he would seek to keep you at a chilling distance from that precious Savior who loves you with an everlasting love. But you have only to fix your gaze upon the blood, the advocacy, the heart of Jesus, to get a triumphant answer to all the enemy's terrible suggestions and to all the infidel reasonings of your own heart. Do not, therefore, go on another hour without seeking to get a thorough settlement of the question between your soul and Christ. Remember, “His is an unchanging love, free and faithful, strong as death.” Remember also His own words, “Return, ye backsliding children” — “Return to Me.” Finally, remember that Jesus loves to be trusted.

Secondly, the *heart* has to be restored as well as the conscience. Let this not be forgotten. It often happens in the history of souls that though the conscience may be perfectly clear as to certain acts which we have done, yet the roots from where those acts have sprung have not been reached. The acts appear on the surface of daily life, but the roots are hidden down deep in the heart,

unknown to ourselves and others, but thoroughly exposed to the eye of Him with whom we have to do.

Now, these roots must be reached, exposed and judged before the heart is in a right condition in the sight of God. Look at Abraham. He started on his course with a certain root in his heart, a root of unbelieving reserve in reference to Sarah. This thing led him astray when he went down into Egypt. Although his conscience was restored and he got back to his altar at Bethel, yet the root was not reached for years afterwards in the affair of Abimelech, king of Gerar.

All this is deeply practical and most solemn. It finds its illustration in Peter as well as in Abraham. Mark the exquisitely delicate way in which our blessed Lord proceeds to reach the roots in the heart of His dear and honored servant, Peter. "So when they had dined." Not till then. There was no allusion to the past, nothing that might cause a chill to the heart or bring a cloud over the spirit while a restored conscience was fasting in company with a love that knows no change. This is a fine moral trait. It characterizes the dealings of God with all His saints. The conscience is set at rest in the presence of infinite and everlasting love, before there is the most distant illusion to the roots of things in the heart. When Simon Peter, in the full confidence of a restored conscience, flung himself at the feet of his risen Lord, he was called to listen to that gracious invitation, "Come and dine." But "when they had dined," Jesus took Peter apart to let in upon his soul the light of truth, so that by it he might discern the root from where all his failure had sprung. That root was self-confidence which had led him to place himself above his fellow-disciples and say, "Though all should deny Thee, yet will not I."

This root had to be exposed. Therefore, "When they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" This was a pointed and strong question, and it went right to the very bottom of Peter's heart. Three times Peter had denied his Lord and three times his Lord now challenges the heart of Peter, for the roots must be reached if any permanent good is to be done. It will not do merely to have the conscience purged from the effects which have been produced in practical life, there must also

be the moral judgment of that which produced them. This is not sufficiently understood and attended to. Hence, again and again the roots spring up and bring forth fruit, and scatter their seed a thousand-fold around us, thus cutting out for us the most bitter and sorrowful work which might all be avoided if the roots of things were thoroughly judged and kept under.

Christian reader, our object in this article is entirely practical. Let us exhort one another to judge our roots, whatever they may be. Do we know our roots? Doubtless, it is very hard to know them. They are deep and many; pride, personal vanity, covetousness, irritability, ambition — these are some of the roots of character, the motive-springs of action, over which a rigid censorship must ever be exercised. We must let nature know that the eye of self-judgment is continually upon it. We have to carry on the struggle without stopping. We may have to lament over occasional failure, but we must maintain the struggle, for *struggle* is the evidence of life. May God the Holy Spirit strengthen us for the ceaseless conflict.

Lastly, we shall close with a brief reference to restoration as bearing upon the soul's position or path. The conscience being thoroughly purged and the heart with its varied roots, judged, there is moral preparedness for our proper path. The perfect love of Jesus had expelled all fear from Peter's conscience; His threefold question had opened up the roots in Peter's heart, and now He says to him, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdest thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hand and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spoke He, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, follow Me."

Here we have in two words the path of the servant of Christ. "Follow Me." The Lord had just given Peter the sweetest pledges of His love and confidence. He had, notwithstanding all past failure, entrusted him with the care of all that was dear to His loving heart in this world, even the lambs and sheep of His flock. He had said to him, "If you have affection for Me, feed My lambs, shepherd My sheep," and now, in one brief but comprehensive utterance, He

opens before him his proper path. "Follow Me." This is enough. It includes all beside.

If we want to follow Jesus, we must keep the eye continually upon Him; we must mark His footprints and tread therein. Yes, mark them and walk in them; and when tempted like Peter to "turn about" to see what this one or that one has to do, or how he does it, we may hear the correcting words, "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me." This is to be our one grand and all-absorbing business, come what may. A thousand things may arise to distract and hinder. The devil will tempt us to look here and there, to look at this one and that one, to imagine we could do better here than there or there than here, to be occupied with and imitate the work of some fellow-servant. All this is met by those pointed words, "Follow Me."

There is immense danger in the present day of following in the wake of others, of doing certain things *because* others do them, or doing things *as* others do them. All this has to be carefully guarded. It will be sure to come to nothing. What we really want is a broken will — the true spirit of a servant who waits on the Master to know His mind. Service does not consist in doing this or that, or running here and there; it is simply doing the Master's will, whatever that may be. "They serve who stand and wait." It is easier to be busy than to be quiet. When Peter was "young," he went where he would, but when he got "old" he went where he would not. What a contrast between the young, restless, ardent, energetic Peter, going where he would, and the old, matured, subdued, experienced Peter going where he would not. What a mercy to have the will broken! To be able to say from the heart, "*What* Thou wilt, *as* Thou wilt, *where* Thou wilt, *when* Thou wilt." "Not My will, but Thine, O Lord, be done."

"Follow Me." Precious words! May they be engraved on our hearts, beloved reader. Then shall we be steady in our course and effective in our service. We shall not be distracted or unsettled by the thoughts and opinions of men. It may be we will get very few to understand us or sympathize with us — few to approve or appreciate our work. It matters not. The Master knows all about it. Let us only be sure of what He has told us to do, and *do* it. If a master tells one of his servants to go and do a certain thing or occupy a certain post,

it is his business to go and do that thing, or occupy that post, no matter what his fellow-servants may think. They may tell him he ought to be somewhere else or to do something else. A proper servant will not listen to them, for he knows his master's mind and has to do his master's work.

Would it were more thus with all the Lord's servants! Would that we all knew more distinctly and carried out more decidedly the Master's will respecting us. Peter had his path and John had his. James had his work and Paul had his. So it was of old, the Gershonite had his work and the Merarite had his; and if one had interfered with the other, the work could not have been done. The Tabernacle was carried forward or set up by each man doing his own proper work. Thus it is in this our day. God has varied workmen in His house and in His vineyard. He has quarrymen, stone-squarers, masons and decorators. Are all quarrymen? Surely not, but each has his work to do, and the building progresses by each one doing his own appointed work. Should a quarryman despise a decorator or a decorator look down with contempt upon a quarryman? Assuredly not. The Master wants them both, and whenever the one interferes with the other, as we so often do, the faithful correcting word falls on the ear, "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me."

John 21:22

"Follow thou me." John 21:22.

Discipleship in an evil day.

Preface.

The following Tract is a reprint of a paper which appeared in a recent number of "The Present Testimony," containing the substance of a Lecture on the first three chapters of the Book of Daniel. It is published in this form, at the request of a number of Christian friends and with earnest desire that the Holy Spirit may be pleased to use it for the purpose of leading many hearts to seek a closer walk with God.

C.H.M.

Discipleship in an evil day.

The first three chapters of the Book of Daniel furnish a most seasonable and important lesson at a time like the present, in which the disciple is in such danger of yielding to surrounding influences, and of lowering his standard of testimony and his tone of discipleship, in order to meet the existing condition of things.

At the opening of chapter 1 we have a most discouraging picture of the state of things, in reference to the ostensible witness of God on the earth. "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, came Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar, to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the house of his god." (Daniel 1:1, 2) Here then we have an aspect of things quite sufficient, if looked at from nature's point of view, to discourage the heart, to damp the spirit, and paralyse the energies. Jerusalem in ruins, the temple trodden down, the Lord's vessels in the house of a false god, and Judah carried away captive. Surely the heart would feel disposed to say, There is no use in seeking to hold up the standard of practical discipleship and

personal devotedness any longer. The spirit must droop, the heart must faint, and the hands must hang down, when such is the condition of the people of God. It could be naught but the most contemptible presumption for any of Judah's sons to think of taking up a true Nazarite's position at such a time.

Such would be nature's reasoning; but such was not the language of faith. Blessed be God! there is always a wide sphere in which the spirit of genuine devotedness can develop itself — there is always a path along which the true disciple can run, even though he should have to run in solitude. It matters not what the outward condition of things may be, it is faith's privilege to hang as much on God, to feed as much on Christ, and to breathe as much of the air of heaven, as though all were in perfect order and harmony.

This is an unspeakable mercy to the faithful heart. All who desire to walk devotedly can always find a path to walk in; whereas, on the contrary, the man who draws a plea, from outward circumstances, for relaxing his energy, would not be energetic, though most favourably situated.

If ever there was a time in which one might be excused for taking a low ground, it was the time of the Babylonish captivity. The entire framework of Judaism was broken up; the kingly power had passed out of the hand of David's successor, and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar; the glory had departed from Israel; and, in one word, all seemed faded and gone, and naught remained for the exiled children of Judah, save to hang their harps upon the willows, and sit down by the rivers of Babylon, there to weep over departed glory, faded light, and fallen greatness.

Such would be the language of blind unbelief; but, blessed be God! it is when everything appears sunk to the lowest possible point, that then faith rises in holy triumph; and faith, we know, is the only true basis of effective discipleship. It asks for no props from the men and things around it; it finds "all its springs" in God; and hence it is that faith never shines so brightly as when all around is dark. It is when nature's horizon is overcast with the blackest clouds, that faith basks in the sunshine of the divine favour and faithfulness.

Thus it was that Daniel and his companions were enabled to overcome the peculiar difficulties of their time. They judged that there was nothing to hinder their enjoying as elevated a Nazariteship in Babylon as ever had been known in Jerusalem; and they judged rightly. Their judgment was the judgment of a pure and well-founded faith. It was the self-same judgment on which the Baraks, the Gideons, the Jephthahs, and the Samsons of old had acted. It was the judgment to which Jonathan gave utterance, when he said, "There is no restraint with the Lord to save by many or by few." (1 Sam. 14) It was the judgment of David, in the valley of Elah, when he called the poor trembling host of Israel "the army of the living God." (1 Sam. 17) It was the judgment of Elijah, on Mount Carmel, when he built an altar with "twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob." (1 Kings 18) It was the judgment of Daniel himself when, at a further stage of his history, he opened his window and prayed toward Jerusalem. (Dan. 6) It was the judgment of Paul when, in view of the overwhelming tide of apostasy and corruption which was about to set in, he exhorts his son Timothy to "hold fast the form of sound words." (2 Tim. 1:18) It was the judgment of Peter when, in prospect of the dissolution of the entire framework of creation, he encourages believers to "be diligent, that they be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless." (2 Peter 3:14) It was the judgment of John when, amid the actual breaking up of everything ecclesiastical, he exhorts his well beloved Gaius to "follow not that which is evil but that which is good." (3 John 11) And it was the judgment of Jude when, in the presence of the most appalling wickedness, he encourages a beloved remnant to "build themselves up in their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, to keep themselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." (Jude 20, 21) In one word, it was the judgment of the Holy Ghost, and, therefore, it was the judgment of faith.

Now, all this attaches immense value and interest to Daniel's determination, as expressed in the first chapter of this book. "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." (Ver. 8) He might, very naturally, have said to

himself, "There is no use in one poor feeble captive seeking to maintain a place of separation. Everything is broken up. It is impossible to carry out the true spirit of a Nazarite amid such hopeless ruin and degradation. I may as well accommodate myself to the condition of things around me."

But no; Daniel was on higher ground than this. He knew it was his privilege to live as close to God in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, as within the gates of Jerusalem. He knew that, let the outward condition of the people of God be what it might, there was a path of purity and devotedness opened to the individual saint, which he could pursue independently of everything.

And may we not say, that the Nazariteship of Babylon possesses charms and attractions fully as powerful as the Nazariteship of Canaan? Unquestionably. It is unspeakably precious and beautiful, to find one of the captives in Babylon breathing after, and attaining unto, so elevated a standard of separation. It teaches a powerful lesson for every age. It holds up to the view of believers, under every dispensation, a most encouraging and soul-stirring example. It proves that, amid the darkest shades, a devoted heart can enjoy a path of cloudless sunshine.

But how is this? Because "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever." (Heb. 13) Dispensations change and pass away. Ecclesiastical institutions crumble and moulder into ashes. Human systems totter and fall; but the name of Jehovah endureth for ever, and His memorial unto all generations. It is upon this holy elevation that faith plants its foot. It rises above all vicissitude, and enjoys sweet converse with the unchangeable and eternal Source of all real good.

Thus it was that, in the days of the judges, faith achieved more glorious triumphs than ever were known in the days of Joshua. Thus it was that Elijah's altar on Mount Carmel was surrounded by a halo fully as bright as that which crowned the altar of Solomon.

This is truly encouraging. The poor heart is so apt to sink, and be discouraged, by looking at the failure and unfaithfulness of man, instead of at the infallible faithfulness of God. "The foundation of

God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." (2 Tim. 2:19) What can ever touch this enduring truth? Nothing! And, therefore, nothing can touch the faith which lays hold of it, or the superstructure of practical devotedness which is erected on the foundation of that faith.

And then look at the glorious results of Daniel's devotedness and separation. In the three opening chapters we observe three distinct things, resulting from the position assumed by Daniel and his companions, in reference to "*the king's meat*." 1, They were let into the secret of "*the king's dream*." 2, They withstood the seductions of "*the king's image*." And, 3, They were brought unscathed through "*the king's furnace*."

1. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." This is beautifully exemplified in the case before us. "The magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans," who were breathing the atmosphere of the royal presence, were all in the dark as to the royal dream. "The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter." Very likely; but there was a God in heaven who knew all about it; and who, moreover, could unfold it to those who had faith enough, and devotedness enough, and self-denial enough, to separate themselves from Babylonish pollutions, though involved in the Babylonish captivity. The mazes, the labyrinths, and the enigmas of human things are all plain to God; and He can and does make them plain to those who walk with Him, in the sanctity of His holy presence. God's Nazarites can see farther into human affairs than the most profound philosophers of this world. And how is this? How can they so readily unravel the world's mysteries? Because they are above the world's mists. They are apart from the world's defilements. They are in the place of separation, the place of dependence, the place of communion. "Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions; that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven, concerning this secret." (Dan. 2:17, 18) Here we have their place of strength and intelligence. They had only to look up to

heaven, in order to be endowed with a clear understanding as to all the destinies of earth.

How real and simple is all this? "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all;" and, hence, if we want light, we can find it only in His presence; and we can only know the power of His presence as we are practically taking the place of separation from all the moral pollutions of earth.

And, observe, a further result of Daniel's holy separation. "Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him." Here we have earth's proudest and most powerful monarch at the feet of the captive exile. Magnificent fruit of faithfulness! Precious evidence of the truth that God will always honour the faith that can in any measure, rise to the height of His thoughts! He will not, He cannot, dishonour the draft which confidence presents at His exhaustless treasury. Daniel, on this memorable occasion, realised, in his own person, as fully as ever it was realised, God's ancient promise: "And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee. . . .And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath."(Deut. 28:10, 13)

Assuredly Daniel was, in the above scene, "the head," and Nebuchadnezzar "the tail," as looked at from the divine point of view. Witness, also, the bearing of this holy Nazarite, in the presence of the impious Belshazzar. (Dan. 5:17-29) Have we not, here, as magnificent a testimony to the destined pre-eminence of the seed of Abraham, as when Joshua's victorious captains placed their feet on the necks of the kings of Canaan (Joshua 10:24); or, when "all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart?" (1 Kings 10:24) Unquestionably; and, in a certain sense, it is a more magnificent testimony. It is natural to expect such a scene in the history of Joshua, or of Solomon; but to find the haughty king of Babylon prostrate at the feet of one of his captives, is something far beyond the utmost stretch of nature's expectation.

There it is, however, as a most striking and soul stirring proof of the power of faith to triumph over all manner of difficulties, and to produce the most extraordinary results. Faith is the same mighty principle, whether it act on the plains of Palestine, on the top of Carmel, by the rivers of Babylon, or amid the ruins of the professing Church. No fetters can bind it, no difficulties deter it, no pressure damp it, no changes affect it. It ever rises to its proper object, and that object is God Himself, and His eternal revelation. Dispensations may change, ages may run their course, the wheels of time may roll on, and crush beneath their ponderous weight the fondest hopes of the poor human heart; but there stands faith, that immortal, divine, eternal reality, drinking at the fountain of pure truth, and finding all its springs in Him, who is "the way, the truth, and the life."

By this "precious faith" it was that Daniel acted, when he "purposed that he would not defile himself with the king's meat." True, he could no longer ascend to that holy and beautiful house, where his fathers had worshipped. The rude foot of a foreign foe had trodden down the holy city. The fire no longer burned on the altar of the God of Israel. The golden candlestick no longer enlightened, with its seven lamps, the holy place. But there was faith in Daniel's heart, and that faith carried him beyond every surrounding influence, and enabled him to appropriate, and act in the power of, "all the promises of God," which are "Yea, and Amen in Christ Jesus." Faith is not affected by ruined temples, fallen cities, faded lights, or departed glories. Why not? Because God is not affected by them. God is always to be found, and faith is always sure to find Him.

2. But the same faith which enabled those holy men of old to refuse the king's meat, enabled them, also, to despise the king's image. They had separated themselves from defilement, in order that they might enjoy a more intense communion with the true God; and they could not, therefore, bow down to an image of gold, even though it were ever so high. They knew that God was not an image. They knew He was a reality. They could only present worship to Him, for He alone was the true object thereof.

Nor did it make any matter to them that all the world was against them. They had only to live and act for God. It might seem as if they were setting up to be wiser than their neighbours. It might savour of

presumption to stand against the tide of public opinion. Some might feel disposed to ask if truth lay only with them? Were all "the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces," sunk in darkness and error? Could it be possible that so many men of rank, of intelligence, and of learning were in the wrong, and only a few strangers of the captivity in the right?

With such questions our Nazarites had nothing to do. Their path lay right onward. Should they bow down and worship an image, in order to avoid the appearance of condemning other people? Assuredly not. And yet how often are those, who desire to keep a conscience void of offence in the sight of God, condemned for setting themselves up and judging others.

Doubtless Luther was condemned by many for setting himself up in opposition to the doctors, the cardinals, and the pope. Should he, in order to avoid such condemnation, have lived and died in error? Who would say so?

"Ah! but," some will reply, "Luther had to deal with palpable error." So thought Luther; but thousands of learned and eminent men thought otherwise. So also in the case of "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego," they had to do with positive idolatry; but the whole world differed from them. What then? "We must obey God rather than man." "Let others do as they will; as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." If people were to remain in error and continue to do what they, at least, feel to be wrong, In order to avoid the appearance of judging others, where should we be?

Ah! no; my beloved reader, do you seek to pursue the steady, onward, upward path of pure and elevated discipleship. And, whether or not you, thereby, condemn others, is no concern of yours. "CEASE TO DO EVIL." This is the first thing for the true disciple to do. When he has yielded obedience to this golden precept, he may expect to "learn to do well." "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." When God speaks, I am not to turn round to see how my obedience to His voice will affect my neighbours, or to consider what they will think about me. When the voice of the risen and glorified Jesus fell upon the ear of the prostrate Saul of Tarsus,

he did not begin to inquire what the chief priests and Pharisees would think of him were he to obey. Surely not. "Immediately," he says, "I conferred not with flesh and blood." (Gal. 1:16) "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." (Acts 26: 19) This is the true spirit and principle of discipleship. "Give glory to God, before he cause darkness, and your feet stumble upon the dark mountains." Nothing can be more dangerous than to hesitate, when divine light shines upon the path. If you do not act upon the light, when you get it, you will, assuredly, be involved in thick darkness. Hence, therefore, as another has said, "Never go before your faith, nor lag behind your conscience."

3. But, we have said, if our Nazarites refused to bow before the king's image, they had to encounter the king's rage, and the king's furnace. For all this they were, by the grace of God, prepared: their Nazariteship was a real thing; they were ready to suffer the loss of all things, and even life itself, in defence of the true worship of the God of Israel. "They worshipped and served their own God," not merely beneath the peaceful vine and fig-tree in the land of Canaan, but in the very face of "a burning fiery furnace." They acknowledged Jehovah, not merely in the midst of a congregation of true worshippers, but in the presence of an opposing world. Theirs was a true discipleship in an evil day. They loved the Lord; and, therefore, for His sake, they abstained from the king's luxuries, they withstood the king's rage, and they endured the king's furnace. "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." This was the language of men who knew whose they were, and where they were — of men who had calmly and deliberately counted the cost — of men to whom the Lord was everything, the world nothing. All that the world could offer, together with life itself, was at stake; but what of that? "They endured as seeing Him who is invisible." Eternal glory lay before them; and they were quite prepared to reach that glory by a fiery pathway. God can take His servants to heaven by a chariot of fire, or by a furnace of fire, as

seems good to Him. Whatever be the mode of going, it is well to get there.

But could not the Lord have preserved His beloved servants from being cast into the furnace? No doubt. This would have been but a very small matter to Him. He did not, however, do so: it was His will that the faith of His servants should be put to the test — should be tried in the furnace — should be passed through the most searching crucible, in order that it "might be found to praise and honour and glory." Is it because the refiner sets no value on the wedge of gold, that he puts it into the furnace? No; but because he does. And, as some one has beautifully remarked, "His object is not merely to remove the dross, but to brighten the metal."

It is very evident that had the Lord, by an act of *power*, kept His servants out of the furnace, there would have been less glory to Him, and as a consequence, less blessing to them. It was far better to have His presence and sympathy in the furnace, than His power to keep them out of it. What glory to Him in this! And what unspeakable privilege to them! The Lord went down and walked with His Nazarites in the furnace into which their faithfulness had brought them. They had walked with God in the king's palace; and God walked with them in the king's furnace. This was the most elevated moment in the entire career of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. How little had the king imagined the lofty position in which he was placing the objects of his rage and fury! Every eye was turned from the great image of gold, to gaze, in astonishment, upon the three captives. What could it mean? "Three men *bound!*" "Four men *loose!*" Could it be real? Was the furnace real? Alas, "the most mighty men in the king's army" had proved it to be real. And, had Nebuchadnezzar's image been cast into it, it would have proved its reality also. There was no material for the sceptic or the infidel to work upon. It was a real furnace, and a real flame, and the "three men" were "bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments." All was reality.

But there was a deeper reality: *God was there*. This changed everything: it "changed the king's word," changed the furnace into a place of high and holy fellowship — changed Nebuchadnezzar's bondmen into God's freemen.

God was there! — there, in his power, to write contempt upon all man's opposition — there, in His deep and tender sympathy with His tried and faithful servants — there, in His matchless grace, to set the captives free, and to lead the hearts of His Nazarites into that deep fellowship with Himself for which they so ardently thirsted.

And, my beloved reader, is it not worth passing through a fiery furnace to enjoy a little more of the presence of Christ, and the sympathy of His loving heart? Are not fetters, with Christ, better than jewels without Him? Is not a furnace where He is better than a palace where He is not? Nature says, "No!" Faith says, "Yes!"

It is well to bear in mind that this is not the day of Christ's *power*; but it is the day of His *sympathy*. When passing through the deep waters of affliction, the heart may, at times, feel disposed to ask, 'Why does not the Lord display His power, and deliver me?' The answer is, This is not the day of His power. He could avert that sickness — He could remove that difficulty — He could take off that pressure — He could prevent that catastrophe — He could preserve that beloved and fondly-cherished object from the cold grasp of death. But, instead of putting forth His power to deliver, He allows things to run their course, and pours His own sweet sympathy into the oppressed and riven heart, in such a way as to elicit the acknowledgment that we would not, for worlds, have missed the trial, because of the abundance of the consolation.

Such, my reader, is the manner of our Jesus just now. By and by He will display His power; He will come forth as the Rider on the white horse; He will unsheath His sword; He will make bare His arm; He will avenge His people, and right their wrongs for ever. But now His sword is sheathed, His arm covered. This is the time for making known the deep love of His heart, not the power of His arm, nor the sharpness of His sword. Are you satisfied to have it so? Is Christ's sympathy enough for your heart, even amid the keenest sorrow and the most intense affliction? The restless heart, the impatient spirit, the unmortified will, would lead one to long for escape from the trial, the difficulty, or the pressure; but this would never do. It would involve incalculable loss. We must pass from form to form in the school; but the Master accompanies us, and the

light of His countenance, and the tender sympathy of His heart, sustain us under the most severe exercises.

And, then, see what glory redounds to the name of the Lord, when His people are enabled, by His grace, to pass, triumphantly, through a trial! Read Daniel 3:26-28, and say where you could find richer or rarer fruits of a faithful discipleship. The king and all his nobles, who, just before, had been wholly engrossed with the bewitching music and the false worship, are now occupied with the amazing fact that the fire, which had slain the mighty men, had taken no effect whatever upon the worshippers of the true God, save to consume their fetters and let them walk free, in company with the Son of God. "Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, YE SERVANTS OF THE MOST HIGH GOD, come forth and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, *saw these men*, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them."

Here, then, was a noble testimony — such a testimony as would never have been rendered, had the Lord, by a mere act of power, preserved His servants from being cast into the furnace. Nebuchadnezzar was furnished with a striking proof that his furnace was no more to be dreaded than his image was to be worshipped by "the servants of the most high God." In a word, the enemy was confounded; God was glorified; and His dear servants brought forth unscathed from "the burning fiery furnace." Precious fruits, these, of a faithful Nazariteship!

And, observe, further, the honour put upon our Nazarites. "Then Nebuchadnezzar spake and said, Blessed be *the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego*." Their names are intimately associated with the God of Israel. This was a high honour. They had identified themselves with the true God when it was a matter of life and death to do so; and, therefore, the true God identified Himself with them, and led them forth into a large and wealthy place. He set their feet upon a rock, and lifted their heads up above all their enemies round

about them. How true it is that "them that honour me I will honour!" And it is equally true that "they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." (1 Sam. 2:30)

My beloved reader, have you found settled, divine peace for your guilty conscience, in the perfected atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you simply taken God at His word? Have you set to your seal that God is true? If so, you are a child of God; your sins are all forgiven, and you are accepted as righteous in Christ; heaven, with all its untold glories, is before you; you are as sure of being in the glory as Christ Himself, inasmuch as you are united to Him.

Thus, everything is settled for you for time and eternity, according to the very utmost desire of your heart. Your need is met, your guilt removed, your peace established, your title sure. You have nought to do for yourself All is divinely finished.

What remains? Just this: LIVE, FOR CHRIST! You are left here for "a little while," to occupy for Him, and wait for His appearing. Oh! seek to be faithful to your blessed Master. Be not discouraged by the fragmentary state of everything around you. Let the case of Daniel and his honoured companions encourage your heart to seek after an elevated course here below. It is your privilege to enjoy as much of companionship with the blessed Lord Jesus, as if you were cast amid the palmy days of apostolic testimony.

May the Holy Ghost enable the writer and the reader of these lines to drink into the spirit — walk in the footsteps — manifest the graces — and wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ!

C.H.M.

Acts 2: 1-11

CLOVEN TONGUES

It will greatly enhance the grace of this lovely passage of Scripture to bear in mind what it was that rendered the cloven tongues necessary. In Genesis 11 we have the inspired record of the first grand effort of the children of men to establish themselves in the earth, to form a great association and make themselves a name. And all this, be it remembered, without God. His name is never mentioned. He was not to form any part of this proud and popular scheme. He was entirely shut out. It was not a dwelling place for God that was to be erected on the plain of Shinar. It was a city for man, a center round which men were to gather.

Such was the object of the children of men as they stood together on the plain of Shinar. It was not, as some have imagined, to escape another flood. There is not a shadow of foundation in the passage for any such idea. Here are their words, "And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." There is no thought here of escaping another flood. It is sheer imagination without any Scripture basis. The object is as plain as possible. It is precisely similar to all those great confederacies, associations or masses of flesh that have been formed on the earth from that day to this. The Shinar Association could compete with any association of modern times, both in its principle and object.

But it proved to be a Babel. Jehovah wrote *confusion* upon it. He divided their tongues and scattered them abroad. In a word, divided tongues were sent as the expression of divine judgment upon this first great human association. This is a solemn and weighty fact. An association without God, no matter what its object, is really nothing but a mass of flesh, based on pride and ending in hopeless confusion. "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces" (Isa. 8: 9). So much for all human associations. May we learn to keep clear of them! May we adhere to that one divine association — the Church of the living God, of

which a risen Christ in glory is the living Head, the Holy Spirit the living Guide, and the Word of God the living Charter!

It was to gather this blessed Assembly that the cloven tongues were sent in grace on the day of Pentecost. No sooner had the Lord Jesus Christ taken His seat at the right hand of power, amid the brightness of heaven's majesty, than He sent down the Holy Spirit to publish the glad tidings of salvation in the ears of His very murderers. Inasmuch as that message of pardon and peace was intended for men of various tongues, so the divine messenger came down prepared to address each "in his own tongue wherein he was born." The God of all grace made it plain — so plain that it cannot be mistaken — that He desired to make His way to each heart with the sweet story of grace. Man, on the plain of Shinar, did not want God, but God on the day of Pentecost proved that He wanted man. Blessed forever be His holy Name! God had sent His Son and man had just murdered Him. Now He sends the Holy Spirit to tell man there is pardon through that very blood which He had shed, for his guilt in shedding it. Matchless, marvelous, overwhelming grace! Oh! that it may subdue our hearts and bind us to Him who is its source, its channel and the power of enjoyment! The grace of God has far surpassed all the enmity of man. It has proved itself victorious over all the opposition of the human heart and all the rage of hell.

In Genesis 11 divided tongues were sent in judgment. In Acts 2 divided tongues were sent in grace. The blessed God of all grace would cause each one to hear of full salvation, and hear of it in those very words in which his infant ears had hearkened to the earliest whisperings of a mother's love — in "his own tongue wherein he was born." It mattered not whether the language were soft or harsh, refined or barbarous, the Holy Spirit would use it as the vehicle for conveying the precious message of salvation right home to the poor heart. If divided tongues had once been given to *scatter* in judgment, they were again given to *gather* in grace — not now around an earthly tower, but around a heavenly Christ — not for the exaltation of man, but for the glory of God.

It is worthy of notice that when God was giving the law from Mount Sinai, He spoke only in one tongue and to one people. The law was carefully wrapped up in one language and deposited in the

midst of one nation. Not so the gospel. When that was the burden, God the Holy Spirit Himself descended from heaven in cloven tongues to send the soul-stirring tidings far and wide over the whole world and convey them “to every creature under heaven” in the very dialect wherein he was born. This is a great moral fact. It comes down upon the heart with uncommon weight and power. When God was speaking in terms of requirement and prohibition, He confined Himself to one language, but when He was publishing the message of life and salvation, pardon and peace through the blood of the Lamb, He spoke in every language under heaven. When *man's duty* was to be declared, God spoke in one dialect, but when *God's salvation* was to be published, He spoke in every dialect under heaven.

This surely tells a tale. It declares plainly which is more in harmony with the divine mind, law or grace. Blessed be His Name, He delights in grace. Law and judgment are His strange work. He has pronounced the feet of those who publish the gospel to be beautiful. Of those who desired to be teachers of the law, He said, “I would they were even cut off that trouble you.” Thus His acts and His words show the bent of His loving heart towards poor unworthy sinners. He has left nothing undone, nothing unsaid, to prove His perfect willingness to save and bless. Therefore all who die in their sins will perish without excuse, and those awful words will echo through the regions of eternal gloom forever and ever, “I would, but ye would not!” Reader, think of this! Are you yet in your sins? If so, we earnestly beseech you to flee *now* from the wrath to come. Accept the message of pardon now sent to you in your own language wherein you were born, and go on your way rejoicing.

In conclusion, we might add that Genesis 11, Acts 2 and Revelation 7: 9-17 form a very lovely group of scriptures. In the first, we see divided tongues sent in judgment; in the second, divided tongues are given in grace; and in the third, divided tongues are seen gathered in glory. Well may we say, “Thy testimonies are wonderful, therefore doth my soul love them.”

Acts 7: 55-60

STEPHEN

There are two grand facts which characterize Christianity and mark it off from all that had gone before. These are, first, Man glorified in heaven, and secondly, God dwelling in man on the earth. These are stupendous facts, divinely glorious and fitted to produce the most powerful effect upon the heart and life of the Christian.

They are unique to Christianity. They were never known until redemption was fully accomplished and the Redeemer took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. Then was seen for the first time in the annals of eternity, a Man on the throne of God. Wondrous sight! Magnificent result of accomplished redemption! The enemy seemed to have triumphed when the first man was expelled from Eden, but the Second Man has made His victorious way into heaven and taken His seat on the eternal throne of God.

This, we repeat, is a fact of transcendent glory. The counterpart, the companion fact is God the Holy Spirit dwelling with and in man on earth. These things were unknown in Old Testament times. What did Abraham know of a glorified Man in heaven? What did any of the ancient worthies know of it? Nothing; how could they? There was no man on the throne of heaven until Jesus took His seat there. Until He was glorified in heaven, the Holy Spirit could not take up His abode in man on earth. "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: *for the Holy Spirit was not yet; because that Jesus was not yet glorified*" (John 7: 38-39). "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: *for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you*" (John 16: 7).

Here we have our two facts linked together in the most direct and positive manner: Christ glorified above and the Holy Spirit dwelling in man below. The two are inseparably connected; the latter is entirely dependent upon the former, and both together form

the two great distinguishing features of that glorious Christianity revealed in the gospel of God.

It is not our purpose to enter upon any elaborate proof of these truths. We assume them as established. Moreover, we assume that the Christian reader cordially receives and holds them as *eternal* truths and that he is prepared to appreciate the illustration of their practical power and formative influence presented in the history of Stephen as recorded in Acts 7: 55-60. Let us draw near and gaze on the marvelous picture — the picture of a true Christian.

The principal part of Acts 7 is occupied with a most powerful unfolding of the history of the nation of Israel -- a history stretching from the call of Abraham to the death of Christ. At the close of his address, Stephen made a painful application to the consciences of his hearers, which drew forth their most bitter animosity and deadly rage. "When they heard these things they were cut to the heart and they gnashed on him with their teeth." Here we see the effect of religiousness without Christ. These men were the professed guardians of religion and the guides of the people, but it proved to be religion versus Christianity. In them we have the terrible exponent of a godless, Christless religion; in Stephen we have the lovely exhibition of true Christianity. They were full of religious animosity and rage: he was full of the Holy Spirit. They gnashed their teeth: his face was like that of an angel. What a contrast!

We must quote the passage for the reader. "But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

Here are our two great facts again displayed in a man of like passions with ourselves. Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit and his earnest gaze was fixed on a glorified Man in heaven. This is Christianity. This is the true, the normal idea of a Christian. He is a man full of the Holy Spirit, looking with the steady gaze of faith into heaven and occupied with a glorified Christ. We cannot accept any lower standard than this, short as we may come of it practically. It is very high and very holy. Moreover, we have to confess how very

little we are up to it. Still it is the divine standard, and every devoted heart will aspire to it and nothing less. It is the happy privilege of every Christian to be full of the Holy Spirit and to have the eye of faith fixed on the glorified Man in heaven. There is no divine reason why it should not be so. Redemption is accomplished, sin is put away, grace reigns through righteousness, there is a Man on the throne of God, the Holy Spirit has come down to this earth and taken up His abode in the believer individually and in the Church corporately.

Thus it stands. Be it carefully noted that these things are not mere speculations or cold theories. Alas! they may be held as such, but in themselves they are not. On the contrary they are immensely practical, divinely formative, powerfully influential, as we can distinctly see in the case of the blessed martyr Stephen. It is impossible to read the closing verses of Acts 7 and not see the powerful effect produced upon Stephen by the Object which filled the vision of his soul. There we behold a man surrounded by the most terrible circumstances, enemies rushing upon him, death staring him in the face. But instead of being in any wise affected or governed by those circumstances, he is entirely governed by heavenly objects. He looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw Jesus. Earth was rejecting him, as it already rejected his Lord, but heaven was opened to him, and looking up into that open heaven he caught some of the rays of glory shining in the face of his risen Lord. He not only caught them but reflected them back upon the moral gloom which surrounded him.

Is not all this most deeply practical? Assuredly it is! Stephen was not only lifted above his surroundings in the most wonderful manner, but he was enabled to exhibit to his persecutors the meekness and grace of Christ. In him we see a most striking illustration of 2 Corinthians 3: 18 — a passage of great depth and fullness. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Lord the Spirit.”*

{* "Beholding as in a glass" hardly conveys the force, fullness and beauty of the original word. The English reader should be informed that the entire clause is expressed by the one Greek word

which conveys the double idea of beholding and reflecting. The passage might be rendered thus: "We all, with open face mirroring the glory, are changed ..." The real idea is that the Christian reflects, like a mirror, the glory on which he gazes and thus becomes conformed to the image of his Lord by the powerful ministry of the Lord the Spirit. The whole verse is one of the most condensed, yet comprehensive and magnificent statements of practical Christianity anywhere to be found in the sacred canon. It furnishes a concise commentary on the facts, of which Stephen is a vivid illustration. Would that we all more fully entered into and more faithfully exhibited the power of these things! }

Only see how all this is livingly unfolded in the scene before us. The very highest expression of heavenly Christianity is met by the deepest, darkest and most deadly display of religious resentment. We can see the two culminating in the death of the first Christian martyr. "Then they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord and cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this he fell asleep."

Here is genuine practical Christianity — living conformity to the image of Christ. Here we see a man so lifted above circumstances, so lifted out of himself as to be able — after the pattern of his Lord — to pray for his murderers. Instead of being occupied with himself or thinking of his own sufferings, he thinks of others and pleads for them. So far as he was concerned all was settled. His eye was fixed on the glory — so fixed as to catch its concentrated beams and reflect them back upon the very faces of his murderers. His countenance was radiant with the light of that glory into which he was about to enter, and he was enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit to imitate his blessed Master and to spend his last breath in praying for his murderers: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And what then? He had nothing more to do but fall asleep — to close his eyes upon a scene of death and open them upon a

scene of deathless glory, or rather to enter upon that scene which already filled the vision of his enraptured soul.

Reader, let us remember that this is true Christianity. It is the happy privilege of a Christian to be full of the Holy Spirit, looking off from himself and up from his surroundings, whatever they may be, gazing steadfastly into heaven and occupied with the glorified Man Christ Jesus. The necessary result of being thus occupied is practical living conformity to that blessed One on whom the eye is fixed. We become like Him in spirit, in ways and in our entire character. It must be so. “We all, with open face mirroring the glory, are changed into the same image.”

It is of very great importance to see and know that nothing short of this is up to the mark of the Christianity presented in the New Testament. This is the divine standard. We should not be satisfied with anything less. We see in Stephen a man reflecting the glory of Christ in a very positive practical way. He was not merely talking about glory, but actually reflecting it. We may talk about heavenly glory while our practical ways are anything but heavenly. It was not so with Stephen. He was a living mirror in which men could see the glory reflected. And should it not be so with us? Unquestionably. But is it so? Are we so absorbed with our risen Lord, so fixed on Him, so centered in Him that our fellow men — those with whom we meet from day to day — can see the traits, the features of His image reflected in our character, our habits, our spirit, our style? Regretfully we cannot say much on this score. But then, dearly beloved Christian reader, can we not at least say, “Is it our heart's deep and earnest *desire* to be so occupied and filled with Christ that His lovely grace may shine out in us to the praise of His name?” God, in His rich mercy, grant that our eye may be so fixed on Jesus that we too may, in some degree, mirror the glory and thus shed some tiny ray of that glory upon the darkness around!

When the pangs of trial seize us,

When the waves of sorrow roll,

I will lay my head on Jesus -

Pillow of the troubled soul:
Surely none can feel like Thee,
Weeping One of Bethany!

“Jesus wept!” — that tear of sorrow
Is a legacy of love.
Yesterday, today, tomorrow,
He the same doth ever prove.
Thou art all in all to me,
Living One of Bethany!

Acts 8

PREACHING CHRIST: WHAT IS IT?

“Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ unto them”

This brief and simple statement embodies in it a grand characteristic feature of Christianity — a feature which distinguishes it from every system of religion that now exists or ever was propounded in this world. Christianity is not a set of abstractions — a number of dogmas — a system of doctrines. It is preeminently a religion of living facts, of divine realities — a religion which finds its center in a divine Person, the Man Christ Jesus. He is the foundation of all Christian doctrine. From His divine and glorious Person all truth radiates. He is the living fountain from which all the streams issue forth in fullness, power and blessing. “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” Apart from Him all is death and darkness. There is not one atom of life, not one ray of light in all this world except what comes from Him. A man may possess all the learning of the schools; he may bask in the most brilliant light that science can pour upon his understanding and his pathway; he may garnish his name with all the honors which his fellow mortals can heap upon him, but if there is the breadth of a hair between him and Jesus — if he is not in Christ and Christ in him — if he has not believed on the Name of the only begotten Son of God, he is involved in death and darkness. Christ is “the true Light which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world.” Hence no man can, in a divine sense, be termed an enlightened man except “a man in Christ.”

It is well to be clear as to this. It is needful to press it, in this day of man's pride and pretension. Men are boasting of their light and intelligence, of the progress of civilization, of the research and discovery of the age in which our lot is cast, of the arts and sciences and what has been done and produced by their means. We do not want to touch these things. We are quite willing to let them stand for what they are really worth, but we are arrested by these words which fell from the Master's lips, “I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of

life.” Here it is, “He that followeth Me.” Life and light are only to be had in Jesus. If a man is not following Jesus, he is plunged in death and darkness, even though he is possessed of the most commanding genius and enriched with all the stores of science and knowledge.

We will be deemed narrow-minded in thus writing. We will by many, be regarded as men of very contracted views indeed — men of one idea, and even that one idea presented in a one-sided way. Well, be it so. We are men of one idea; and we heartily desire to be more so. But what is that one idea? Christ! He is God's grand idea, blessed be His Name forevermore. Christ is the sum and substance of all that is in the mind of God. He is the central object in heaven, the grand fact of eternity, the object of God's affection — of angels' homage — of saints worship — of demons' dread — the alpha and the omega of the divine counsels — the keystone of the arch of revelation — the central sun of God's universe.

All this being so, we need not marvel at Satan's constant effort to keep people from coming to Christ and to draw them away from Him after they have come to Him. He hates Christ and will use anything and everything to hinder the heart in getting hold of Him. Satan will use cares or pleasures, poverty or riches, sickness or health, vice or morality, profanity or religion; in short, he cares not what it is, provided he can keep Jesus out of the heart.

On the other hand, the constant object of the Holy Spirit is to present Christ Himself to the soul. It is not something *about* Christ, doctrines respecting Him, or principles connected with Him merely, but His own very self in living power and freshness. We cannot read a page of the New Testament without noticing this. The whole book, from the opening lines of Matthew to the close of the Revelation, is simply a record of facts respecting Jesus. It is not our purpose to follow out this record; to do so would be interesting beyond expression, but it would lead us away from our immediate thesis to which we must now address ourselves. May it be unfolded and applied in the power of the Holy Spirit!

In studying Scripture in connection with our subject, we shall find the Lord Jesus Christ presented in three ways — as a test, as a victim and as a model. Each of these points contains in itself a

volume of truth, and when we view them in their connection, they open to our souls a wide field of Christian knowledge and experience. Let us then consider what is meant when we speak of

Christ As a Test

In contemplating the life of the Lord Jesus as a Man, we have the perfect exhibition of what a man ought to be. We see in Him the two grand creature perfections, namely, obedience and dependence. Though God over all, the Almighty Creator and Sustainer of the wide universe; though He could say, "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering," yet so thoroughly and absolutely did He take the place of a Man on this earth that He could say, "The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord hath opened Mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back" (Isa. 1: 4-5).

The Lord never moved one step without divine authority. When the devil tempted Him to work a miracle to satisfy His hunger, His reply was, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord." He would readily work a miracle to feed others, but not to feed Himself. Again, when tempted to cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, He replied, "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." He had no command from God to cast Himself down, and He could not act without it; to do so would be a tempting of Providence. So also, when tempted with the offer of all the kingdoms of this world, on condition of doing homage to Satan, His reply was, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

The Man Christ Jesus was perfectly obedient. Nothing could tempt Him to diverge the breadth of a hair from the narrow path of obedience. He was the obedient Man from first to last. It was the same to Him where He served or what He did. He would act by the authority of the divine Word. He would take bread from God; He would come to His temple when sent of God, and He would wait for God's time to receive the kingdoms of this world. His obedience was

absolute and uninterrupted from the manger to the cross, and in this He was well pleasing to God. It was creature perfection; and nothing in any wise different from this could be agreeable to God. If perfect obedience is pleasing to God, then disobedience must be hateful. The life of Jesus, in this one feature of it, was a continual feast to the heart of God. His perfect obedience was continually sending up a cloud of the most fragrant incense to the throne of God.

Now, this is what a man *ought* to be. We have here a perfect test of man's condition, and when we look at ourselves in the light of this one ray of Christ's glory, we must see our entire departure from the true and only proper place of the creature. The light that shines from the character and ways of Jesus reveals, as nothing else could reveal, the moral darkness of our natural state. We are not obedient; we are willful; we do our own pleasure; we have cast off the authority of God; His Word does not govern us. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8).

It may be asked, "Did not the law make manifest the wilfulness and enmity of our hearts?" No doubt, but who can fail to see the difference between a law *demanding* obedience and the Son of God, as Man, *exhibiting* obedience? Well then, in so far as the life and ways of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ transcend in glory the entire legal system, and in so far as the Person of Christ transcends in glory and dignity the person of Moses, just so far does Christ, as a test of man's condition, exceed in moral power the law of Moses. And the same holds good of every test that was ever applied and every other standard that was ever set up. The Man Christ Jesus, viewed in the one point of perfect obedience, is an absolutely perfect test by which our natural state can be tried and made manifest.

Take another ray of Christ's moral glory. He was as absolutely dependent upon God as He was obedient to Him. He could say, "Preserve Me, O God, for in Thee do I put My trust" (Ps. 16). And again, "I was cast upon Thee from the womb" (Ps. 22). He never for one moment abandoned the attitude of entire dependence upon the living God. It is befitting to be dependent upon God for everything. The blessed Jesus ever was! He breathed the very atmosphere of dependence from Bethlehem to Calvary. He was the only Man who

ever lived a life of uninterrupted dependence upon God, from first to last. Others have depended partially, He did it perfectly. Others have occasionally or even mainly looked to God; He never looked anywhere else. He found *all* His springs, not some of them or most of them, in God.

This, too, was most pleasing to God. To have a Man on this earth whose heart was never, for one single moment of time, out of the attitude of dependence, was very precious to the Father. Hence, again and again, heaven opened and the testimony came forth, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

Since this dependence in the perfect life of the Man Christ Jesus was infinitely agreeable to the mind of God, it also furnishes an infinitely powerful test of the natural state of man. We can here see, as we can see nowhere else, our apostasy from the creature's only proper place — the place of dependence. True, the inspired historian informs us in Genesis 3 that the first Adam fell from his original place of obedience and dependence. True also, the law of Moses makes manifest that Adam's descendants are, every one of them, in a condition of revolt and independence, but who can fail to see with what superior power all this is brought out in this world by the life and ways of Jesus? In Him we see a Man perfectly obedient and perfectly dependent in the midst of a scene of disobedience and independence, and in the face of every temptation to abandon the position which He occupied.

Thus the life of Jesus in this one particular point of perfect dependence, tests man's condition and proves his entire departure from God. Man in his natural state always seeks to be independent of God. We need not go into any detailed proof of this. This one ray of light, emanating from the glory of Christ and shining into man's heart, lays bare every chamber thereof, and proves beyond all question — proves in a way that nothing else could prove — man's departure from God and the haughty independence which marks our natural condition.

The more intense the light which you bring to bear upon an object, the more perfectly you can see what it is. There is a vast difference between looking at a picture in the dim morning twilight

and examining it in broad daylight. Thus it is in reference to our real state by nature. We may view it in the light of the law, in the light of conscience, in the light of the loftiest standard of morality known among men, and in so viewing it, we may see that it is not what it ought to be, but it is only when we view it in the full blaze of the moral glory of Christ that we can see it as it really is. It is one thing to say, "We have done those things which we ought not to have done, and left undone those things which we ought to have done," and it is another thing altogether to see ourselves in that perfect light which makes everything manifest. It is one thing to look at our ways in the light of law, conscience or morality, and another thing to look at our nature in the light of that all-powerful test, namely, the life of the Man Christ Jesus.

We will refer to one more feature in the character of Christ, and that is His perfect self-emptiness. He never once sought His own interest in anything. His was a life of constant self-sacrifice. "The Son of Man has come to serve and to give." These two words "serve" and "give" formed the motto of His life and were written in letters of blood upon His cross. In His marvelous life and death, He was the Servant and the Giver. He was ever ready to answer every form of human need. We see Him at Sychar's lonely well, opening the fountain of living water to a poor thirsty soul. We see Him at the pool of Bethesda, imparting strength to a poor impotent cripple. We see Him at the gate of Nain, drying the widow's tears and giving back to her bosom her only son.

All this and much more we see, but we never see Him looking after His own interests. No, never! We cannot too deeply ponder this fact in the life of Jesus, nor can we too thoroughly scrutinize ourselves in the light which this wondrous fact emits. If in the light of his perfect obedience, we can detect our terrible wilfulness; if in the light of His absolute dependence, we can discern our pride and haughty independence; then surely, in the light of His self-emptiness and self-sacrifice, we may discover our gross selfishness in its ten thousand forms, and as we discover it, we must loathe and abhor ourselves. Jesus never thought of Himself in anything He ever said or did. He found His food and His drink in doing the will of God and in meeting the need of man.

What a test is here! How it proves us! How it makes manifest what is in us by nature! How it sheds its bright light over man's nature and man's world, and rebukes both the one and the other! For what, after all, is the great root-principle of nature and of this world? Self! "Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself" (Ps. 49). Self-interest is really the governing principle in the life of every unrenewed man, woman and child in this world. Nature may clothe itself in very amiable and attractive forms; it may assume a very generous and benevolent aspect; it can scatter as well as hoard; but of this we may rest assured that the unregenerate man is wholly incapable of rising above self as an object. In no way could this be made so thoroughly manifest — in no way could it be developed with such force and clearness — in no way could its vileness and hideousness be so fully detected and judged as in the light of that perfect test presented in the self-sacrificing life of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. It is when that penetrating light shines upon us that we see ourselves in all our true depravity and personal vileness.

The Lord Jesus came into this world and lived a perfect life — perfect in thought, perfect in word, perfect in action. He perfectly glorified God, and not only so, but He perfectly tested man. He showed what God is, and He showed also what man ought to be — showed it not merely in His doctrine, but in His walk. Man was never so tested before. Therefore, the Lord Jesus could say, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth Me, hateth My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father" (John 15: 22-24).

Again, He says, "I judge no man; and yet if I judge, My judgment is true" (John 8: 15-16). The object of His mission was not judgment but salvation, yet the effect of His life was judgment upon everyone with whom He came in contact. It was impossible for anyone to stand in the light of Christ's moral glory and not be judged in the very center and source of His being. When Peter saw himself in that light, he exclaimed, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5).

Such was the certain result of a man's seeing himself in the presence of Christ. Not all the thunderings and lightnings of Mount Sinai, not all the condemnations of the legal system, not all the voices of the prophets could produce such an effect upon a sinner as one single ray of the moral glory of Christ darting into his soul. I may look at the law and feel I have not kept it, and own I deserve its curse. Conscience may terrify me and tell me I deserve hell-fire because of my sins. All this is true, but the very moment I see myself in the light of what Christ is, my whole moral being is laid bare — every root, every fiber, every motive spring, every element, all the sources of thought, feeling, desire, affection and imagination are exposed to view, and I abhor myself. It cannot possibly be otherwise. The whole book of God proves it. The history of all God's people illustrates it. To cite cases would fill volumes.

True conviction is produced in the soul when the Holy Spirit lets in upon it the light of the glory of Christ. Law is a reality, conscience is a reality, and the Spirit of God may and does make use of the former to act on the latter, but it is only when I see myself in the light of what Christ is, that I get a proper view of myself. Then I am led to exclaim with Job, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee; therefore I abhor myself."

Reader, have you ever seen yourself in this way? Have you ever really tested yourself by the perfect standard of the life of Christ? It may be you have been looking at your fellow man and comparing yourself with that imperfect standard, and trying yourself by that imperfect test. This will never do. Christ is the true standard, the perfect test, the divine touchstone. God cannot have anything different from Christ. You must be like Him — conformed to His image — before you can find your place in the presence of God. Do you ask, "How can this ever be?" By knowing Christ as the Victim and by being formed after Him as the Model!

It is most needful, before we proceed with the subject which has been engaging our attention, that the whole world and each human heart should be seen and judged in the light of the moral glory of Christ — that divine and perfect test by which everyone and everything must be tried. Christ is God's standard for all. The more fully and faithfully the world and self are measured thereby, the

better. The grand question for the whole world and for each human heart is this, "How has Christ been treated? What have we done with Him?" God sent His only begotten Son into the world as the expression of His love to sinners. He said, "It may be they will reverence My Son when they see Him." Did they do so? Sadly, no. "They said, This is the heir; come let us kill Him." This is how the world treated Christ.

Be it observed, it was not the world in its dark pagan form that so treated the blessed One. No; it was the world of the religious Jew and of the polished and cultivated Greek. It was not into the dark places of the earth, as men speak, that Jesus came, but into the very midst of His own highly favored people "who were Israelites; to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." It was to them He came in meekness, lowliness and love. It was among them He lived and labored and "went about doing good, healing all who were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him." How did they treat Him? This is the question; let us ponder it deeply, and ponder the answer. They preferred a murderer to the holy, spotless, loving Jesus. The world got its choice. Jesus and Barabbas were set before it and the question was put, "Which will you have?" What was the answer — the deliberate, determined answer? "Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber."

Tremendous fact! — a fact little weighed, little understood, little entered into — a fact which stamps the character of this present world and tests and makes manifest the state of every unrepentant, unconverted heart beneath the canopy of heaven. If I want a true view of the world, of nature, of the human heart, of myself, where shall I turn? To police reports? To the calendars of our Grand Juries? To the various statistics of the social and moral condition of our cities and towns? No; all these may set before us facts which fill us with horror, but let it be distinctly seen and deeply felt that all the facts ever recorded of crime in its most fearful forms, are not to be compared with that one fact, the rejection and crucifixion of the Lord of glory. This crime stands out in bold relief from the background of man's entire history and fixes the true condition of the world, of man, of nature, of self.

Now, it is this we are anxious to urge upon the heart of the reader before we proceed to the second division of our subject. It is the only way to get a right sense of what the world is and of what the human heart is. Men may speak of the vast improvement which has taken place in the world and of the dignity of human nature, but the heart turns back to that hour in when the world, when called to make a choice between the Lord of glory and a murderer, deliberately selected the latter and nailed the former to a tree, between two thieves. This crime of crimes remains, so far as the world is concerned, uncanceled, unforgiven. It stands recorded on the eternal page. Not only is this so as regards the world as a whole, but it also holds good for the unrepentant, unconverted reader of these lines. The solemn question still remains to be answered — answered by the world — answered by the individual sinner — “What have you done with the Son of God? What has become of Him? How have you treated Him?”

Of what use is it to point to the progress of the human race, to the march of civilization, to the advance of the arts and sciences, to improvements in transportation and communication, to modern weapons, to the ten thousand forms in which human genius has tasked itself in order to minister to human lust, luxury and self-indulgence? All these things are far outweighed by the misery, the moral degradation, the squalid poverty, the ignorance and vice in which more than nine-tenths of the human race are involved.

But we do not attempt to put barbarism against civilization, poverty against luxury, grossness against refinement, ignorance against intelligence. We have only one test, the one standard, the one gauge, and that is the cross to which Jesus was nailed by the representatives of this world's religion, its science, its politics and its civilization.

It is here we take our stand and ask this question, Has the world ever yet repented of this act? No; for had it done so, the kingdoms of this world would have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. It is here we take our stand and ask the reader, Have *you* repented of this act? He may say, “I never did it. It was done by wicked Jews and wicked Romans nearly 2000 years

ago. How could I be counted guilty of a crime which was committed so many centuries before I was born?"

We reply, It was the act of the world and you are either part of that world which stands before God under the guilt of the murder of His Son, or you have, as a repentant and converted soul, found refuge and shelter in the pardoning love of God. There is no middle ground, and the more clearly you see this the better, for in no way can you have a just sense of the condition of this world or of your own heart except in the light which is cast thereon by the life and death of Christ *as a test*. We cannot stop short of this mark if we would form a true estimate of the character of the world, the nature of man and the condition of the unconverted soul. As to the world, there can be no real improvement in its condition, no radical change in its state, until the sword of divine judgment has settled the question of its treatment of the Son of God. As far as the individual sinner is concerned, the divine testimony is, "Repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out." This leads us, in the second place, to contemplate

Christ As A Victim

This is a much more pleasing subject to dwell upon, though the other must never be omitted in preaching Christ. It is too much lost sight of in our preaching. We do not sufficiently press home upon the conscience of the sinner, Christ both in life and death, as a test of nature's true condition and a proof of its irremediable ruin. The law may be used, and rightly so, to do its testing work in the conscience. Yet, through the blindness and folly of our hearts, we may attempt to take up that very law to work out a righteousness for ourselves — that law by which, when rightly viewed, is the *knowledge* of sin. But it is impossible for anyone to have his eyes opened to see the death of Christ as the terrible exhibition of the enmity of the heart against God, and not be convinced that he is utterly and hopelessly ruined and undone. This is true repentance. It is the moral judgment, not merely of my acts, but of my nature in the light of the cross as the only perfect test of what that nature really is.

All this is fully brought out in the preaching of Peter in the earlier chapters of the Acts. Look at the second chapter where we

find the Holy Spirit presenting Christ both as a test and as a victim. “Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know. Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that He should be holden of it ... Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Here we have solemn and bitter dealing with conscience as to the way they treated the Lord's Anointed. It was not merely that they had broken the law; that was true; nor yet that they had merely rejected all the witnesses that had been sent to them; that was equally true, but that was not all. They had actually crucified and slain “a Man approved of God,” and that Man was none other than the Son of God Himself. This was the naked and startling fact which the inspired preacher urges home with solemn emphasis upon the consciences of his hearers.

Mark the result! “Now, when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” No marvel that they were pierced to the very heart. Their eyes were opened and what did they discover? Why, that they were actually against God Himself — the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And about what were they at issue? About the law? No. About the prophets? No. About the rites and ceremonies, the statutes and institutions of the Mosaic economy? No. All this was true and bad enough. But there was something far beyond all this. Their guilt had reached its culmination in the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. “The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus, whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.”

This truly was and is the climax of man's guilt, and when brought home in the mighty energy of the Holy Spirit to any heart in all this world, it must produce true repentance and evoke from the depths of the soul, the earnest inquiry, "Men and brethren, what shall I do?" "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" It is not merely that we have failed in keeping the law, in doing our duty to God and our duty to our neighbor in living as we should. Sadly, all this is too true. But oh! we have been guilty of the dreadful sin of crucifying the Son of God. Such is the measure of human guilt, and such was the truth pressed home by Peter on the consciences of the men of his time.

What then? When the sharp edge of this powerful testimony had penetrated the hearts of the hearers, when the arrow from the quiver of the Almighty had pierced the soul and drawn forth the bitter penitential cry, "What shall we do?," what was the answer? What had the preacher to say? "Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." So also in the third chapter, he says, "And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

Here we have the two things very distinctly presented, namely, Christ as a test and Christ as a victim — the cross as the exhibition of man's guilt and the cross as the exhibition of the love of God. "Ye killed the Prince of life." Here was the arrow for the conscience. "But those things which God before had showed that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled." Here was the healing balm. It was the determinate counsel of God that Christ should suffer, and while it was true that man had displayed his hatred of God in nailing Jesus to the cross, yet no sooner is any soul made to see this and thus is brought to divine conviction, than the Holy Spirit holds up to view that very cross as the foundation of the counsels of redeeming love and the ground of the full remission of sins to every true believer.

Thus it was in that most touching scene between Joseph and his brethren as recorded in Genesis 44 and 45. The guilty brethren are made to pass through deep and painful exercises of heart, until they stand in the presence of their injured brother with the arrow of conviction piercing their inmost soul. Then, but not until then, these soothing words fall upon their ears, "Now, therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life.... So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God."

Exquisite, matchless grace! The moment they entered the place of confession, Joseph was in the place of forgiveness. This was divine. "He spoke roughly to them" when they were thoughtless as to their sin, but no sooner did they say these words, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother," than they were met by the sweet response of grace, "It was not you, but God."

Thus it is, beloved reader, in every case. The very instant the sinner takes the place of contrition, God takes the place of full and free forgiveness; and most assuredly, when God forgives, the sinner is forgiven. "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Ps. 32).

Would we have it otherwise? Surely not. An hard heart, an unbroken spirit, an unreached conscience could not understand or make a right use of such words as, "Be not grieved; it was not you, but God." How could it? How could an unrepentant heart appreciate words which are only designed to soothe and tranquilize a broken and contrite spirit? Impossible. To tell a hard-hearted sinner not to be grieved, would be fatally false treatment. Joseph could not possibly have said to his brethren, "Be not grieved with yourselves" until they had said and felt "We are verily guilty."

Such is the order, and it is well to remember it. "I will confess and Thou forgavest." The moment the sinner takes his true place in the presence of God, there is not one syllable said to him about his sins except it be to tell him that they are all forgiven and all forgotten. "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." God not only forgives but forgets. The convicted sinner stands and gazes upon the cross, and sees himself in the light of the glory of Christ as

the divine and perfect test, and cries out, "What shall I do?" How is he answered? By the unfolding of Christ as a victim, slain by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Who can define the feelings of a soul that has been convicted of desiring a murderer and crucifying the Son of God, when he learns that that very crucified One is the channel of pardon and life to him — that the blood which was shed puts away forever the guilt of shedding it? What language can adequately set forth the emotion of one who has seen his guilt, not merely in the light of the ten commandments, but as shown out in the cross of a world-rejected Jesus; and yet knows and believes that his guilt is all and forever put away? Who could attempt to embody in language the feelings of Joseph's brethren when they felt his tears of affection dropping upon them? What a scene! Tears of contrition and tears of affection mingled! Precious mixture! The mind of God alone can duly estimate its value and sweetness.

But here let us just guard against misunderstanding. Let no one suppose that tears of contrition are the *cause* of pardon or the meritorious ground of peace. Far, far away be the thought from the reader's mind! All the tears of contrition that ever gushed forth from the fountains of broken hearts, from the days of Joseph's brethren to the days of the third of Acts and to the present moment, could not form the just foundation of a sinner's acceptance and peace with God or wash away a single stain from the human conscience. The blood of the divine Victim and that alone, in prospect from the fall of man to Calvary and in retrospect, from Calvary till this moment — nothing except that precious blood, that atoning death, that peerless sacrifice — could justify a holy God in forgiving one sin. But, blessed be God, so perfectly has that sacrifice vindicated and glorified His Name, that the moment any sinner sees his true state, his guilt, his rebellion, his enmity, his base ingratitude, his hatred of God and of His Christ; the very moment he takes the place of true contrition in the divine presence — the place of one utterly broken down, without plea of moderation — that moment, infinite grace meets him with those healing, soothing, tranquilizing words, "Be not

grieved,” “your sins and iniquities will I remember no more,” “Go in peace.”

Some might suppose that we attach undue importance to the measure of contrition, or that we mean to teach that everyone must feel the same character or degree of conviction as was produced by Peter's powerful appeal in Acts 2. Nothing is further from our thoughts. We believe there must and there will be conviction and contrition. Further, we believe the cross is the only adequate measure of human guilt — that it is only in the light of that cross that anyone can have a just sense of the vileness, sinfulness and loathsomeness of his nature. But all may not see this. Many never think of the cross as a test and proof of their guilt, but merely as the blessed ground of their pardon. They are bowed down under a sense of their many sins and shortcomings, and they look to the cross of Christ as the only ground of pardon. Most surely they are right! But there is a deeper view of sin, a deeper sense of what human nature in its fallen state really is, a deeper conviction of the utterly godless and christless condition of the heart. Where is this to be reached? At the cross and there alone. It will never do to look back at the men of the first century and say what terrible sinners they were to crucify the living embodiment of all that was holy and good, gracious and pure. No; what is needed is to bring the cross forward into our century and measure nature, the world and self thereby.

This, be assured of it, reader, is the true way to judge the question. There is no real change. “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” is as positively the cry of the world of today as it was of the world of the first century. The cross was then and is now the only true measure of human guilt. When anyone, man, woman or child, is brought to see this, he has a far deeper sense of his condition than ever he can have by looking at his sins and shortcomings in the light of conscience or of the ten commandments.

And to what will all this lead the soul? What will be the effect of seeing self in the light which the cross, as a test, throws upon it? The deepest self-abhorrence. Yes, and this holds good in the case of the most refined moralist and amiable religionist who ever lived, just as much as in the case of the grossest and vilest sinner. It is no longer a question of grades and shades of character, to be settled by

the graduated scale of human conscience or the moral sense. Oh no; the cross is seen as the only perfect standard. Nature, the world, the heart, self, is measured by that standard, and its true condition reached and judged.

We are intensely anxious that the reader should thoroughly enter into this point. He will find it to be of immense moral power in forming his convictions, both as to his own heart and as to the real character of the world through which he is passing — its moral foundations, its framework, its features, its principles, its spirit, its aim, its end. We want him to take the cross as the perfect measure of himself and all around him. Let him not listen to the suggestions of Satan or to the thoughts that spring up in his own heart, to the vapourings of philosophy and science, falsely so-called, to the infidel vauntings of this preeminently infidel age. Let him listen to the voice of Holy Scripture which is the voice of the living God. Let him use the test which Scripture furnishes — a crucified Christ. Let him try all that and see where it will lead him. One thing is certain, it will lead him down in his own self-consciousness into those profound depths where nothing can avail him except Christ as the divine Victim who bore the judgment of God against sin and opened heaven to the sinner.

Having sought to present Christ as a test and Christ as a victim, we shall now, in dependence upon divine guidance and teaching, proceed to consider Him as the Model

The Model

The Model to which the Holy Spirit seeks to conform every true believer. This will complete our subject and open up a wide field of thought to the Christian reader. God has predestinated His people to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8). But how can we ever be formed after such a model? How can we ever think of being conformed to such an image? The answer to these questions will unfold more fully the blessedness and infinite value of the truth which has already passed before us.

If the reader has followed the line of thought we have been pursuing; if he has experimentally entered into it or if it has entered into him in the power of the Spirit of God; if he has made it his own, he will see and feel and own that in himself, by nature, there is not a single atom of good, not one point on which he can rest his hopes for eternity. He will see that, so far as he is concerned, he is a total wreck. He will see that the divine purpose as revealed in the gospel is not to reconstruct this moral wreck, but to erect an entirely new thing. Of this new thing, the cross of Christ is the foundation.

The reader cannot ponder this too deeply. Christianity is not the old nature made better, but the new nature implanted. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3). "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5).

The effect of the mission of Christ to this world was to prove, as nothing else could have proved, man's totally irremediable ruin. When man rejected and crucified the Son of God, his case was proved to be hopeless. It is of the deepest importance to be thoroughly clear as to this. It solves a thousand difficulties and clears the prospect of many a dark and heavy cloud. As long as a man is possessed with the idea that he must improve his nature by any process whatever, he must be a total stranger to the fundamental truth of Christianity.

Sadly, there is a fearful amount of darkness and error in the professing Church as to this simple truth of the gospel. Man's total ruin is denied or reasoned away in one way or another, and the very truths of Christianity as well as the institutions of the Mosaic economy, are made use of to improve fallen nature and fit it for the presence of God. Thus the true nature of sin is not felt; the claims of holiness are not understood; the free, full and sovereign grace of God is set aside; and the sacrificial death of Christ is thrown overboard.

The sense of all this makes us long for more earnestness, power and faithfulness in setting forth those foundation truths which

are constantly affirmed and maintained in the New Testament. We believe it to be the solemn duty of every writer and every speaker, of all authors, editors, preachers and teachers to take a firm stand against the strong current of opposition to the simplest truths of divine revelation, so painfully and alarmingly apparent in every direction. There is an urgent demand for faithfulness in maintaining the standard of pure truth, not in a spirit of controversy, but in meekness, earnestness and simplicity. We want to have Christ preached as a test of all that is in man, in nature, in the world. We want Christ preached as a victim, bearing all that was due to our sins; and we want Him preached as a model on which we are to be formed in all things.

This is Christianity. It is not fallen nature trying to work out righteousness by keeping the law of Moses. Neither is it fallen nature striving to imitate Christ. No; it is the complete setting aside of fallen nature as an utterly good-for-nothing thing and the reception of a crucified and risen Christ as the foundation of all of our hopes for time and eternity. How could the unrenewed sinner get righteousness by keeping the law, by the which is the knowledge of sin? How could he ever set about to imitate Christ? Utterly impossible! "He must be born again." He must get new life in Christ before he can exhibit Christ. This cannot be too strongly insisted upon. For an unconverted man to think of imitating the example or walk in the footsteps of Jesus, is the most hopeless thing in the world. Ah! no; the only effect of looking at the blessed example of Jesus is to put us in the dust in self-abasement and true contrition. And when from this place we lift our eyes to the cross of Calvary to which Jesus was nailed as our surety, our sin-bearer, our substitute, we see pardon and peace flowing down to us through His most precious sacrifice. Then, but not until then, we can calmly and happily sit down to study Him as our model.

If I look at the life of Jesus apart from His atoning death; if I measure myself by that perfect standard; if I think of working myself into conformity to such an image, it must plunge me into utter despair. But when I behold that perfect, spotless, holy One bearing my sins in His own body on the tree — when I see Him laying in His death and resurrection the everlasting foundation of

life and peace and glory for me — then, with a peaceful conscience and liberated heart, I can look back over the whole of that marvelous life and see therein how I am to walk, for “He has left us an example that we should follow His steps.”

Thus, while Christ as a test shows me my guilt, Christ as a victim cancels that guilt, and Christ as a model shines before the vision of my soul as the standard at which I am to aim continually. In a word, Christ is my life and Christ is my model, and the Holy Spirit, who has taken up His abode in me on the ground of accomplished redemption, works in me for the purpose of conforming me to the image of Christ. True, I must always feel and own how infinitely short I come of that lofty standard, but still, Christ is my life, though the manifestation of that life is sadly hindered by the infirmities and corruptions of my old nature. The life is the same, as the apostle John says, “which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is past and the true light now shineth” (1 John 2: 8). We can never be satisfied with anything less than “Christ our life, Christ our model.” “For me to live is Christ.” It was Christ reproduced in the daily life of Paul by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is true Christianity. It is not flesh turned religious and leading a pious life. It is not unrenewed, fallen, ruined nature trying to recover itself by rites and ceremonies, prayers, alms and vigils. It is not the old man turning from “wicked works” to “dead works,” exchanging the beer parlor, the theatre, the gaming table and the race course, for the monastery, the pew, the meeting house or the lecture hall. No reader, it is “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” and Christ reproduced in your daily life by the powerful ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

Be not deceived! It is of no possible use for fallen nature to clothe itself in forms of religion. It may become involved in the attractive things of ritualism, sacred music, pious pictures, sculpture, architecture, dim religious light. It may scatter the fruits of a large-hearted benevolence: it may visit the sick, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shed on all around the sunshine of a genial philanthropy. It may read the Bible and go through every form of religious routine. It may even attempt a hollow imitation of Christ: schoolmen may

discipline it, others may subdue it, mystics may enwrap it in their cloudy reveries and lead it into quiet meditation with nothing to contemplate. In short, all that religion, morality and philosophy can do for it and with it, may be done *but all in vain*, inasmuch as it still remains true that, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” “It cannot see or enter the kingdom of God,” for “ye must be born again.”

Here lies the deep and solid, the divine and eternal foundation of Christianity. There must be the life of Christ in the soul — the link with “the Second Man, the last Adam.” The first man has been condemned and set aside. The Second Man came and stood beside the first. He proved him and tested him, and showed most fully that there was not a single ingredient in his nature, his character or his condition which could be made available in that new creation, that heavenly kingdom which was about to be introduced — that not a single stone or timber in the old building could be worked into the new — that “in my flesh dwelleth no good thing” — and that the ground must be thoroughly cleared of all the rubbish of ruined humanity, and the foundation laid in the death of the Second Man who in resurrection has become, as the last Adam, the Head of the new creation. Apart from Him there can be no life. “He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5: 12).

Such is the conclusive language of Holy Scripture, and this language must hold good in spite of all the reasonings of those who boast themselves in their liberal and enlightened views, in their intellectual powers and in the breadth of their theology. It matters little what men may think or say; we have only to hearken to the Word of our God which must stand forever, and that Word declares, “Ye must be born again.” Men cannot alter this. There is a kingdom which can never be moved. In order to see or enter this heavenly kingdom, we must be born again. Man has been tried in every way and proved wanting. Now, “Once, in the end of the ages, hath Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb. 9: 26).

This is the only ground of life and peace. When the soul is firmly settled thereon, it can find its delight in studying Christ as its model. It is finished with all its own poor efforts to obtain life,

pardon and the favor of God. It flings aside its “deadly doings;” it has found life in Jesus, and now its grand business is to study Him, to mark His footsteps and walk therein — to do as He did, to aim always at being like Him, to seek in everything to be conformed to Him. The great question for the Christian on all occasions is not, “What harm is there in this or that?” but, “Is this like Christ?” He is our divine pattern. Are husbands exhorted to love their wives? It is “As Christ loved the Church.” What a model! Who can ever come up to it? No one, but we are still to keep it before us. Thus we shall enter into the truth of those lines of our own poet,

“The more Thy glories strike mine eyes,

The humbler I shall lie,

Thus while I sink, my joys shall rise

Immeasurably high.”

The Christian reader will at once perceive what a wide field of practical truth is opened up by this closing point in our subject. What an unspeakable privilege to be able, day by day, to sit down and study the life and ways of our Great Example to see what He was; to mark His words, His spirit, His style; to trace Him in all the details of His marvelous path; to note how “He went about doing good”; how it was His food and His drink to do the will of God and to minister to the need of man. And then to think that He loves us, that He died for us, that He is our life, that He has given us of His Spirit to be the spring of power in our souls to subdue all that is of the old root of self and produce in our daily life the expression of Christ.

What mortal tongue can unfold the preciousness of all this? It is not living by rules and regulations. It is not pursuing a dead round of duties. It is not subscribing to certain dogmas of religious belief. No; it is union with Christ and the manifestation of Christ. This we repeat and reiterate and would impress upon the reader. This and nothing less, nothing different, is true, genuine, living Christianity. Let him see that he possesses it, for if not, he is dead in trespasses and sins, he is far from God and far from the kingdom of God. But if

he has been led to believe on the name of the only begotten Son of God, if as a consciously ruined and guilty sinner he has fled for refuge to the blood of the cross, then Christ is his life, and it should be his one unvarying object, day by day, to study his model, to fix his eye on the headline and aim at coming as near to that as possible. This is the true secret of all practical godliness and sanctification. This alone constitutes a living Christianity. It stands in vivid contrast with what is commonly called "a religious life" which, alas! very often resolves itself into a mere dead routine, a rigid adherence to lifeless forms, a barren ritualism which, far from exhibiting anything of the freshness and reality of the new man in Christ, is a distortion of nature itself.

Christianity brings a living Christ into the heart and into the life. It diffuses a divine influence all around. It enters into all the relations and associations of human life. It teaches us how to act as husbands and wives, as fathers and mothers, as masters, as children, as servants. It does not teach us by dry rules and regulations, but by setting before us, in the Person of Christ, a perfect model of what we ought to be. It presents to our view the very One who, as a test, left us without a single plea, and as a victim, left us without a single stain, and who now, as our model, is to be the subject of our admiring study and the standard at which we are ever and only to aim. It does not matter where we are or what we are, provided Christ is dwelling in the heart and exhibited in the daily life. If we have Him in the heart and before the eye, He will regulate everything; if we don't have Him, we have nothing.

We will here close our paper, not because our theme is exhausted, but because it is inexhaustible. We believe that the Spirit of God alone can open the subject and apply it in living power and freshness to the soul of the reader and thus lead him into a higher type of Christianity than is ordinarily exhibited in this day of worldly profession. May the Lord stir up all our hearts to seek greater nearness to Himself and more faithful conformity to Him in all our ways! May we be enabled to say with a little more truth and sincerity, "Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change the body of our humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto His body of

glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.”

Acts 10:36

GOD PREACHING PEACE

“The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: He is Lord of all” (Acts 10: 36).

One of the most momentous questions which can be put to a human being is this, “Have you peace with God?” It is a question of the deepest solemnity, and it claims a direct and immediate answer from every heart. There is no reason why any truly anxious soul should continue for one moment without settled peace with God. Christ has made peace by the blood of His cross. God is preaching peace by Jesus Christ, and here we have the solid foundation of the believer's peace — Christ's finished work received on the authority of God's Word by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is the divine basis of peace. The more simply we build thereon, the more solid our peace will be. The reason why so many are in a state of miserable uncertainty is because they do not rest in absolute faith on God's foundation. They are occupied with themselves instead of building exclusively on Christ. They are looking to *experience* rather than to a risen Savior. Feelings and attainments engage them instead of Christ. They are vainly hoping to find some sort of improvement in themselves, and not finding it to their satisfaction — for what honest soul ever does? — they are filled with gloomy doubts. The heart is oppressed with anxious fear and the spirit is overcast with heavy clouds. They have no divine certainty, so they try to find comfort in the exercises of a religious life. Inasmuch as imperfection attaches to their very best and most pious exercises, they are ever kept in a condition of spiritual darkness and bondage. Neither in our inward feelings and experiences, nor in our outward exercises — of whatsoever kind these may be — have we the true ground of our peace in the divine presence. God did not send to the children of Israel, nor does He now send to us Gentiles, peace by spiritual experiences or by religious exercises, but simply by Jesus Christ.

The reader cannot be too simple in laying hold of this great truth. He may rest assured that it is God's gracious desire that his soul should find peace. If not, why should God send, preach, proclaim, announce peace. If God sends us a message of peace, He surely means that we should have it. He has provided it for us by the precious atoning death of His Son, and He declares it unto us by His Spirit in the Holy Scriptures. Thus it is all of God from first to last. Hence it is called the peace of God. It comes forth from His heart. It bears the imprint of His hand and it is to the praise of His own eternal Name. We have nothing to do but to receive with all thankfulness, this precious peace, and let it flow like an even river through our souls.

Here we would turn directly to the reader and press home upon his soul this grand question, "Do you have peace with God?" Do not, we beseech you, put it aside. It is a question of eternal importance — a question, in comparison with which all mere earthly questions dwindle into utter insignificance.

It may be that someone whose eye scans these lines feels really anxious about this grand question, and would give worlds, if he possessed them, for a full, clear and satisfactory answer. Such an one may feel disposed to ask, "What is the ground of this peace and how may I have it for myself?" Two deeply important questions, most surely — questions which we shall seek, by the grace of God, to answer.

First, as to the real ground of the soul's peace. If the reader will turn to the last verse of Romans 4 he will find it set forth in two brief but weighty sentences. In this passage the inspired apostle, in speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, declares that "He was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification."

Here, we have the solid and imperishable foundation of the sinner's peace, the divine ground on which God can preach peace. Jesus Christ was delivered for our offenses. Let this be carefully noted. Let us mark particularly who was delivered, who delivered Him, and for what He was delivered. All these are essential to our enjoyment of peace.

Who was delivered? The Holy One, the spotless One, the Lamb, the Christ, the Son of God, that blessed One who lay in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, the object of the Father's supreme delight from everlasting, the Eternal Son. This blessed One who lay in the bosom from before all worlds, lay in the womb of the virgin, in the manger of Bethlehem, was baptized in Jordan, was tempted in the wilderness, was transfigured on the Mount, was bowed down in the garden, was nailed to a tree, buried in the grave, raised from the dead and is now seated on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

This is He who was “delivered.” He stood with our offenses. He represented us on the cross. He stood in our place and received from the hand of Eternal Justice all that we deserved. There was a transfer of all our guilt, all our offenses, all our iniquities, all our transgressions to Him who knew no sin, who had no more to do with sin than we had to do with righteousness. He died in our place. The One whose whole human life was a sweet odor always ascending to the throne of God, was delivered up to death, charged with all our offenses.

Who delivered Him? This is a vital question. Who delivered Jesus up to the death of the cross? Isaiah 53 and 2 Corinthians 5 furnish the answer: “It pleased *Jehovah* to bruise Him.” Such is the language of the inspired prophet. And now hear the apostle: “God hath made Him (Christ) to be sin for us.” God has done it. It will not do to say that “we lay our sins on Jesus.” We want much more than this. If it were merely a question of our laying our sins on Jesus, we could never have peace with God, seeing we do not know the extent of our sin, the depth of our guilt, the true amount of our liabilities as God knows it. To have peace with God, I must know that *He* is satisfied. *God* was the offended party, the grieved One, and He must be satisfied. Well, blessed be His name, He is satisfied, for He Himself has found the ransom. He has laid our sins, according to *His* estimate of them, on the head of the divine Sin-bearer.

All that was needful, not merely to meet our condition, but to satisfy His claims, vindicate His majesty and glorify His name, He Himself has provided in the atoning death of His own Son. Thus He is satisfied. Hence He can preach peace to us by Jesus Christ, Lord

of all. The spotless Christ was judged on the cross in our place. God hid His face from that blessed One, turned away His countenance, closed His ear and forsook Him for the moment. Why? Because He was delivered for our offenses. God forsook Him that He might receive us. He treated Him as we deserved in order that He might treat us as He deserved. Jesus took our place in death and judgment, that we might take His place in life, righteousness and everlasting glory.

Now, let us ask, for *what* was the precious Savior delivered? “For our offenses.” For how many? For all, most surely. When Jesus hung on the cross, all the believer's offenses were laid upon and imputed to Him. Yes, all. Then, they all were future when Christ bore them on the cross, yet there is no such distinction as past, present or future with Him who spans eternity as a moment. All our sins were laid on Jesus. He answered for them and put them away forever, so they are gone out of God's sight. Instead of our sins, there is nothing before God except the Christ who bore them and blotted them out forever, and was raised for our justification. Who raised Him? Even the same one who delivered Him. And why did He raise Him? Because all was settled for which He had been delivered. Christ glorified God in the putting away of our sins, and God glorified Christ by raising Him from the dead and crowning Him with glory and honor. Most marvelous, most precious truth! Christ forsaken on the cross because our sins were laid on Him. Christ crowned on the throne because our sins are put away. “He was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification.” Such is the true, the solid, the everlasting ground of a sinner's peace in the presence of God.

Now one word as to the question of how the sinner can have this peace for himself. The answer is as simple as God can make it. What is it? Has the sinner to do anything? Has he to be anything but what he is — a poor lost, worthless, guilty creature? No. He has simply to believe God's Word — to receive into his heart, not merely into his head, the blessed message which God sends to him; to rest in Christ; to be satisfied with that which has satisfied God. God is satisfied with Christ without anything else whatever. Is the reader satisfied or is he waiting for something more, something of

his own — his vows and resolutions, his feelings and experiences?
If so, he cannot get peace. To be satisfied with Christ is to have
peace with God.

The Lord of Life in death hath lain,
To clear me from all charge of sin;
And, Lord, from guilt of crimson stain
Thy precious blood hath made me clean.

Acts 13:39

“Be it known unto you, therefore, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him, *all* that *believe* are justified from *all things*, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

Decision for Christ.

In approaching the subject of “Decision for Christ,” there are two or three obstacles which lie in our way — two or three difficulties which hang around the question, which we would fain remove, if possible, in order that the reader may be able to view the matter on its own proper ground, and in its own proper bearings.

In the first place, we encounter a serious difficulty in the fact that very few of us, comparatively, are in a condition of soul to appreciate the subject, or to suffer a word of exhortation thereon. We are, for the most part, so occupied with the question of our soul's salvation — so taken up with matters affecting ourselves, our peace, our liberty, our comfort, our deliverance from the wrath to come, our interest in Christ, that we have but little heart for ought that purely concerns Christ Himself — His Name — His Person — His cause — His glory.

There are, we may say, two things which lie at the foundation of all true decision for Christ, namely, a conscience purged by the blood of Jesus, and a heart that bows with reverent submission to the authority of His word, in all things. Now we do not mean to dwell upon these things in this paper; first, because we are anxious to get, at once, to our immediate theme; and, secondly, because we have so often dwelt on the subject of establishing the conscience in the peace of the gospel, and in setting before the heart the paramount claims of the word of God. We merely refer to them here for the purpose of reminding the reader that they are absolutely essential materials in forming the basis of decision for Christ. If my conscience is ill at ease, if I am in doubt as to my salvation, if I am filled with “anxious thought” as to whether I am a child of God or not, decision for

Christ is out of the question. I must know that Christ died for me, before I can, intelligently and happily, live for Him.

So also, if there be any reserve in the heart as to my entire subjection to the authority of Christ as my Lord and Master; if I am keeping some chamber of my heart, be it ever so remote, ever so small, closed against the light of His word, it must, of necessity, hinder my whole-hearted decision for Him in this world. In a word, I must know that *Christ is mine and I am His*, ere my course down here can be one of unswerving, uncompromising decision for Him. If the reader hesitates as to this, if he is still in doubt and darkness, let him pause, and turn directly to the cross of the Son of God, and hearken to what the Holy Spirit declares as to all those who simply put their trust therein. Let him drink into his inmost soul these words, "Be it known unto you, therefore, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him, *all that believe* are justified from *all things*, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Yes, reader, these are the glad tidings for you. "*All from all*," by faith in a crucified and risen Lord.

But we see another difficulty in the way of our subject. We greatly fear, that while we speak of decision for Christ, some of our readers may suppose that we are contending for some notion or set of notions of our own; that we are pressing some peculiar views or principles to which we vainly and foolishly venture to apply the imposing title of "Decision for Christ." All this we do most solemnly disclaim. The words which stand at the head of this paper are the simple expression of our thesis. We do not contend for mere attachment to sect, party, or denomination, for adherence to the doctrines or commandments of men. We write in the immediate presence of Him who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men, and we distinctly avow that our one object is to urge upon the Christian reader the necessity of decision for Christ. We would not, if we know ourselves, pen a single line to swell the ranks of a party, or draw over adherents to any particular doctrinal creed, or any special form of church polity. We are impressed with the conviction that where Christ has His right place in the heart, all will be right; and that, where He has not, there will be nothing right. And, further, we believe that nothing but plain decision for Christ

can effectually preserve the soul from the fatal influences that are at work around us in the professing Church. Mere orthodoxy cannot preserve us. Attachment to religious forms will not avail in the present fearful struggle. It is, we feel persuaded, a simple question of Christ as our life, and Christ as our object. May the Spirit of God now enable us to ponder aright the subject of "Decision for Christ!"

It is well to bear in mind that there are certain great truths — certain immutable principles — which underlie all the dispensations of God from age to age, and which remain untouched by all the failure, the folly, and the sin of man. It is on these great moral truths, these foundation principles, that faith lays hold, and in them finds its strength and its sustenance. dispensations change and pass away — men prove unfaithful in their varied positions of stewardship and responsibility; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. It never changes, never fails. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." And, again, "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." Nothing can touch the eternal truth of God, and, therefore, what we want, at all times, is to give that truth its proper place in our hearts; to let it act on our conscience, form our character, and shape our way. "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord." This is true security. Here lies the real secret of decision for Christ. What God has spoken must govern us in the most absolute manner, ere our path can be said to be one of plain decision. There may be tenacious adherence to our own notions, obstinate attachment to the prejudices of the age, a blind devotion to certain doctrines and practices resting on a traditional foundation, certain opinions which we have received to hold without ever enquiring as to whether or not there be any authority whatever for such opinions in holy scripture. There may be all this, and much more, and yet not one atom of genuine decision for Christ.

Now we feel we cannot do better than furnish our readers with an example or two drawn from the page of inspired history, which will do more to illustrate and enforce our theme than aught that we could possibly advance. And first, then, let us turn to the book of

Esther, and there contemplate, for a few moments, the instructive history of

"MORDECAI THE JEW."

This very remarkable man lived at a time in which the Jewish economy had failed through the unfaithfulness and disobedience of the Jewish people. The Gentile was in power. The relationship between Jehovah and Israel could no longer be publicly acknowledged. The faithful Jew had but to hang his harp on the willows, and sigh over the faded light of other days. The chosen seed were in exile; the city and temple where their fathers worshipped were in ruins, and the vessels of the Lord's house were in a strange land. Such was the outward condition of things in the day in which Mordecai's lot was cast. But, in addition to this, there was a man, very near the throne, occupying only the second place in the empire, sitting beside the very fountain-head of authority, possessing princely wealth, and wielding almost boundless influence. To this great man, strange to say, the poor exiled Jew sternly refuses to bow. Nothing will induce him to yield a single mark of respect to the second man in the kingdom. He will save the life of Ahasuerus; but he will not bow to Haman.

Reader, why was this? Was this blind obstinacy or bold decision — which? In order to determine this we must enquire as to the real root or principle of Mordecai's acting. If, indeed, there was no authority for his conduct in the law of God, then must we at once pronounce it to have been blind obstinacy, foolish pride, or, it may be, envy of a man in power. But if, on the other hand, there be within the covers of the five inspired books of Moses, a plain authority for Mordecai's deportment in this matter, then must we, without hesitation, pronounce his conduct to have been the rare and exquisite fruit of attachment to the law of his God, and uncompromising decision for Him and His holy authority.

This makes all the difference. If it be merely a matter of private opinion — a question concerning which each one may lawfully adopt his own view — then, verily, might such a line of conduct be justly termed the most narrow-minded bigotry. We hear a great deal, now-a-days, about narrow-mindedness on the one hand, and large-

heartedness on the other. But, as a Roman orator, over two thousand years ago, exclaimed in the senate-house of Rome, "Conscript Fathers, long since, indeed, we have lost the true names of things;" so may we, in the bosom of the professing Church, at the close of the nineteenth century, repeat, with far greater force, "Long since we have lost the true names of things." For what do men now call bigotry and narrow-mindedness? A faithful clinging to, and carrying out of, "Thus saith the Lord." And what do they designate large-heartedness? A readiness to sacrifice truth on the altar of politeness and civility.

Reader, be thou fully assured that thus it is at this solemn moment. We do not want to be sour or cynical, morose or gloomy. But we must speak the truth, if we are to speak; at all. We desire that the tongue may be hushed in silence, and the pen may drop from the hand, if we could basely cushion the plain bold, unvarnished truth, through fear of scattering my readers, or to avoid the sneer of the infidel. We cannot shut our eyes to the solemn fact that God's truth is being trampled in the dust; that the Name of Jesus is despised and rejected. We have only to pass from city to city, and from town to town, of highly-favoured England, and read upon the walls the melancholy proofs of the truth of our assertions. Truth is flung aside, in cold contempt. The Name of Jesus is little set by. On the other hand, man is exalted, his reason deified, his will indulged. Where must all this end? "In the blackness of darkness for ever."

How refreshing, in the face of all this, to ponder the history of Mordecai the Jew. It is very plain that he knew little and cared less about the thoughts of men on the question of narrow-mindedness. He obeyed the word of the Lord, and this we must be allowed to call real breadth of mind — true largeness of heart. For what, after all, is a narrow mind? A narrow mind we hold to be a mind which refuses to open itself to admit the truth of God. And what, on the contrary, is a large and liberal heart? A heart expanded by the truth and grace of God. Let us not be scared away from the path of plain decision, by the scornful epithets which men have bestowed upon that path. It is a path of peace and purity, a path where the light of an approving conscience is enjoyed, and upon which the beams of divine favour ever pour themselves in undimmed lustre.

But why did Mordecai refuse to bow to Haman? Was there any great principle at stake? Was it merely a whim of his own? Had he a "Thus saith the Lord" for his warrant in refusing a single nod of the head to the proud Amalekite? Yes. Let us turn to the seventeenth chapter of the book of Exodus, and there we read, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar and called the name of it. Jehovah-nissi; for he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

[It is deeply interesting to note that neither the Jews' best Friend, nor their worst enemy is once formally named in the Book of Esther; but faith could recognize both the one and the other.]

Here, then, was Mordecai's authority for not bowing to Haman the Agagite. A faithful Jew could not do reverence to one with whom Jehovah was at war. The heart might plead a thousand excuses and urge a thousand reasons. It might seek an easy path for itself on the plea that the Jewish system was in ruins, and the Amalekite in power, and that therefore it was worse than useless, yea, it was positively absurd, to maintain such lofty ground when the glory of Israel was gone, and the Amalekite was in the place of authority. "Of what use," it might be argued, "can it be to hold up the standard when all is gone to pieces? You are only making your degradation more remarkable by the pertinacious refusal to bow your head. Would it not be better to give just one nod? That will settle the matter. Haman will be satisfied, and you and your people will be safe. Do not be obstinate. Show a tendency to be courteous. Do not stand up, in that dogged way, for a thing so manifestly non-essential. Besides, you should remember that the command in Exodus 17 was only to be rehearsed in the ears of Joshua, and only had its true application in his bright and palmy days. It was never meant for the ears of an exile, never intended to apply in the days of Israel's desolation."

All this, and much beside, might have been urged on Mordecai; but, ah! the answer was simple: "God hath spoken. This is enough for Me. True, we are a scattered people; but the word of the Lord is

not scattered. He has not reversed His word about Amalek, nor entered into a treaty of peace with him. Jehovah and Amalek are still at war, and Amalek stands before me in the person of this haughty Agagite. How can I bow to one with whom Jehovah is at war? How can I do homage to a man whom the faithful Samuel would hew in pieces before the Lord?" "Well, then," it might be further urged upon this devoted Jew, "you will all be destroyed. You must either bow or perish." The answer is still most simple: "I have nothing to do with consequences. They are in the hand of God. Obedience is my path, the results are with Him. It is better to die with a good conscience than live with a bad one. It is better to go to heaven with an uncondemning heart, than remain upon earth with a heart that would make me a coward. God has spoken. I can do no otherwise. May the Lord help me! Amen."

Oh! how well we can understand the mode in which this faithful Jew would be assaulted by the enemy. Nothing but the grace of God can ever enable any one to maintain a deportment of unflinching decision, at a moment in which everything within and around is against us. True it is, we know that it is better to suffer anything than deny our Lord, or fly in the face of His commandments; but yet how little are some of us prepared to endure a single sneer, a single scornful look, a single contemptuous expression, for Christ's sake. And, perhaps, there are few things harder, for some of us at least, to bear than to be reproached on the ground of narrow-mindedness and bigotry. We naturally like to be thought large-hearted and liberal. We like to be accounted men of enlightened mind, sound judgement, and comprehensive grasp. But we must remember that we have no right to be liberal at our Master's expense. We have simply to obey.

Thus it was with Mordecai. He stood like a rock and allowed the whole tide of difficulty and opposition to roll over him. He would not bow to the Amalekite, let the consequence be what it might. Obedience was his path. The results were with God. And look at the result! In one moment, the tide was turned. The proud Amalekite fell from his lofty eminence, and the exiled Jew was lifted from his sackcloth and ashes and placed next the throne. Haman exchanged his wealth and dignities for a gallows; Mordecai exchanged his sackcloth for a royal robe.

Now it may not always happen that the reward of simple obedience will be as speedy and as signal as in Mordecai's case. And, moreover, we may say that we are not Mordecais, nor are we placed in his position. But the principle holds good whoever and wherever we are. There is not one of us, however obscure or insignificant, that has not a sphere within which our influence is felt for good or for evil. And, besides, independent altogether of our circumstances and the apparent results of our conduct, we are called upon to obey implicitly the word of the Lord — to have His word hidden in our hearts to refuse, with unswerving decision, to do or to say aught that the word of the living God condemns. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" This should be the language, whether it be the question of a child tempted to steal a lump of sugar, or the most momentous step in evil that one can be tempted to take. The strength and moral security of Mordecai's position lay in this fact, that he had the word of God for his authority. Had it not been so, his conduct would have been senseless in the extreme. To have refused the usual expression of respect to one in high authority, without some weighty reason, could only be regarded as the most unmeaning obstinacy. But the moment you introduce a "Thus saith the Lord," the matter is entirely changed. The word of the Lord endureth for ever. The divine testimonies do not fade away or change with the times and seasons. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or one tittle of what our God hath spoken shall never pass away. Hence, what had been rehearsed in the ears of Joshua, as he rested in triumph under the banner of Jehovah, was designed to govern the conduct of Mordecai, though clothed in sackcloth as an exile, in the city of Shushan. Ages and generations had passed away; the days of the Judges and the days of the Kings had run their course; but the commandment of the Lord with respect to Amalek had lost — could lose - none of its force. "The Lord *hath sworn* that the Lord will have war with Amalek;" not merely in the days of Joshua, nor in the days of the Judges, nor in the days of the Kings, but "from generation to generation." Such was the record — the imperishable and immutable record of God, and such was the plain, solid and unquestionable foundation of Mordecai's conduct.

And here let us say a few words as to the immense importance of entire submission to the word of God. We live in a day which is plainly marked by strong self-will. Man's reason, man's will, and man's interest are working together, with appalling success to ignore the authority of holy scripture. So long as the statements of the word of God chime in with man's reason, so long as they do not run counter to His will, and are not subversive of his interests, so long he will tolerate them, or it may be he will quote them with a measure of respect, or, at least, with self-complacency; but the moment it becomes a question of Scripture *versus* reason, will, or interest, the former is either silently ignored or contemptuously rejected. This is a very marked and solemn feature of the days that are now passing over our heads. It behoves Christians to be aware of it, and to be on their watchtower. We fear that very few comparatively are truly alive to the real state of the moral atmosphere which enwraps the religious world. We do not refer here so much to the bold attacks of infidel writers. To these we have alluded elsewhere. What we have now before us is rather the cool indifference, on the part of professing Christians, as to scripture; the little power which pure truth wields over the conscience; the way in which the edge of scripture is blunted or turned aside. You quote passage after passage from the inspired Volume, but it seems like the pattering of rain upon the window; the *reason* is at work, the *will* is dominant, *interest* is at stake, human opinions bear sway, God's truth is practically, if not in so many words, set aside.

All this is deeply solemn. We know of few things more dangerous than intellectual familiarity with the letter of Scripture where the spirit of it does not govern the conscience, form the character, and shape the way. We want to tremble at the word of God, to bow down, in reverential submission, to its holy authority, in all things. A single line of scripture ought to be sufficient for our souls, on any point, even though, in carrying it out, we should have to move athwart the opinions of the highest and best of men. May the Lord raise up many faithful and true-hearted witnesses in these last days — men like the faithful Mordecai, who would rather ascend a gallows than bow to an Amalekite.

For the further illustration of our theme, we shall ask the reader to turn to the sixth chapter of the book of Daniel. There is a special charm and interest in the history of these living examples presented to us in the Holy Scriptures. They tell us how the truth of God was acted upon, in other days, by men of like passions with ourselves; they prove to us that in every age there have been men who so prized the truth, so revered the word of the living God, that they would rather face death, in its most appalling forms, than depart one hair's breadth from the narrow line laid down by the authoritative voice of their Lord and Master. It is healthful to be brought in contact with such men — healthful at all times, but peculiarly so in days like the present, when there is so much laxity and easy-going profession — so much of mere theory — when every one is allowed to go his own way, and hold his own opinion, provided always that he does not interfere with the opinions of his neighbour — when the commandments of God seem to have so little weight, so little power over the heart and conscience. Tradition will get a hearing; public opinion will be respected; anything and everything, in short, but the plain and positive statements of the word of God, will get a place in the thoughts and opinions of men. At such a time, it is we repeat, at once healthful and edifying to muse over the history of men like Mordecai the Jew, and Daniel the prophet, and scores of others, in whose estimation a single line of holy scripture rose far above all the thoughts of men, the decrees of governors, and the statutes of kings, and who declared plainly that they had nothing whatever to do with consequences where the word of the Lord was concerned. Absolute submission to the divine command is that which alone becomes the creature.

It is not, be it observed and well remembered, that any man or any number of men have any right to demand subjection to their decisions or decrees; this would be most strongly deprecated. No man has any right to enforce his opinions upon his fellow. This is plain enough, and we have to bless God for the inestimable privilege of civil and religious liberty, as enjoyed under the government of England. But what we urge upon our readers, just now, is plain decision for Christ, and implicit subjection to His authority, irrespective of everything, and regardless of consequences. This is what we do most earnestly desire for ourselves and for all the people

of God, in these last days. We long for that condition of soul, that attitude of heart, that quality of conscience, which shall lead us to bow down in implicit subjection to the commandments of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. No doubt there are difficulties, stumbling blocks, and hostile influences to be encountered. It may be said, for instance, that "It is very difficult for one, now-a-days, to know what is really true and right. There are so many opinions and so many ways, and good men differ so in judgement about the simplest and plainest matters, and yet they all profess to own the Bible as the only standard of appeal; and, moreover, they all declare that their one desire is to do what is right, and to serve the Lord, in their day and generation. How, then, is one to know what is true or what is false, seeing that you will find the very best of men ranged on opposite sides of the same question?"

The answer to all this is very simple. "If thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light." But most assuredly my eye is not single if I am looking at men, and reasoning on what I see in them. A single eye rests simply on the Lord and His word. Men differ, no doubt — they have differed, and they ever will differ; but I am to hearken to the voice of my Lord and do His will. His word is to be my light and my authority, the girdle of my loins in action, the strength of my heart in service, my only warrant for moving hither and thither, the stable foundation of all my ways. If I were to attempt to shape my way according to the thoughts of men, where should I be? How uncertain and unsatisfactory would my course be! Thank God, He has made it all plain — so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein; and all I want is a single eye, a subject will, a teachable spirit, to be led aright. If I really want to be guided aright, my God will surely guide me; but if I am looking to men, if I am governed by mixed motives, if I am seeking my own ends and interests, if I am seeking to please my fellows, then, undoubtedly, my body shall be full of darkness, heavy clouds shall settle down upon my pathway, and uncertainty mark all my goings.

Christian reader, think of these things. Think deeply upon them. Depend upon it, they have a just claim upon your attention. Do you earnestly desire to follow your Lord? Do you really aim at something beyond mere empty profession, cold orthodoxy, or

mechanical religiousness? Do you sigh for reality, depth, energy, fervour, and whole heartedness? Then make Christ your one object, His word your rule, His glory your aim. Oh! that thus it may be with the writer and the reader of these lines. Alas! alas! how we have failed in these things, God only knows. But, blessed be His Name, there is full forgiveness with Him, and He giveth more grace, so that we can count upon Him to restore our souls, to revive His work in our hearts, and grant us a closer walk with Him than we have ever known before. May the blessed Spirit be pleased to use for the furtherance of these ends our meditation on the interesting narrative of

"DANIEL THE PROPHET."

"It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; and over these, three presidents, of whom Daniel was first; that the princes might give accounts unto them and the king should have no damage. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion or fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." (Dan. 6:1-4)

What a testimony! How truly refreshing to the heart! "No error or fault!" Even his most bitter enemies could not put their finger upon a single blemish in his character, or a flaw in his practical career. Truly this was a rare and admirable character — a bright witness for the God of Israel, even in the dark days of the Babylonish captivity — an unanswerable proof of the fact that no matter where we are situated, or how we are circumstanced, no matter how unfavourable our position, or how dark the day in which our lot is cast, it is our happy privilege so to carry ourselves, in all the details of daily life, as to give no occasion to the enemy to speak reproachfully.

How sad when it is otherwise! How humiliating when those who make a high profession are found constantly breaking down in the most commonplace affairs of domestic and commercial life! There

are few things which more tend to discourage the heart than to hear — as, alas! one so often does — that Christians, so-called, are the most unsatisfactory persons to have any dealings with — that they are bad masters, or bad servants, or bad tradesmen — that they do not attend to their business, that they charge higher prices and give worse value than those who make no profession at all. It is most deplorable when any just ground is afforded for such statements.

No doubt worldly people are only too ready to find occasion against those who profess the Name of Jesus; and, further, we have to remember that there are two sides to every question, and that, very frequently, a broad margin must be left for exaggeration, high colouring, and false impressions. But still, it is the Christian's plain duty so to walk in every position and relationship of life, as that "no error or fault" may be found in him. We should not make any excuses for ourselves. The duties of our situation, whatever it may happen to be, should be scrupulously performed. A careless manner, a slovenly habit, an unprincipled mode of acting, on the part of a Christian, is a serious damage to the cause of Christ, and a dishonour to His holy name. And, on the other hand, diligence, earnestness, punctuality, and fidelity, bring glory to that Name. And this should ever be the Christian's object. He should not aim at his own interest, his own reputation, or his own progress, in seeking to carry himself aright in his family and in his calling in life. True, it will promote his interest, establish his reputation, and further his progress, to be upright and diligent in all his ways; but none of these things should ever be his motive. He is to be ever and only governed by the one thing, namely, to please and honour his Lord and Master. The standard which the Holy Ghost has set before us, as to all these things, is furnished in the words of the epistle to the Philippians: "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." We should not be satisfied with anything less than this. "They could find none occasion nor fault, forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." Noble testimony! Would that it were more called forth, in this our day, by the deportment, the habits, the temper, and ways of all those who profess and call themselves Christians.

But there was one point in which Daniel's enemies felt they could lay hold of him. "Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning *the law of his God.*" Here was a something in the which occasion might be found to ruin this beloved and honoured servant of God. It appears that Daniel had been in the habit of praying three times a day, with his window open toward Jerusalem. This fact was well known, and was speedily laid hold of, and turned to account. "Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, king Darius, live for ever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree."

Here, then, was a deep plot, a subtle snare, laid for the blameless and harmless Daniel. How would he act in the face of all this? Would he not feel it right to lower the standard? Well, if the standard were something of his own, he might surely lower it, and perhaps he ought. But if it were something divine — if his conduct were based upon the truth of God, then clearly it was his place to hold it up as high as ever, regardless of statutes, decrees, and writings established, signed, and countersigned. The whole question hinged upon this. Just as in the case of Mordecai the Jew, the question hinged upon the one point of whether he had any divine warrant for refusing to bow to Haman; so, in the case of Daniel the prophet, the question was, had he any divine authority for praying toward Jerusalem. It certainly seemed strange and odd. Many might have felt disposed to say to him, "Why persist in this practice? What need is there for opening your window and praying toward Jerusalem, in such a public manner? Can you not wait until night has drawn her sable curtain around you, and your closet door has shut you in, and then pour out your heart to your God? This would be prudent, judicious, and expedient. And, surely, your God does not exact this of you. He does not regard time, place, or attitude. All

times and places are alike to Him. Are you wise — are you right, in persisting in such a line of action, under such circumstances? It was all well enough before this decree was signed, when you could pray when and as you thought right; but now it does seem like the most culpable fatuity and blind obstinacy to persevere; it is as though you really courted martyrdom."

All this, and much more we may easily conceive, might be suggested to the mind of the faithful Jew; but still the grand question remained, "What saith the scripture?" Was there any divine reason for Daniel's praying toward Jerusalem? Assuredly there was, In the first place, Jehovah had said to Solomon, in reference to the temple at Jerusalem, "Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually." Jerusalem was God's centre. It was, it is, and ever shall be. True, it was in ruins — the temple was in ruins; but God's word was not in ruins, and here is faith's simple but solid warrant. King Solomon had said, at the dedication of the temple, hundreds of years before Daniel's time, "If thy people sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies, and they carry them away captive unto a land far off or near. Yet if they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee, in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly; if they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captive, and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name: then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling-place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee." (2 Chr. 6:36-39)

Now this was precisely what Daniel was doing — this was the ground he took. He was a captive exile, but his heart was at Jerusalem, and his eyes followed his heart. If he could not sing the songs of Zion, he could at least breathe his prayers toward Zion's hill. If his harp was on the willows at Babylon, his fond affections turned toward the city of God, now a heap of ruins, but ere long to be an eternal excellency, the joy of the whole earth. It mattered not

to him that a decree had been signed by earth's greatest monarch, forbidding him to pray toward the city of his fathers and to his fathers' God. It mattered not to him that the lions' den was yawning to receive him, and the lions' jaws ready to devour him. Like his brother Mordecai, he had nothing to do with consequences. Mordecai would rather mount the gallows than bow to Haman, and Daniel would rather descend to the lions' den than cease to pray to Jehovah. These, surely, were the worthies — the spiritual giants of other days. They were men of the right stamp — real, downright, thorough-going men — men whose hearts and consciences were governed absolutely by the word of God. The world may dub them bigots and fools; but, oh! how the heart does long for such bigots and fools, in these days of false liberality and wisdom!

It might have been said to Mordecai and Daniel that they were contending for mere trifles — for things wholly indifferent and non-essential. This is an argument often used; but, ah! it has no weight with an honest and a devoted heart. Indeed there is nothing more contemptible, in the judgement of every true lover of Jesus, than the principle that regulates the standard as to essentials and non-essentials. For, what is it? Simply this, "All that concerns my salvation is essential; all that merely affects the glory of Christ is nonessential." How terrible is this! Reader, dost thou not utterly abhor it? What! shall we accept salvation as the fruit of our Lord's death, and deem aught that concerns Him non-essential? God forbid. Yea; rather let us entirely reverse the matter, and regard all that concerns the honour and glory of the Name of Jesus, the truth of His word, and the integrity of His cause, as vital, essential, and fundamental; and all that merely concerns ourselves as non-essential and indifferent. May God grant us this mind! May nothing be deemed trivial by us which has for its foundation the word of the living God!

Thus it was with those devoted men whose history we have been glancing at. Mordecai would not bow his head, and Daniel would not close his window. Blessed men The Lord be praised for such, and for the inspired record of their actings. Mordecai would rather surrender life than diverge from the truth of God, and Daniel would rather do the same than turn away from God's centre. Jehovah had

said that He would have war with Amalek from generation to generation, and therefore Mordecai would not bow. Jehovah had said of Jerusalem, "Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually;" therefore Daniel would not cease to pray toward that blessed centre. The word of the Lord endureth for ever, and faith takes its stand on that imperishable foundation. There is an eternal freshness about every word that has come forth from the Lord. His truth holds good throughout all generations; its bloom can never be brushed away, its light can never fade, its edge can never be blunted. All praise be to His holy name!

But let us look, for a moment, at the result of Daniel's faithfulness. The king was plunged into the deepest grief when he discovered his mistake. "He was sore displeased with himself." So well he might. He had fallen into a snare; but Daniel was in good keeping. It was all right with him. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." It matters not whether it be a lion's den at Babylon or a prison at Philippi, faith and a good conscience can make a man happy in either. We question if Daniel ever spent a happier night on this earth, than the night which he spent in the lions' den. He was there for God, and God was there with him. He was there with an approving conscience and an uncondemning heart. He could look up from the very bottom of that den straight into heaven, yea, that den was heaven upon earth to his happy spirit. Who would not rather be Daniel in the den than Darius in the palace? The one, happy in God, the other "sore displeased with himself." Darius would have every one pray to him; Daniel would pray to none but God. Darius was bound by his own rash decree; Daniel was bound Only by the word of the living God. What a contrast!

And then see in the end what signal honour was put upon Daniel. He stood publicly identified with the one living and true God. "O Daniel," cried the king, "servant of the living God." Truly he had earned this title for himself. He was, unquestionably, a devoted and decided servant of God. He had seen his three brethren cast into a furnace because they would worship only the true God, and he had been cast into the lions' den because he would pray only to Him; but the Lord had appeared for them and him, and given them a glorious

triumph. He had allowed them to realize that precious promise made of old to their fathers, that they should be the head and their enemies the tail; that they should be above and their enemies below. Nothing could be more marked — nothing could more forcibly illustrate the value which God puts upon plain decision and true-hearted devotedness, no matter where, when, or by whom exhibited.

Oh! for an earnest heart in this day of lukewarmness! O Lord, revive thy work!

Acts 15: 36

“LET US GO AGAIN”

“Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the Word of the Lord and see how they do.”

A motto for the evangelist is the expression, “to preach the gospel in the regions beyond.” This is the grand object of the evangelist, let his talents or sphere of action be what they may.

But the pastor has his work as well as the evangelist, and we desire to also furnish a motto for him. Such a motto we have in the words, “let us go again.” We are not merely to regard this expression as the narrative of what was done, but a model of what *ought* to be done. If the evangelist is responsible to preach the gospel in the regions beyond, so long as there are regions to be evangelized, the pastor is responsible to “go again and visit his brethren,” so long as there are brethren to be visited. The evangelist forms the vital connection; the pastor maintains and strengthens that connection. The one is the instrument of creating the beautiful link, the other of perpetuating it. It is quite possible that the two gifts may exist in the same person, as in Paul's case, but whether this be so or not, each gift has its own specific sphere and object. The business of the evangelist is to call out the brethren; the business of the pastor is to look after them. The evangelist goes first and preaches the Word of the Lord; the pastor goes again and visits those upon whom that Word has taken effect. The former calls out the sheep, the latter feeds and takes care of them.

The order of these things is divinely beautiful. The Lord will not gather out His sheep and leave them to wander uncared for and unfed. This would be wholly unlike His gracious, tender, thoughtful way. Hence, He not only imparts the gift whereby His sheep are to be called into existence, but also that gift whereby they are to be fed and maintained. He has His own interest in them and in every stage of their history. He watches over them with intense care from the

moment in which they hear the first quickening words until they are safely in the mansions above.

His desire to gather the sheep tells itself forth in the large-heartedness of the expression, “the regions beyond.” His desire for their well-being is seen in the words, “let us go again.” The two things are intimately connected. Wherever the Word of the Lord has been preached and received, there you have the formation of mysterious but real and most precious links between heaven and earth. The eye of faith can discern the most beautiful link of divine sympathy between the heart of Christ in heaven and “every city” where “the Word of the Lord” has been preached and received. This is as true now as it was then. There may be many things to hinder our spiritual perception of this link, but it is there. God sees it and faith sees it likewise. Christ has His eye — an eye beaming with intense interest and radiant with tender love — upon every city, every town, every village, every street, every house in which His Word has been received.

The assurance of this is most comforting to every one who feels that he has truly received the Word of the Lord. Were we called upon to prove from Scripture the truth of our assertion, we should do so by the following quotation: “And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise and go into the street which is called Straight and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus: for behold he prayeth” (Acts 9: 10-11). Can anything be more touching than to hear the Lord of glory giving, with such minuteness, the address of His newly-found sheep? He gives the street, the number (so to speak) and Saul's very occupation at the moment. His gracious eye takes in everything connected with each one of those for whom He gave His precious life. There is not a circumstance, however trivial, in the path of the very feeblest of His members in which the blessed Lord Jesus is not interested. His name be praised for such a comforting assurance! May we be enabled to enter more fully into the reality and power of such a truth!

Now, our gracious Shepherd would fill the heart of each one acting under Him with His own tender care for the sheep. It was He

who animated the heart of Paul to express and carry out the design embodied in the words, "let us go again." It was the grace of Christ flowing down into the heart of Paul and giving character and direction to the zealous service of that most devoted and laboring apostle.

Observe the force of the words "go again." It does not matter how often you may have been there before. It may be once or twice or thrice. This is not the question. "Let us go again" is the motto for the pastoral heart, for there is always a demand for the pastoral gift. Matters are always springing up in the various places in which "the Word of the Lord" has been preached and received, demanding the labors of the divinely-qualified pastor. This is especially true in this day of spiritual poverty. There is immense demand on the pastor to "go again and visit his brethren in every city" where "the Word of the Lord" has been preached, "and see how they do."

Reader, do you possess anything of a pastoral gift? If so, think of those comprehensive words, "let us go again." Have you been acting on them? Have you been thinking of your "brethren" — of those "who have obtained like precious faith" — those who, by receiving "the Word of the Lord," have become spiritual brethren? Are your interests and sympathies engaged on behalf of "every city" in which a spiritual link has been formed with the Head above? Oh! how the heart longs for a greater exhibition of holy zeal and energy, of individual and independent devotedness — independent, I mean, not of the sacred fellowship of the truly spiritual, but of every influence which would tend to clog and hinder that elevated service to which each one is distinctly called in responsibility to the Master alone.

Let us beware of the restraints of cumbrous religious machinery, of religious routine, of false order. Let us beware, too, of indolence, of love of personal ease, of a false economy which would lead us to attach an undue importance to the matter of expense. The silver and the gold are the Lord's and His sheep are far more precious to Him than silver and gold. His own words are, "Lovest thou Me? feed My sheep." And if only there is the heart to do this, the means will never be wanting. How often may we detect ourselves spending sums of money unnecessarily on the table, the

wardrobe and the library, which would be amply sufficient to carry us to “the regions beyond” to preach the gospel, or to “every city” to “visit our brethren”!

May the Lord grant unto us an earnest self-denying spirit, a devoted heart to Him and to His most holy service, a true desire for the spread of His gospel and the prosperity of His people. May the time passed of our lives be sufficient for us to have lived and labored for self and its interests, and may the time to come be given to Christ and His interests. Let us not allow our treacherous hearts to deceive us by plausible reasonings about domestic, commercial or other claims. All such should be strictly attended to, no doubt. A well-regulated mind will never offer to God a sacrifice arising out of the neglect of any just claim. If I am at the head of a family, the claims of that family *must* be duly responded to. If I am at the head of a business, the claims of that business must be duly met. If I am a hired servant, I must attend to my work. To fail in any of these would be to dishonor the Lord instead of serving Him.

But, allowing the widest possible margin for all righteous claims, let us ask, are we doing all we can for “the regions beyond” and for “our brethren in every city where we have preached the Word of the Lord?” Has there not been a blameworthy abandonment both of evangelistic and pastoral work? Have we not allowed domestic and commercial ties to act *unduly* upon us? And what has been the result? What have we gained? Have our children turned out well and our commercial interests prospered? Has it not often happened that, where the Lord's work has been neglected, the children have grown up in carelessness and worldliness? And as to the business, have we not often toiled all the night and gazed on an empty net in the morning? On the other hand, where the family and the circumstances have been left with absolute confidence in the hand of Jehovah-Jireh (the Lord will provide), have they not been far better cared for?

Let these things be deeply pondered with an honest heart and a single eye, and we shall be sure to arrive at just conclusions.

I cannot lay down the pen without calling the reader's attention to the fullness of the expression, “see how they do.” How very much

is involved in these words! “How they do” publicly, socially, privately. “How they do” in doctrine, in association, in walk. “How they do” spiritually, morally, relatively — “how they do” in every way. Be it well remembered that this seeing how our brethren do must *never* resolve itself into a curious, prying, gossiping, busybody spirit — a spirit that wounds and heals not, that meddles and mends not. To all who would visit us in such a spirit as this we should assuredly say, “be yet far from here.” But to all who would carry out Acts 15: 36, we desire to say, “our hands, our hearts, our houses are wide open; come in, ye blessed of the Lord. 'If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide.'”

O Lord, be pleased to raise up evangelists to visit “the regions beyond” and pastors to visit, again and again, “the brethren in every city.”

Acts 16: 8-31

"THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST

We ventured to offer a word to the evangelist, which we now follow up with a paper on the evangelist's work; and we cannot do better than select, as the basis of our remarks, a page from the missionary record of one of the greatest evangelists that ever lived. The passage of Scripture that stands at the head of this article furnishes specimens of three distinct classes of hearers, and also the method in which they were met by the great apostle of the Gentiles, guided, most surely, by the Holy Ghost.

We have, first, *the earnest seeker*; secondly, *the false professor*; and thirdly, *the hardened sinner*. These three classes are to be met everywhere, and at all times, by the Lord's workman; and hence we may be thankful for an inspired account of the right mode of dealing with such. It is most desirable that those who go forth with the gospel should have skill in dealing with the various conditions of soul that come before them, from day to day; and there can be no more effectual way of attaining this skill than the careful study of the models given us by God the Holy Ghost.

Let us then, in the first place, look at the narrative of the earnest seeker.

The laborious apostle, in the course of his missionary journeyings, came to Troas, and there a vision appeared to him in the night, "There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; and from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

"And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake

unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things that were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptised, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us" (Acts 16: 8-15).

Here, then, we have a touching picture — something well worth gazing at and pondering. It is a picture of one who, having through grace gotten a measure of light, was living up to it, and was earnestly seeking for more. Lydia, the seller of purple, belonged to the same interesting generation as the eunuch of Ethiopia, and the centurion of Caesarea. All three appear on the page of inspiration as quickened souls not emancipated — not at rest — not satisfied. The eunuch had gone from Ethiopia to Jerusalem in search of something on which to rest his anxious soul. He had left that city still unsatisfied, and was devoutly and earnestly hanging over the precious page of inspiration. The eye of God was upon him, and He sent His servant Philip with the very message that was needed to solve his difficulties, answer his questions, and set his soul at rest.

God knows how to bring the Philips and the eunuchs together. He knows how to prepare the heart for the message and the message for the heart. The eunuch was a worshiper of God; but Philip is sent to teach him how to see God in the face of Jesus Christ. This was precisely what he wanted. It was a flood of fresh light breaking in upon his earnest spirit, setting his heart and conscience at rest, and sending him on his way rejoicing. He had honestly followed the light as it broke in upon his soul, and God sent him more.

Thus it is ever. "To him that hath shall more be given." There never was a soul who sincerely acted up to his light that did not get more light. This is most consolatory and encouraging to all anxious inquirers. If the reader belongs to this class, let him take courage. If he is one of those with whom God has begun to work, then let him rest assured of this, that He who hath begun a good work will perform the same until the day of Jesus Christ. He will, most surely, perfect that which concerneth His people.

But let no one fold his arms, settle upon his oars, and coolly say, "I must wait God's time for more light. I can do nothing — my efforts are useless. When God's time comes I shall be all right; till then, I must remain as I am." These were not the thoughts or feelings of the Ethiopian eunuch. He was one of the earnest seekers; and all earnest seekers are sure to be happy finders. It must be so, for "God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11: 6).

So also with the centurion of Caesarea. He was a man of the same stamp. He lived up to his light. He fasted, he prayed, and gave alms. We are not told whether he had read the sermon on the mount: but it is remarkable that he exercised himself in the three grand branches of practical righteousness set forth by our Lord in the sixth chapter of Matthew. [The reader will notice that in Matthew 6: 1, the marginal reading is the correct one: "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them." Then we have the three departments of this righteousness, namely, alms-giving (ver. 2); prayer (ver. 3) fasting (ver. 16). These were the very things Cornelius was doing. In short, he feared God, and was working righteousness, according to his measure of light.] He was moulding his conduct and shaping his way according to the standard which God had set before him. His righteousness exceeded the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, and therefore he entered the kingdom. He was, through grace a real man, earnestly following the light as it streamed in upon his soul, and he was led into the full blaze of the gospel of the grace of God. God sent a Peter to Cornelius, as he had sent a Philip to the eunuch. The prayers and alms had gone up as a memorial before God, and Peter was sent with a message of full salvation through a crucified and risen Saviour.

Now it is quite possible that there are persons who, having been rocked in the cradle of easy-going evangelical profession, and trained up in the flippant formalism of a self-indulgent, heaven-made-easy religion, are ready to condemn the pious conduct of Cornelius, and pronounce it the fruit of ignorance and legality. Such persons have never known what it was to deny themselves a single meal, or to spend an hour in real, earnest prayer, or to open their hand, in true benevolence, to meet the wants of the poor. They have

heard and learnt, perchance, that salvation is not to be gained by such means — that we are justified by faith without works — that it is to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly.

All this is most true; but what right have we to imagine that Cornelius was praying, fasting, and giving alms in order to earn salvation? None whatever — at least if we are to be governed by the inspired narrative, and we have no other means of knowing aught about this truly excellent and interesting character. He was informed by the angel that his prayers and his alms had gone up as a memorial before God. Is not this a clear proof that these prayers and alms were not the trappings of self-righteousness, but the fruits of a righteousness based on the knowledge which he had of God? Surely the fruits of self-righteousness and legality could never have ascended as a memorial to the throne of God; nor could Peter ever have said concerning a mere legalist that he was one who feared God and worked righteousness.

Ah, no; Cornelius was a man thoroughly in earnest. He lived up to what he knew, and he would have been quite wrong to go further. To him the salvation of his immortal soul the service of God, and eternity, were grand and all-absorbing realities. He was none of your easy-going professors, full of flippant, vapid, worthless talk, but doing nothing. He belonged to another generation altogether. He belonged to the working, not the talking class. He was one on whom the eye of God rested with complacency, and in whom the mind of heaven was profoundly interested.

And so was our friend of Thyatira, Lydia, the seller of purple. She belonged to the same school — she occupied the same platform as the centurion and the eunuch. It is truly delightful to contemplate these three precious souls — to think of one in Ethiopia; another at Caesarea; and a third at Thyatira or Philippi. It is particularly refreshing to contrast such downright thorough-going, earnest souls, with many in this our day of boasted light and knowledge, who have got the plan of salvation, as it is termed, in their heads, the doctrines of grace on the tongue, but the world in the heart; whose absorbing object is self, self, self-miserable object!

We shall have occasion to refer more fully to these latter under our second head; but, for the present, we shall think of the earnest Lydia; and we must confess it is a far more grateful exercise. It is very plain that Lydia, like Cornelius and the eunuch, was a quickened soul; she was a worshiper of God; she was one who was right glad to lay aside her purple-selling, and betake herself to a prayer-meeting, or to any such like place where spiritual profit was to be had, and where there were good things going. "Birds of a feather flock together," and so Lydia soon found out where a few pious souls, a few kindred spirits, were in the habit of meeting to wait on God in prayer.

All this is lovely. It does the heart good to be brought in contact with this deep-toned earnestness. Surely the Holy Ghost has penned this narrative, like all Holy Scripture, for our learning. It is a specimen case, and we do well to ponder it. Lydia was found diligently availing herself of any and every opportunity; indeed she exhibited the real fruits of divine life, the genuine instincts of the new nature. She found out where saints met for prayer, and took her place among them. She did not fold her arms and settle down on her lees, to wait, in antinomian indolence and culpable idleness, for some extraordinary indefinable thing to come upon her, or some mysterious change to come over her. No; she went to a prayer-meeting — the place of expressed need — the place of expected blessing: and there God met her, as He is sure to meet all who frequent such scenes in Lydia's spirit.

God never fails an expectant heart. He has said, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me"; and, like a bright and blessed sunbeam on the page of inspiration, shines that pregnant, weighty, soul-stirring sentence, "God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." He sent a Philip to the eunuch in the desert of Gaza. He sent a Peter to the centurion, in the town of Caesarea. He sent a Paul to a seller of purple, in the suburbs of Philippi; and He will send a message to the reader of these lines, if he be a really earnest seeker after God's salvation.

It is ever a moment of deepest interest when a prepared soul is brought in contact with the full gospel of the grace of God. It may be that that soul has been under deep and painful exercise for many a

long day, seeking rest but finding none. The Lord has been working by His Spirit, and preparing the ground for the good seed. He has been making deep the furrows so that the precious seed of His Word may take permanent root, and bring forth fruit to His praise. The Holy Ghost is never in haste. His work is deep, sure and solid. His plants are not like Jonah's gourd, springing up in a night and perishing in a night. All that He does will stand, blessed be His name. "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever." When He convicts, converts, and liberates a soul, the stamp of His own eternal hand is upon the work, in all its stages.

Now, it must have been a moment of intense interest when one in Lydia's state of soul was brought in contact with that most glorious gospel which Paul carried (Acts 16: 14). She was thoroughly prepared for his message; and surely his message was thoroughly prepared for her. He carried with him truth which she had never heard and never thought of. As we have already remarked, she had been living up to her light; she was a worshiper of God; but we are bold to assert that she had no idea of the glorious truth which was lodged in the heart of that stranger who sat beside her at the prayer meeting. She had come thither — devout and earnest woman that she was — to pray and to worship, to get some little refreshment for her spirit, after the toils of the week. How little did she imagine that at the meeting she should hear the greatest preacher that ever lived, save One, and that she should hear the very highest order of truth that had ever fallen upon mortal ears.

Yet thus it was. And, oh, how important it was for Lydia to have been at that memorable prayer meeting! How well it was she had not acted as so many, nowadays, act, who after a week of toil in the shop, the warehouse, the factory, or the field, take the opportunity of lying in bed on Sunday! How many there are whom you will see at their post from Monday morning till Saturday night, working away with all diligence at their calling, but for whom you will look in vain at the meeting on the Lord's day. How is this? They will tell you, perhaps, that they are so worn out on Saturday night that they have no energy to rise on Sunday, and therefore they spend this day in sloth, lounging, and self-indulgence. They have no care for their souls, no care for eternity, no care for Christ. They care for

themselves, for their families, for the world, for money-making; and hence you will find them up with the dawn of Monday and off to their work.

Lydia did not belong to this class at all. No doubt she attended to her business, as every right-minded person will. We dare say — indeed, we are sure — she kept very excellent purple, and was a fair, honest trader, in every sense of the word. But she did not spend her Sabbath in bed, or lounging about her house, or nursing herself up, and making a great fuss about all she had to do during the week. Neither do we believe that Lydia was one of those self-occupied folk whom a shower of rain is sufficient to keep away from a meeting. No; Lydia was of a different stamp altogether. She was an earnest woman, who felt she had a soul to save, and an eternity before her, and a living God to serve and worship.

Would to God we had more Lydias in this our day! It would give a charm, and an interest, and a freshness to the work of an evangelist, for which many of the Lord's workmen have to sigh in vain. We seem to live in a day of terrible unreality as to divine and eternal things. Men, women, and children are real enough at their money-making, their pursuits, and their pleasures; but oh, when the things of God, the things of the soul, the things of eternity, are in question, the aspect of people is that of a yawning indifference. But the moment is rapidly approaching — every beat of the pulse, every tick of the watch, brings us nearer to it — when the yawning indifference shall be exchanged for "weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth." If this were more deeply felt, we should have many more Lydias, prepared to lend an attentive ear to Paul's gospel.

What force and beauty in those words, "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things that were spoken of Paul." Lydia was not one of those who go to meetings to think of anything and everything but the things that are spoken by the Lord's messengers. She was not thinking of her purple, or of the prices, or the probable gains or losses. How many of those who fill our preaching rooms and lecture halls follow the example of Lydia? Alas! we fear but very few indeed. The business, the state of the markets, the state of the funds, money, pleasure, dress, folly — a thousand and one things are thought of, and dwelt upon, and

attended to, so that the poor vagrant, volatile heart is at the ends of the earth instead of "*attending*" to the things that are spoken.

All this is very solemn, and very awful. It really ought to be looked into and thought of. People seem to forget the responsibility involved in hearing the gospel preached. They do not seem to be in the smallest degree impressed with the weighty fact that the gospel never leaves any unconverted person where it finds him. He is either saved by receiving, or rendered more guilty by rejecting it. Hence it becomes a serious matter to hear the gospel. People may attend gospel meetings as a matter of custom, as a religious service, or because they have nothing else to do, and the time would hang heavy upon their hands; or they may go because they think that the mere act of going has a sort of merit attached to it. Thus thousands attend preachings at which Christ's servants, though not Paul's in gift, power, or intelligence, unfold the precious grace of God in sending His only begotten Son into the world to save us from everlasting torment and misery. The virtue and efficacy of the atoning death of the divine Saviour — the Lamb of God — the dread realities of eternity — the awful horrors of hell, and the unspeakable joys of Heaven — all these weighty matters are handled, according to the measure of grace bestowed upon the Lord's messengers, and yet how little impression is produced! They "reason of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," and yet how few are made even to "tremble!"

And why? Will anyone presume to excuse himself for rejecting the gospel message on the ground of his inability to believe it? Will he appeal to the very case before us, and say, "The Lord opened her heart; and if He would only do the same for me, I, too, should attend; but until He does, I can do nothing"? We reply, and with deep seriousness, Such an argument will not avail thee in the day of judgment. Indeed we are most thoroughly convinced that thou wilt not dare to use it then. Thou art making a false use of Lydia's charming history. True it is, blessedly true, the Lord opened her heart; and He is ready to open thine also, if there were in thee but the hundredth part of Lydia's earnestness.

There are two sides to this great question, as there are to every question. It is all very well, and sounds very forcible, for thee to say,

"I can do nothing." But who told thee this? Where hast thou learnt it? We solemnly challenge thee, in the presence of God, Canst thou look up to Him and say, "I can do nothing — I am not responsible"? Say, is the salvation of thy never-dying soul just the one thing in which thou canst do nothing? Thou canst do a lot of things in the service of the world, of self, and of Satan; but when it becomes a question of God, the soul, and eternity, you coolly say, "I can do nothing — I am not responsible."

Ah! it will never do. All this style of argument is the fruit of a one-sided theology. It is the result of the most pernicious reasoning of the human mind upon certain truths in Scripture which are turned the wrong way and sadly misapplied. But it will not stand. This is what we urge upon the reader. It is of no possible use arguing in this way. The sinner is responsible; and all the theology, and all the reasoning, and all the fallacious though plausible objections that can be scraped together, can never do away with this weighty and most serious fact.

Hence, therefore, we call upon the reader to be, like Lydia, in earnest about his soul's salvation — to let every other question, every other point, every other subject, sink into utter insignificance in comparison with this one momentous question — the salvation of his precious soul. Then, he may depend upon it, the One who sent Philip to the eunuch, and sent Peter to the centurion, and sent Paul to Lydia, will send some messenger and some message to him, and will also open his heart to attend. Of this there cannot possibly be a doubt, inasmuch as Scripture declares that "God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." All who perish, after having heard the message of salvation — the sweet story of God's free love, of a Saviour's death and resurrection — shall perish without a shadow of an excuse, shall descend into hell with their blood upon their guilty heads. Their eyes shall then be open to see through all the flimsy arguments by which they have sought to prop themselves up in a false position, and lull themselves to sleep in sin and worldliness.

But let us dwell for a moment on "the things that were spoken of Paul." The Spirit of God hath not thought proper to give us even a brief outline of Paul's address at the prayer-meeting. We are

therefore left to other passages of Holy Scripture to form an idea of what Lydia heard from his lips on that interesting occasion. Let us take, for example, that famous passage in which he reminds the Corinthians of the gospel which he had preached to them. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15: 1-4).

Now we may safely conclude that the foregoing passage of Scripture contains a compendium of the things that were spoken of Paul at the prayer-meeting at Philippi. The grand theme of Paul's preaching was Christ — Christ for the sinner — Christ for the saint — Christ for the conscience — Christ for the heart. He never allowed himself to wander from this great centre, but made all his preachings and all his teachings circulate round it with admirable consistency. If he called on men, both Jews and Gentiles, to repent, the lever with which he worked was Christ. If he urged them to believe, the object which he held up for faith was Christ, on the authority of Holy Scripture. If he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, the One that gave cogency and moral power to his reasoning was Christ. In short, Christ was the very gist and marrow, the sum and substance, the foundation and top stone of Paul's preaching and teaching.

But, for our present purpose, there are three grand subjects, found in Paul's preaching, to which we desire to call the reader's attention. These are, first, the grace of God; secondly, the Person and work of Christ; and thirdly, the testimony of the Holy Ghost as given in the Holy Scriptures.

We do not attempt to go into these vast subjects here; we merely name them, and entreat the reader to ponder them, to muse over them, and seek to make them his own.

1. The grace of God — His free, sovereign favour — is the source from whence salvation flows — salvation in all the length,

breadth, height, and depth of that most precious word — salvation which stretches, like a golden chain, from the bosom of God, down to the very deepest depths of the sinner's guilty and ruined condition, and back again to the throne of God — meets all the sinner's necessities, overlaps the whole of the saint's history, and glorifies God in the highest possible manner.

2. Then, in the second place, the Person of Christ and His finished work are the only channel through which salvation can possibly flow to the lost and guilty sinner. It is not the Church and her sacraments, religion and its rites and ceremonies — man or his doings in any shape or form. It is the death and resurrection of Christ. "He died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day." This was the gospel which Paul preached, by which the Corinthians were saved, and the apostle declares, with solemn emphasis, "If any man preach any other gospel, let him be accursed." Tremendous words for our day!

3. But, thirdly, the authority on which we receive the salvation is the testimony of the Holy Ghost in Scripture. It is "according to the Scriptures." This is a most solid and comforting truth. It is not a question of feelings, or experiences, or evidences, it is a simple question of faith in God's Word wrought in the heart by God's Spirit.

It is a serious reflection for the evangelist, that wherever God's Spirit is at work, there Satan is sure to be busy. We must remember, and ever be prepared for this. The enemy of Christ and the enemy of souls is always on the watch, always hovering about to see what he can do, either to hinder or corrupt the work of the gospel. This need not terrify or even discourage the workman; but it is well to bear it in mind and be watchful. Satan will leave no stone unturned to mar or hinder the blessed work of God's Spirit. He has proved himself the ceaseless, vigilant enemy of that work, from the days of Eden down to the present moment.

Now, in tracing the history of Satan, we find him acting in two characters, namely, as a serpent, or as a lion — using craft or violence. He will try to deceive; and, if he cannot succeed, then he will use violence. Thus it is in this sixteenth chapter of the Acts. The apostle's heart had been cheered and refreshed by what we moderns

should pronounce, "a beautiful case of conversion." Lydia's was a very real and decided case, in every respect. It was direct, positive, and unmistakable. She received Christ into her heart, and forthwith took Christian ground by submitting to the deeply significant ordinance of baptism. Nor was this all. She immediately opened her house to the Lord's messengers. Hers was no mere lip profession. It was not merely saying she believed. She proved her faith in Christ, not only by going down under the water of baptism, but also by identifying herself and her household with the name and cause of that blessed One whom she had received into her heart by faith.

All this was clear and satisfactory. But we must now look at something quite different. The serpent appears upon the scene in the person of the deceiver.

"It came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour" (vers. 16-18).

Here, then, was a case eminently calculated to test the spirituality and integrity of the evangelist. Most men would have hailed such words from the lips of this damsel as an encouraging testimony to the work. Why then was Paul grieved? Why did he not allow her to continue to bear witness to the object of his mission? Was she not saying the truth? Were they not the servants of the most high God? And were they not showing the way of salvation? Why be grieved with — why silence such a witness? Because it was of Satan; and, most assuredly, the apostle was not going to receive testimony from him. He could not allow Satan to help him in his work. True, he might have walked about the streets of Philippi owned and honoured as a servant of God, if only he had consented to let the devil have a hand in the work. But Paul could never consent to this. He could never suffer the enemy to mix himself up with the work of the Lord. Had he done so, it would have given the deathblow to the testimony at Philippi. To have permitted Satan to

put his hand to the work, would have involved the total shipwreck of the mission to Macedonia.

It is deeply important for the Lord's workman to weigh this matter. We may rest assured that this narrative of the damsel has been written for our instruction. It is not only a statement of what has occurred, but a sample of what may and indeed what does occur every day.

Christendom is full of false profession. There are multitudes of false professors at this moment, throughout the wide domain of Christian profession. It is sad to have to say it, but so it is, and we must press the fact upon the attention of the reader. We are surrounded, on all sides, by those who give a merely nominal assent to the truths of the Christian religion. They go on, from week to week, and from year to year, professing to believe certain things which they do not in reality believe at all. There are thousands who, every Lord's Day, profess to believe in the forgiveness of sins, and yet, were such persons to be examined, it would be found that they either do not think about the matter at all, or, if they do think, they deem it the very height of presumption for any one to be sure that his sins are forgiven.

This is very serious. Only think of a person standing up in the presence of God and saying, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," and all the while he does not believe any such thing! Can anything be more hardening to the heart, or more deadening to the conscience than this? It is our firm persuasion that the forms and the formularies of professing Christianity are doing more to ruin precious souls than all the forms of moral pravity put together. It is perfectly appalling to contemplate the countless multitudes that are at this moment rushing along the well-trodden highway of religious profession, down to the eternal flames of hell. We feel bound to raise a warning note. We want the reader most solemnly to take heed as to this matter.

We have only instanced one special formulary, because it refers to a subject of very general interest and importance. How few, comparatively, are clear and settled as to the question of forgiveness of sins! How few are able, calmly, decidedly, and intelligently, to

say, "I know that my sins are forgiven!" How few are in the real enjoyment of full forgiveness of sins, through faith in that precious blood that cleanseth from all sins! How solemn, therefore, to hear people giving utterance to such words as these, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," while, in fact, they do not believe their own very utterance!

Is the reader in the habit of using such a form of words? Does he believe it? Say, are thy sins forgiven? Art thou washed in the precious atoning blood of Christ? If not, why not? The way is open. There is no hindrance. Thou art perfectly welcome, this moment, to the free benefits of the atoning work of Christ. Though thy sins be as scarlet; though they be black as midnight, black as hell; though they rise like a dreadful mountain before the vision of thy troubled soul, and threaten to sink thee into eternal perdition; yet do these words shine with divine and heavenly lustre on the page of inspiration, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1: 7).

But mark, friend, do not go on, week after week, mocking God, hardening thine own heart, and carrying out the schemes of the great enemy of Christ, by a false profession. This marks the damsel possessed by a spirit of divination, and here her history links itself with the present awful condition of Christendom. What was the burden of her song, during those "many days" in the which the apostle narrowly considered her case? "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." But she was not saved — she was not delivered — she was, all the while, under Satan's power And not only so, but Satan was seeking to use her for the purpose of marring and hindering the work of the gospel.

Thus it is with Christendom — thus it is with each false professor throughout the length and breadth of the professing Church. Every one who professes to believe in the forgiveness of sins, and yet does not believe in it — does not know that his sins are forgiven, does not think that anyone can know it until the day of judgment, every such person is, in principle, on the ground of the damsel possessed with the spirit of divination. What she said was true enough, but she was not true in saying it. This was the grievous

point in the case. It is one thing to say, or assent to what is true, and another thing to be true in saying it. Of what possible use was it to go on from day to day, giving utterance to the formulary, "They show unto us the way of salvation", while she remained in the same unsaved unblest condition? None whatever, and we know of nothing, even in the deepest depths of moral evil, or in the darkest shades of heathenism, more truly awful than the state of careless, hardened, self-satisfied, fallow-ground professors, who on each successive Lord's Day give utterance, either in their prayers or their singing, to words which, so far as they are concerned, are wholly false.

The thought of this is, at times, almost overwhelming. We cannot dwell upon it. It is really too sorrowful. We shall therefore pass on, having once more solemnly warned the reader against every shade and degree of false profession. Let him not say or sing aught that he does not heartily believe. The devil is at the bottom of all false profession, and by means thereof he seeks to bring discredit on the work of the Lord.

But how truly refreshing to contemplate the actings of the faithful apostle in the case of the damsel. Had he been seeking his own ends, or had he been merely a minister of religion, he might have welcomed her words as a tributary stream to swell the tide of his popularity, or promote the interest of his cause. But Paul was not a mere minister of religion; he was a minister of Christ — a totally different thing. And we may notice that the damsel does not say a word about Christ. She breathes not the precious, peerless name of Jesus. There is total silence as to Him. This stamps the whole thing as of Satan. "No man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost." People may speak of God, and of religion; but Christ has no place in their hearts. The Pharisees, in John 9, could say to the poor man, "Give God the praise"; but in speaking of Jesus, they could say, "This man is a sinner."

Thus it is ever in the case of corrupt religion, or false profession. Thus it was with the damsel in Acts 16. There was not a syllable about Christ. There was no truth, no life, no reality. It was hollow and false. It was of Satan; and hence Paul would not and could not own it; he was grieved with it and utterly rejected it.

Would that all were like him! Would that there were the singleness of eye to detect, and the integrity of heart to reject the work of Satan in much that is going on around us! We are thoroughly convinced that the Spirit of God has written the narrative of this damsel for our instruction. It may be said perhaps, that we have no such cases now. We reply, for what end did the Holy Ghost pen the record? Alas! there are thousands of cases at this moment, answering to this type of the damsel. We cannot but view it as a sample case, an illustration of Christendom's false profession, which exhibits far more of the craft and subtle wiles of the enemy than is to be found in ten thousand forms in which moral pravity clothes itself. Everyone can judge of drunkenness, theft, and such like, but it demands an eye anointed with heavenly eye salve to detect the wily workings of the serpent behind the fair profession of a baptised world.

Such an eye Paul, through grace, possessed. He was not to be deceived. He saw that the whole affair was an effort of Satan to mix himself up with the work, that thus he might spoil it altogether. "But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."

This was true spiritual action. Paul was not in any haste to come into collision with the evil one, or even to pronounce upon the case at all; he waited many days; but the very moment that the enemy was detected he is resisted and repulsed with uncompromising decision. A less spiritual workman might have allowed the thing to pass, under the idea that it might turn to account and help forward the work. Paul thought differently; and he was right. He would take no help from Satan. He was not going to work by such an agency; and hence, in the name of Jesus Christ — that name which the enemy so sedulously excluded — he puts Satan to flight.

But no sooner was Satan repulsed as the serpent, than he assumed the character of a lion. Craft having failed, he tried violence. "And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas and drew them into the market-place unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrates,

saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely" (Acts 16: 19-23).

Thus the enemy seemed to triumph; but be it remembered that Christ's warriors gain their most splendid victories by apparent defeat. The devil made a great mistake when he cast the apostle into prison. Indeed it is consolatory to reflect that he has never done anything else but make mistakes, from the moment that he left his first estate down to the present moment. His entire history, from beginning to end, is one tissue of errors.

And thus, as has been already remarked, the devil made a great mistake when he cast Paul into prison at Philippi. To nature's view it might have seemed otherwise; but in the judgment of faith, the servant of Christ was much more in his right place in prison for the truth's sake, than outside at his Master's expense. True, Paul might have saved himself. He might have been an honoured man, owned and acknowledged as "a servant of the most high God," if he had only accepted the damsel's testimony, and suffered the devil to help him in his work. But he could not do this, and hence he had to suffer. "And the multitude [ever fickle and easily swayed] rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely. Who, having received such a charge, *thrust* them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks" (ver. 22-24) .

Here, then, some might have said, was an end to the work of the evangelist in the city of Philippi. Here was an effectual stop to the preaching. Not so; the prison was the very place, at the moment, for the evangelist. His work was there. He was to find a congregation within the prison walls which he could not have found outside. But this leads us, in the third and last place, to the case of the hardened sinner.

It was very unlikely that the jailer would ever have found his way to the prayer meeting at the river side. He had little care for such things. He was neither an earnest seeker, nor a deceiver. He was a hardened sinner, pursuing a very hardening occupation. Jailers, from the occupation of their office, are, generally speaking, hard and stern men. No doubt there are exceptions. There are some tender-hearted men to be found in such situations; but, as a rule, jailers are not tender. It would hardly suit them to be so. They have to do with the very worst class of society. Much of the crime of the whole country comes under their notice; and many of the criminals come under their charge. Accustomed to the rough and the course, they are apt to become rough and coarse themselves.

Now, judging from the inspired narrative before us, we may well question if the Philippian jailer was an exception to the general rule with respect to men of his class. Certainly he does not seem to have shown much tenderness to Paul and Silas. "He thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks." He seems to have gone to the utmost extreme in making them uncomfortable.

But God had rich mercy in store for that poor, hardened, cruel jailer; and, as it was not at all likely that he would go to hear the gospel, the Lord sent the gospel to him; and, moreover, He made the devil the instrument of sending it. Little did the jailer know whom he was thrusting into the inner prison — little did he anticipate what was to happen ere another sun should rise. And we may add, little did the devil think of what he was doing when he sent the preachers of the gospel into jail, there to be the means of the jailer's conversion. But the Lord Jesus Christ knew what He was about to do, in the case of a poor hardened sinner. He can make the wrath of man to praise Him and restrain the remainder.

He everywhere hath sway

And all things serve His might,

His ev'ry act pure blessing is,

His path unsullied light.

When He makes bare His arm,

Who shall His work withstand?

When He His people's cause defends,

Who then shall stay His hand?

It was His purpose to save the jailer; and so far from Satan's being able to frustrate that purpose, he was actually made the instrument of accomplishing it. "God's purpose shall stand; and He will do all His pleasure." And where He sets His love upon a poor, wretched, guilty sinner, He will have him in Heaven, spite of all the malice and rage of hell.

As to Paul and Silas, it is very evident that they were in their right place in the prison. They were there *for the truth's sake*, and therefore *the Lord was with them*. Hence they were perfectly happy. What, though they were confined within the gloomy walls of the prison, with their feet made fast in the stocks, prison walls could not confine their spirits. Nothing can hinder the joy of one who has the Lord with him. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were happy in the fiery furnace. Daniel was happy in the lions' den; and Paul and Silas were happy in the dungeon of Philippi: "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises to God: and the prisoners heard them."

What sounds to issue from the inner prison! We may safely say that no such sounds had ever issued thence before. Curses and execrations and blasphemous words might have been heard; sighs, cries, and groans come forth from those walls. But to hear the accents of prayer and praise, ascending at the midnight hour, must have seemed strange indeed. Faith can sing as sweetly in a dungeon as at a prayer-meeting. It matters not where we are, provided always that we have God with us. His presence lights up the darkest cell, and turns a dungeon into the very gate of Heaven. He can make His servants happy anywhere, and give them victory over the most

adverse circumstances, and cause them to shout for joy in scenes where nature would be overwhelmed with sorrow.

But the Lord had His eye upon the jailer. He had written his name in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world, and He was now about to lead him into the full joy of His salvation. "And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed" (ver. 26).

Now if Paul had not been in full communion with the mind and heart of Christ, he would assuredly have turned to Silas and said, "Now is the moment for us to make our escape. God has most manifestly appeared for us, and set before us an open door. If ever there was an opening of divine Providence surely this is one." But no; Paul knew better. He was in the full current of His blessed Master's thoughts, and in full sympathy with his Master's heart. Hence he made no attempt to escape. The claims of truth had brought him into prison; the activities of grace kept him there. Providence opened the door; but faith refused to walk out. People talk of being guided by Providence; but if Paul had been so guided, the jailer would never have been a jewel in his crown.

"And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled" (ver 27). This proves, very plainly, that the earthquake, with all its attendant circumstances, had not touched the heart of the jailer. He naturally supposed, when he saw the doors open, that the prisoners were all gone. He could not imagine a number of prisoners sitting quietly in jail when the doors lay open and their chains were loosed. And then what was to become of him if the prisoners were gone? How could he face the authorities? Impossible. Anything but that. Death, even by his own hand, was preferable to that.

Thus the devil had conducted this hardened sinner to the very brink of the precipice, and he was about to give him the final and fatal push over the edge, and down to the eternal flames of hell; when lo, a voice of love sounded in his ear. It was the voice of Jesus

through the lips of His servant — a voice of tender and deep compassion — "Do thyself no harm."

This was irresistible. A hardened sinner could meet an earthquake; he could meet death itself; but he could not withstand the mighty melting power of love. The hardest heart must yield to the moral influence of love. "Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Love can break the hardest heart. And surely there was love in those words, "Do thyself no harm," coming from the lips of one to whom he had done so much harm a few hours before.

And be it noted, there was not a single syllable of reproach, or even of reflection, uttered by Paul to the jailer. This was Christ-like. It was the way of divine grace. If we look through the Gospels, we never find the Lord casting reproach upon the sinner. He has tears of sorrow; He has touching words of grace and tenderness; but no reproaches — no reflections — no reproach to the poor distressed sinner. We cannot attempt to furnish the many illustrations and proofs of this assertion; but the reader has only to turn to the gospel story to see its truth. Look at the prodigal; look at the thief. Not one reproving word to either.

Thus it is in every case; and thus it was with God's Spirit in Paul. Not a word about the harsh treatment — the thrusting into the inner prison — not a word about the stocks. "Do thyself no harm." And then, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

Such is the rich and precious grace of God. It shines, in this scene, with uncommon lustre. It delights in taking up hardened sinners, melting and subduing their hard hearts, and leading them into the sunlight of a full salvation; and all this in a style peculiar to itself. Yes, God has His style of doing things, blessed be His name; and when He saves a wretched sinner, He does it after such a fashion as fully proves that His whole heart is in the work. It is His joy to save a sinner — even the very chief — and He does it in a way worthy of Himself.

And now, let us look at the fruit of all this. The jailer's conversion was most unmistakable. Saved from the very brink of hell, he was brought into the very atmosphere of heaven. Preserved from self-destruction, he was brought into the circle of God's salvation; and the evidences of this were as clear as could be desired. "And they spake unto him the Word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes; and was baptised he and all his straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

What a marvellous change! The ruthless jailer has become the generous host! "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new." How clearly we can now see that Paul was right in not being guided by providences! How much better and higher to be led by the "eye" of God! What an eternal loss it would have proved to him had he walked out at the open door! How much better to be conducted out by the very hand that had thrust him in — a hand once the instrument of cruelty and sin, now the instrument of righteousness and love! What a magnificent triumph! What a scene, altogether!

How little had the devil anticipated such a result from the imprisonment of the Lord's servants! He was thoroughly outwitted. The tables were completely turned upon him. He thought to hinder the gospel, and, behold! he was made to help it on. He had hoped to get rid of two of Christ's servants, and, lo! he lost one of his own. Christ is stronger than Satan; and all who put their trust in Him and move in the current of His thoughts shall most assuredly share in the triumphs of His grace now, and shine in the brightness of His glory forever.

Thus much, then, as to "the work of an evangelist." Such are the scenes through which he may have to pass — such the cases with which he may have to come in contact. We have seen the earnest seeker satisfied; the deceiver silenced; the hardened sinner saved. May all who go forth with the gospel of the grace of God know how to deal with the various types of character that may cross their path! May many be raised up to do the work of an evangelist!

Acts 16:31

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house,” (Acts 16:31).

"Thou and thy house."

Preface.

Nothing can be more truly beneficial for the soul than to be brought under the searching power of the word of God, — to have our treacherous hearts examined by its sure light, and all our ways fairly tested by its holy precepts. “The law of the Lord is perfect.” It is God's means of effectually dealing with His people, and accomplishing in them the purposes of His love.

Hence, if the soul be in a healthful moral condition, it will truthfully respond to the action of the word; and thus happy and blessed communion will be the result. Increased felt nearness to God, and joy in Him through our Lord Jesus Christ. But if we cannot say with the apostle, “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world” (2 Cor. 1:12), we will be sure to feel its keen edge rather sharper than we can well bear, and its penetrating light too strong for our dark worldly ways. It is a “discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart,” and whatever has been allowed or indulged in by us, which savours of “fleshly wisdom,” and not of “simplicity and godly sincerity,” must meet its condemnation in that word. By this means the mistakes and errors of our course are to be corrected, and the soul of the saint maintained in happy fellowship with the living God. “By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.” And surely it is a great mercy, from “the Father of Mercies,” to have His own word brought home and applied to our consciences, in the light and power of the Holy Ghost. It may break down much that we have been seeking satisfaction in, when out of communion, but, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” the same word reveals to us “the riches of His grace,” which not only builds up, but builds up *“in Him.”*

Truth may cover our faces with "shame and confusion," under a deep sense of our shortcomings; but grace is the restorer of paths, and of souls to walk in them. "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This is the only true position for a smitten conscience to take. Here, and here alone, we gain a complete victory over all our sad failures, when in full confession of all our sins and shortcomings, we cast ourselves on the boundless grace of our God, owning the authority of His truth, and submitting ourselves to it, through whatever channel it may come. Every soul thus exercised, will certainly be led by the Spirit, "that other Comforter," from the "word of God which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," up to the "throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

There, by faith, we find the living Saviour, in all the gracious activities of His priestly ministry meeting for us ALL the claims of divine holiness and all the deep necessities of His poor erring people down here, and maintaining our souls, notwithstanding all our failures, without spot or blemish, in the holy presence of our God. This dear render, is the true grace of God wherein we stand. May we never for a moment lose sight of it.

These few prefatory lines have been suggested by reading the following most important paper in MS. SELF-JUDGMENT *is evidently the writer's desire*. The line of truth therein presented led my soul into deep exercise before God. "Thou and thy house," sounded very like "Thou art the man." Sure I am, our hearts need stirring up on this deeply practical subject. The accompanying tract I believe to be fitted, and by the Lord designed, for this end.

That we are to bring our children up *for the Lord*, is plainly the teaching of this word, "But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of *the Lord*." To do this rightly, we must *ourselves* be daily walking, before our children, in the practical exhibition of His character, and counting much on the sympathies and grace of His heart: remembering that He says to us, "Without me ye can do nothing."

It is also our duty to teach our children, in due time, some useful occupation for "necessary uses." "And let ours also learn to maintain good works (or, profess honest trades, margin), for necessary uses." Compare Ephesians 6:4; Titus 3: 14. These are the points which do severely test our practical Christianity. If the first and all-important duty has not been faith fully discharged, before it is needful to press the second, deep trial must come in, and who can tell how long we may have to endure it, before the Lord Himself appears for our help?

May the "God of all grace" lead us all to know more fully, and value more highly, our blessed privileges, and be more faithful to our great responsibilities as His servants in connection with our families at home.

C. H. M.

Preface.

In sending forth a new edition of the following tract, the writer has only to say that twelve months' close and prayerful consideration of the doctrine therein contained, has tended to strengthen his convictions of its truth and importance. He believes the tract to be, in the main, according to the revealed mind of God. That there are imperfections, in detail, he most fully admits; but he would earnestly entreat the Christian reader to look at the tract as a whole, and not to allow his judgement to be warped by attached passages which, it may be, through the infirmity of the writer, are imperfectly expressed; or, through that of the reader, are imperfectly understood. We are all feeble, erring mortals, and, hence, we would need the constant exercise of patience and forbearance; and, although we may not be able, conscientiously, to agree with all the principles contained in a book or tract, we should, nevertheless, hold ourselves in readiness to receive and profit by whatever truth it may set before us. To reject, or treat with indifference, an entire document, because of some clause therein which we cannot understand or adopt, argues a narrow mind, or a warped judgment, either of which is utterly unworthy of one who has been endowed, by grace divine, with "the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (2 Tim. 1:7) We are called to "try the things that differ," and to "hold fast that which is good." But while the reader will need to exercise an impartial

judgement, the writer feels it imperative upon him to remove, so far as in him lies, every stumbling-block out of the way. This he has earnestly sought to do, in the preparation of this edition, by removing or altering expressions which seemed likely to be misunderstood, and which, indeed, have been interpreted in a way which he never intended. He has, also, in a note or two, ventured to offer a few additional suggestions to those who are called of God to the solemn and important ministry of training the young, in which he sincerely desires, according to his measure, to be their fellow-helper.

May the Lord pour out His rich blessing upon all Christian parents, teachers, and guardians, that they may be enabled to discharge their interesting functions, in His presence, through His grace, and to His glory; and that their hearts may be encouraged by seeing abundant fruit amongst those over whom they are placed. Blessed be His name, He has, during the past year or two, given many Christian parents to say, in reference to their household, "He hath been mindful of us; and He will bless us."

May our hearts be filled with praise for the past, and confidence for the future

C. H. M.

"THOU AND THY HOUSE."

There are two houses which occupy a very prominent place on the page of inspiration, and these are, the house of God, and the house of God's servant. God attaches immense importance to His house; and justly so, because it is His. His truth, His honour, His character, His glory, are all involved in the character of His house; and hence it is His desire that the impress of what He is should plainly appear on that which belongs to Him. If God has a house, it assuredly should be a godly house, a holy house, a spiritual house, an elevated house, a pure and heavenly house. It should be all this, not merely in abstract position and principle, but practically and characteristically. Its abstract position is founded upon what God has made it, and where He has set it; but its practical character is

founded upon the actual walk of those who form its constituent parts down here upon this earth.

Now, while many minds may be prepared to enter into the truth and importance of all the principles connected with God's house, there may be but few, comparatively, who are disposed to give a due measure of attention to those connected with the house of God's servant; although, if one were asked the question, What house stands next in order to the house of God? he should, undoubtedly, reply, The house of His servant. However, as there is nothing like bringing the holy authority of God's word to bear upon the conscience, I shall quote a few passages of scripture, which will tend to show, in a clear and forcible point of view, what are God's thoughts about the house of one holding connection with Him.

When the iniquity of the antediluvian world had risen to a head, and the end of all flesh had come before a righteous God, who was about to roll the heavy tide of judgement over the corrupted scene, these sweet words fell upon Noah's ear, "Come thou and *all thy house* into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." (Gen. 7:1) Now, it will be said, that Noah was a type of Christ — the righteous head of a saved family — saved in virtue of their association with him. All this is fully granted: but Noah's typical character does not, in any wise, interfere with the principle which I seek to deduce from this and kindred passages — which principle, I shall here, at the outset, distinctly lay down: it is this — *the house of every servant of God is, in virtue of its connection with him, brought into a position of privilege and consequent responsibility.**

{*The reader will not, I trust, imagine that the necessity for the work of the Holy Ghost. in the regeneration of the children of Christian parents, is denied or interfered with. God forbid. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This is as true of a Christian's child as of every one else. Grace is not hereditary. The sum of what I would press upon Christian parents is, that scripture inseparably links a man with his house, and that the Christian parent is warranted in counting upon God for his children, and responsible to train his children for God. Let any one who denies this interpret Ephesians 6:4}

That this is a principle involving vast practical consequences, we shall, with God's blessing and grace, see, ere we close this paper; but we must first seek to establish its truth from the word of God. Were we merely left to argue from analogy, our thesis might be easily proved; for it could never be supposed, by any mind at all acquainted with the character and ways of God, that He would attach such unspeakable importance to His own house, and attach none at all, or almost none, to that of His servant. This were impossible; it would be utterly unlike God; and God must always act like Himself. But we are not left to analogy on this most important and deeply practical question; and the passage just quoted forms one of the first of a series of direct and positive proofs. In it we find those immensely significant words, "*Thou and thy house,*" inseparably linked together. God did not reveal a salvation for Noah which was of no avail to Noah's house. He never contemplated such a thing.

The same ark that lay open to him lay open to them also. Why? Was it because they had faith? No; but because *he* had, and they were connected with him. God gave him a blank cheque for himself and his family, and it devolved upon him to fill it up by bringing them in along with him. I repeat it, this does not in the least interfere with Noah's typical character. I look at him typically; but I look at him personally also. Nor can I, under any circumstances separate a man from his house. The house of God is brought into blessing and responsibility because of its connection with Him; and the house of the servant of God is brought into blessing and responsibility because of its connection with him. This is our thesis.

The next passage to which I shall refer occurs in the life of Abraham. "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from — Abraham that thing which I do? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgement; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." (Gen. 18:17-19) Here it is not a question of salvation, but of communion with the mind and purposes of God; and let the Christian parent note and solemnly ponder the fact, that when God was seeking out a man to whom He could disclose His secret counsels, He selected one possessing the

simple characteristic of "commanding his children and his household."

This, to a tender conscience, cannot fail to prove a most pungent principle. If there is one point above another in which Christians have failed, it is in this very point of commanding their children and household. They surely have not set God before them in this particular; for, if I look at the entire record of God's dealings with His house, I find them invariably characterised by the exercise of power on the principle of righteousness. He has firmly established and unflinchingly carried out His holy authority. It matters not what the outward aspect or character of His house may be, the essential principle of His dealing with it is immutable. "Thy testimonies are very sure, holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, *for ever*." Now, the servant must ever take his Master as his model; and if God rules His house with power exercised in righteousness, so must I; for if I am, in any one particular of my conduct, different from Him, I must, in that particular, be wrong. This is plain.

But not only does God so rule His house: He likewise loves, approves of, and treats with His marked and honoured confidence, those who do the same. In the above passage, we find Him saying, "I cannot hide my purposes from Abraham." Why? Is it because of his personal grace or faith? No; but simply because "he will command his children and his household." A man who knows how to command his house is worthy of God's confidence. 'This is a stupendous truth, the edge of which should pierce the conscience of many a Christian parent. Many of us, alas! with our eye resting on Genesis 18:19, may well prostrate ourselves before the One who uttered and penned that word, and cry out Failure! failure! shameful, humiliating failure! And why is this? Why have we failed to meet the solemn responsibility devolving upon us in reference to the due command of our households? I believe there is but one reply, viz., because we have failed to realise, by faith, the privilege conferred upon those households, in virtue of their association with us. It is remarkable that our two earliest proofs should present to our view, with such accuracy, the two grand divisions of our question, namely, privilege and responsibility. In Noah's case, the word was, "Thou and thy house" in the place of salvation. In Abraham's case, it was

"Thou and thy house," in the place of moral government. The connection is at once marked and beautiful, and the man who fails in faith to appropriate the privilege will fail in moral power to answer the responsibility. God looks upon a man's house as part of himself, and he cannot, in the smallest degree, whether in principle or practice, disregard the connection without suffering serious damage, and also marring the testimony.

Now, the question for the Christian parent's conscience really is, "*am I counting upon God for my house, and ruling my house for God?*" A solemn question, surely; yet, it is to be feared, very few feel its magnitude and power. And here, perhaps, my reader may feel disposed to demand fuller scripture proof than has yet been adduced, as to our warrant for counting upon God for our houses. I shall, therefore, proceed with the scripture quotations. I give one from the history of Jacob. "And God said to Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel." This would seem to have been addressed to Jacob personally; but he never thought, for a moment, of disconnecting himself from his family, either as to privilege or responsibility; wherefore it is immediately added: "Jacob said unto *his household*, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments; and let us arise, and go up to Bethel." (Gen. 35:1-3) Here we see that a call to Jacob put Jacob's house under responsibility. He was called to go up to God's house, and the question immediately suggested itself to his conscience whether his own house were it a fit condition to respond to such a call.

We now turn to the opening chapters of the book of Exodus, where we find that one of Pharaoh's four objections to the full deliverance and separation of Israel, had specific reference to "the little ones." "And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh; and he said unto them, Go, serve the Lord your God; but who are they that shall go? And Moses said, We will go with our young, and with our old, with our sons, and with our daughters, with our flocks, and with our herds will we go; *for* we must hold a feast unto the Lord." (Ex. 10:8, 9)

The reason why they should take the little ones and all with them, was because they were going to hold a feast unto the Lord.

Nature might say, Oh! what can these little creatures know about a feast unto the Lord? Are you not afraid of making them formalists? The reply of Moses is simple and decisive, "we will go with our young . . . *for* we must hold a feast unto the Lord." They had no idea of seeking one thing for themselves, and another for their children. they dreamed not of Canaan for themselves and Egypt for their children. How could they taste the manna of the wilderness, or the old corn of the land, while their children were feeding upon the leeks, the onions, and the garlic of Egypt? Impossible. Moses and Aaron understood not such acting. They felt that God's call to them was a call to their little ones; and, moreover, were it not fully carried out, they would no sooner have gone forth from Egypt by one road than their children would draw them back by another. That such would have been the case, Satan was but too well aware, and hence appears the reason of the objection, "*Not so, go now, ye that are men.*" This is the very thing which so many professing Christians are doing (or attempting rather to do) at this present time. They profess to go forth themselves to serve the Lord, but their little ones are in Egypt. They profess to have taken "three days' journey into the wilderness;" in other words, they profess to have left the world, they profess to be dead to it, and risen with Christ, as the possessors of a heavenly life, and the heirs and expectants of a heavenly glory; but they leave their little ones behind, in the hands of Pharaoh, or rather of Satan.* They have given up the world for themselves, but they cannot do so for their children. Hence, on Lord's-day, the professed position of strangers and pilgrims is taken; hymns are sung, prayers uttered, and principles taught, which bespeak a people far advanced in the heavenly life, and just on the borders of Canaan, in actual experience (in spirit, of course, they are already there), but alas! on Monday morning, every act, every habit, every pursuit, every object, contradicts all this. The little ones are trained for the world. The scope, aim, object, and entire character of their education is worldly, in the truest and strictest sense of the word. Moses and Aaron would not have understood such actings; and neither indeed should any morally honest heart, or upright mind, understand them. I should have no other principle, portion, or prospect, for my children, but what I have for myself; nor should I train them with a view to any other. If Christ and heavenly glory are sufficient for me, they are sufficient for them likewise; but then the proof that they are really

sufficient for me, should be unequivocal. The tone of the parent's character should be such as to afford not a shadow of a doubt as to the real deep-seated purpose and object of his soul.

{*It will be said that there cannot be any analogy between the actual removal of people from one country to another, and the training of our children. I reply, the analogy only applies in principle. It is perfectly evident that we cannot take our children to heaven, in the sense in which the Israelites took theirs to Canaan. God alone can fit our children for heaven, by implanting in them the life of His own Son; and He alone can bring them to heaven, in His own time. But, then, although we can neither fit our children for, nor bring them to, heaven, we can, nevertheless, by faith, train them for it; and it is not merely our duty (a poor, cold, and unworthy expression) but our high and holy privilege so to do. Hence, therefore, if the principle on which, and the object with which, we train our children are manifestly worldly, we do, virtually, and so far as in us lies, leave them in the world. And, on the other hand, if our principle and object are, unequivocally, heavenly, then do we, so far as in us lies, train them for heaven. This, my beloved reader, is all that is meant, in this tract, by leaving our children in Egypt or taking them to Canaan. We are responsible to train our children, though we cannot convert them; and God will assuredly bless the faithful training of those whom He has graciously given us.}

But what shall my child say to me, if I tell him that I am earnestly seeking Christ and heaven for him while, at the same time, I am educating him for the world? Which will he believe? Which will exert the more powerful practical influence on his heart and life — my words, or my acts. Let conscience reply; and oh! let it be an honest reply, a reply emanating from its deepest depths, a reply which will unanswerably demonstrate that the question is understood in all its pungency and power. I verily believe the time is come for plain dealing with one another's conscience. It must be apparent to every prayerful and attentive observer of the Christianity of the present day, that it wears a most sickly aspect; that the tone is miserably low; and, in a word, that there must be something radically wrong. As to testimony for the Son of God, it is rarely — alas, how rarely! — thought of. Personal salvation seems to form the

very highest object with ninety-nine out of every hundred professing Christians, as if we were left here to be saved; and not, as saved ones, to glorify Christ.

Now, I would affectionately, yet faithfully, suggest the question, whether much of the failure in practical testimony for Christ is not justly traceable to the neglect of the principle involved in the expression, "Thou and thy house." I cannot but think it has much to do with it. One thing is certain, that a quantity of worldliness, confusion, and moral evil has crept in amongst us, through our little ones having been left in Egypt. We see many who, it may be, ten, fifteen, or twenty years ago, took a prominent place in testimony and service, and seemed to have their hearts much in the work, are now gone back lamentably, not having power to keep their own heads above water, much less to help any one else. All this utters a warning voice for Christian parents having rising families; and the utterance is, "BEWARE OF LEAVING YOUR LITTLE ONES IN EGYPT." Many a heart-broken father, at the present moment, is left to weep and groan over his fatal mistake, in reference to his household. He left them in Egypt, in an evil hour, and under a gross delusion, and now when he ventures, it may be in real faithfulness and earnest affection, to drop a word into the ear of those who have grown up around him, they meet it with a deaf ear, and an indifferent heart, while they cling with vigour and decision to that Egypt in which he faithlessly and inconsistently left them. This is a stern fact, the statement of which may send a pang to many a heart; but truth must be told, in order that, though it wounds some, it may prove a salutary warning to others. But I must proceed with the proofs.

{There is, I should say, a very serious error involved in a Christian parent's committing the training of his children to unconverted persons, or even to those whose hearts are not one with him as to separation from the world. It is natural that a child should look up to, and follow the example of, one who has the training and management of him. Now, what can a teacher make of a child, save what he is himself? Whither can he lead him but to where he is himself? What principles can he instil save those which govern his own mind, and form the basis of his own character? Well, if I see a

man governed by worldly principles — if I see plainly, from his whole course and character, that he is an unconverted persons shall I commit to him the training or instruction of my children, or the formation of their characters? It would be the height of folly and inconsistency so to do. As well might a man who desired to make an oval-shaped bullet cast the melted lead into a circular mould. The same principle applies to the reading of books. A book is decidedly a silent teacher and former of the mind and character; and if I am called to look well to the character and principles of the living teacher, I am equally so to look to those of a silent teacher. I am quite convinced that, in reference both to books and teachers, we need to have our consciences stirred and instructed.}

In the book of Numbers “the little ones” are again introduced to our notice. We have just seen that the real purpose of a soul in communion with God was to go up with the little ones out of Egypt. They must be brought forth from thence at all cost; but neither faith nor faithfulness will rest here. We must not only count upon God to bring them up out of Egypt, but also to bring them on into Canaan. Here Israel signally failed. After the return of the spies, the congregation, on hearing their discouraging report, gave utterance to these fatal accents, “Wherefore hath the Lord brought us Unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt?” (Num. 14) This was terrible. It was, in reality, so far as in them lay, verifying Pharaoh's wily prediction in reference to these very little ones, “Look to it now, for evil is before you.” Unbelief always justifies Satan, and makes God a liar, while faith always justifies God, and proves Satan a liar; and as it is invariably true, that according to your faith so shall it be unto you; so we find, on the other hand, that unbelief reaps as it sows. Thus it was with unhappy, because unbelieving, Israel. “As truly as I live, saith the Lord, *as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you.* Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, doubtless ye shall not come into the land concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. *But your little ones,* which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall

know the land which ye have despised. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in the wilderness." (Ver. 28-32) "They limited the Holy One of Israel," as to their little ones. This was a grievous sin, and it has been recorded for our admonition. How constantly does the heart of the Christian parent reason, in reference to the mode of dealing with children, instead of simply taking God's ground about them. It may be said, We cannot make Christians of our children. This is not the question. We are not called to "make" anything of them. This is God's work, and His only; but if He says, "Bring your little ones with you," shall we refuse? I would not make a formalist of my child, and I *could* not make him a real Christian; but if God, in infinite grace, says to me, "I look upon your house as part of yourself, and, in blessing you, I bless it," shall I, in gross unbelief of heart, refuse this blessing, lest I should minister to formalism, or because I cannot impart reality? God forbid. Yea, rather, let me rejoice with deep unfeigned joy, that God has blessed me with a blessing so divinely rich and full that it extends not only to me, but also to all who belong to me; and, seeing that grace has given me the blessing, let faith take it up and appropriate it.

{Very many content themselves with the assurance that, at some time or other, their children will be converted. But this is not taking God's ground with them now. If we have the assurance that they are within the range of God's purpose, why do we not act upon that assurance? If we are waiting to see certain evidences of conversion in them, before we act as Scripture directs, it is plain that we are looking at something besides God's promise. This is not faith. The Christian parent is privileged to look upon his child now, as one to be trained for the Lord. He is bound to take this ground, in faith, and train Him thus, looking to God, in the fullest assurance, for the result. If I wait to see fruits, this is not faith. Besides the question arises, what are my children now? They may be going about like idle, wilful vagrants, bringing sad dishonour on the name and truth of Christ, and yet, all the while, I satisfy myself by saying, I know they will be converted yet. This will never do. My children should be now, a testimony for God; and they can only be this by my taking God's ground with them, and going on with Him about them.}

But, let us remember, that the way to prove our entrance into the blessing is by fulfilling the responsibility. To say that I am counting upon God to bring my children to Canaan, and yet, all the while, educating them for Egypt, is a deadly delusion. My conduct proves my profession to be a lie, and I am not to wonder if, in the righteous dealings of God, I am allowed to be filled with the fruit of my own doings. Conduct will ever prove the reality of our convictions; and, in this, as in everything else, that word of the Lord is most solemnly true, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." We often want to know the doctrine before we do the will, and the consequence is, we are left in the most profound ignorance. Now, to do the will of God in reference to our children, is to treat them as He does, by regarding them as part of ourselves, and training them accordingly. It is not merely by hoping they may ultimately prove to be the children of God, but by regarding them as those who are already brought into a place of privilege, and dealing with them upon this ground in reference to everything. According to the thoughts and acting's of many parents, it would seem as though they regarded their children in the light of heathens, who had no present interest in Christ, or relationship to God at all. This is, assuredly, falling grievously short of the divine mark. Nor is this a question, as it is too often made, of infant or adult baptism. No; it is simply and entirely a question of faith in the power and extent of that peculiarly gracious word, "Thou and thy house" — a word, the force and beauty of which we shall see more and more fully as we proceed.

Throughout the book of Deuteronomy, the children of Israel are, again and again, instructed to set the commandments, the statutes, the judgements, and precepts of the law before their little ones; and these same little ones are contemplated as enquiring into the nature and object of various ordinances and institutions. The reader can easily run through the, various passages.

I now pass on to that truly memorable resolution of Joshua, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve but as for me and my houses we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15) Observe, "Me and my house." He felt it was not sufficient that he himself should be personally pure from all contact with the defilements and abominations of idolatry; he had also to look well to the moral

character and practical condition of his house. Though Joshua were not to worship idols, yet, if his children did so, would he be guiltless? Certainly not. Moreover, the testimony of the truth would have been as effectual marred by the idolatry of Joshua's house as by the idolatry of Joshua himself; and judgement would have been executed accordingly. It is well to see this distinctly. The opening of the first book of Samuel affords most solemn demonstration of the truth of this: "And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; BECAUSE HIS SONS MADE THEMSELVES VILE AND HE RESTRAINED THEM NOT." (1 Sam. 3:11-13)

Here we see that, no matter what the personal character of the servant of God may be, yet, if he fail in the due regulation of his house, God will not hold him guiltless. Eli should have restrained his sons. It was his privilege, as it is ours, to be able to count upon the specific power of God in the subjugation of every element in his house which was calculated to mar the testimony; but he did not do this, and, hence, his terrible end was, that he broke his neck about the house of God, because he had not broken his heart about his own house. Had he waited upon God about his wilful sons — had he acted faithfully — had he discharged the holy responsibilities devolving upon him, the house of God would never have been desecrated, and the ark of God would not have been taken. In a word, had he treated his house as part of himself, and made it what it ought to be, he would not have called down upon himself the heavy judgement of him whose principle it is, never to separate the words, "*Thou and thy house.*"

But, how many parents have since trodden in Eli's footsteps! Through an utterly false idea in reference to the entire basis and character of parental relationship, they have allowed their children, from infancy to boyhood, and from boyhood to manhood, in the unrestrained indulgence of the will. Not having faith to take divine ground, they have failed in moral power to take even the human

ground of making their children respect and obey them, and the issue has presented to view the most fearful picture of lawless extravagance and wild confusion. The highest object for the servant of God to set before him in the management of his house, is the testimony therein afforded to the honour of Him to whose house he himself belongs. This is really the proper ground of action. I must not seek to have my children in order because it would be an annoyance and inconvenience to me to have them otherwise, but because the honour of God is concerned in the godly order of the households of all those who form constituent parts of His house.

Here, however it may be objected that, up to this point, we have been breathing only the atmosphere of Old Testament scripture, and that the principles and proofs have been only thence deduced; now, on the contrary, God's principle of action is grace according to election, and this leads to the calling out of a man, irrespective of all domestic ties and relationships, so that you may find a most godly, devoted, heavenly minded saint at the head of a most ungodly, irregular, worldly family. I maintain, in opposition to this, that the principles of God's moral government are eternal, and, therefore, whether developed in one age or another, they must be the same. He cannot, at one time, teach that a man and his house are one, and commend him for ruling it properly, and, at another time, teach that they are not one, but permit him to rule his house as he pleases. This is impossible.

God's approval or disapproval of things, flows out of what He is in Himself; and, in this matter, in particular, inasmuch as God rules His own house according to what He is Himself, He commands His servants to rule their houses upon the same principle. Has the dispensation of grace or of Christianity come in to upset this lovely moral order? God forbid! Nay, it has rather, if possible, added new traits of beauty thereto. Was the house of a Jew looked at as a part of himself, and shall the house of a Christian be different? Truly not. It would be a sad abuse, and an anomalous application of that heavenly word. Grace, to apply it to the misrule and demoralisation that prevail in the houses of numberless Christians of the present day. Is it grace to allow the will to ride rampant? Is it grace to have all the passions, tempers, whims, and appetites of a corrupt nature

indulged? Alas! call it not grace, lest our souls should lose the real meaning of the word, and begin to imagine it to be what we have called it. Call it by its proper names — a monstrous abuse — a denial of God, not only as the Ruler of His own house, but as the Moral Administrator of the universe — a flagrant contradiction of all the precepts of inspiration on this deeply-important subject.

But let us turn to the New Testament and see if we cannot find in its sacred pages ample proof of our thesis. Does the Holy Ghost, in this grand section of His book, exclude a man's house from the privileges and responsibilities attached thereto in the Old Testament? We shall see, very plainly, that He does no such thing. Let us have the proofs. In Christ's commission to His Apostles, we find these words, "And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house (not merely the master) be worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you again." (Matt. 10:11-13) Again, "And Jesus said unto Zacchaeus, This day is salvation come to *this house*, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. (Luke 19:9, 10) So in the case of Cornelius: "Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words whereby *thou and all thy house* shall be saved." (Acts 11:13, 14) So also to the jailer at Philippi: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and *thou shalt be saved and thy house*." (Acts 16:31) Then we have the practical result: "And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with *all his house*." (Ver. 34) In the same chapter, Lydia says, "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide." (Ver. 15.) "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus." Why? was it because of its actings toward him? No; but "because he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain." (2 Tim. 1:16) "A bishop must be one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (1 Tim 3:4)

In all these scriptures, we find the same great truth maintained, namely, that when God visits a man with blessings and responsibilities, He visits His house with the same. We may range through the entire canon of inspiration, and see this practical principle maintained throughout. It is worthy of God to teach His children this. But alas! brethren, beloved in the Lord, we have grievously failed in this very thing. As serious a blow has been given to the testimony to God's Son, in these last times, by our failure in this particular, as in anything else. True, there have been varied forms of evil — pride, vanity, worldliness, carnality, mixed motives, unhallowed traffic in unfelt truth, attempts to minister out of the presence of God, ungodly display of mere fleshly or intellectual energy, a making use of the precious word of God as a pedestal on which to show off ourselves, miserable figuring before men, the basest assumption of position and affectation of gift, a dishonest putting forth of principles of which our own consciences had never duly felt the sharp edge, a holding up, before others, scales in which we had never weighed ourselves in the presence of God, lamentable deficiency in a well-adjusted conscience, which would have led us to see the manifest inconsistency between the principles professed and the practices adopted.

In all these things, as well as in many others, there has been the deepest and most marked failure — failure which has grieved that Holy Spirit of God whereby we profess to be sealed, and which has brought dishonour upon that holy name by which we are called. The thought of this should put us in the place of sackcloth and ashes, the place of shame and confusion of face, the place of humiliation and confession — put us there, not merely for a passing moment, a day or a week, but until God Himself take us out of it. Alas I brethren, we attend meetings for prayer and humiliation, and no sooner do we rise from our knees, than we prove, by the detestable levity of our spirit and deportment, how marvellously little we have entered into the truth and reality of our position and state before God. This will never do, never reach the deep and far-spread root of our disease. The furrows of conscience must be laid as deep as the ploughshare of divine truth can lay them, for there alone can the seeds of divine truth be sown. God has His implement for ploughing and sowing at the same moment, and that implement is TRUTH. But, then, we

must present to the action of this truth "an honest and good heart," a tender conscience, and an upright mind. Now, if truth acts upon us, in this way, what will it reveal? What is our condition? What aspect do we present in the midst of that very sphere in which the Master has commanded us to "occupy till he come." The answer to these enquiries cannot be gathered from the pages of our books, our tracts, or our periodicals; for truly one has learnt that it is a much easier thing to scribble truth on paper, than to imprint it on the conscience, and exhibit it in the ten thousand details and varied relationships of actual life. Our writings, therefore, are not exactly the thing; though even they, if examined with a calm, chastened, matured, and spiritual judgement, beneath the searching eye of a righteous God, would be found to contain much crude speculation, much unintelligible and profitless matter, if not much positive unsoundness, calling for profound sorrow and humiliation of heart before our God.

But, if our writings are not the thing, what shall we say of our public meetings — meetings for worship, meetings for prayer, meetings for general edification? What of these? Where is their power, unction, freshness, and elevated tone? Is it not well known and painfully felt by hundreds that, with few exceptions, the meetings are dull, flat, heavy, and unprofitable? Why is this? The promise of Christ remains true. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Now, where His presence is realized, there must be power; but He will not vouchsafe His presence unless our hearts are true to Him as the specific object of our assembly. If we have any lower object than Himself before us, we cannot be said to be gathered in His name, and as a consequence, His presence will not be realized. How many there are who attend meetings without having Christ as their direct and primary object. Some go to hear sermons in order that they may be edified. With such, edification, and not Christ, is the object to which they are gathered. It will not do to say it is Christ and edification, for I cannot possibly have two objects before my mind at the same time; hence, if my object be edification, I am not gathered in the name of Christ, and, therefore, I cannot have that clear, distinct sense of His presence which Matthew 18:20 warrants. There may be many pious emotions and aspirations, much religious

feeling, much intellectual interest in, and occupation about, the letter of scripture, or points of truth; but all these may exist without the slightest realisation of Christ's holy and elevating presence.

Some there are who present themselves in the assembly with their hearts big with thoughts about something they are going to do or say. They have a chapter to read, a hymn to give out, some remarks to make, or they intend to pray, and they are watching for a convenient opportunity to push themselves forward and carry out their intention. With such, it is painfully manifest that Christ is not the object, but self and its miserable doings and sayings. Such persons do a vast deal to rob the assembly of its distinctive holiness, power, and elevation. With them it is not Christ presiding, but the flesh figuring, and this, too, under the most awful circumstances. Flesh may act at an Orange lodge, or on a political platform; but, at an assembly of saints, it should be as though it did not exist. I have no right to present myself before the Lord. in the assembly of His people, with my ready-made discourse, my pre-arranged chapter, or selected hymn. I should go thither to sit in His presence and yield myself to His sovereign rule. In a word, I should go in His name; I should have Him alone as my object; I should forget all in comparison with Him. It is not that, having Him as my object, I may not impart or receive edification; quite the reverse: nay, it is only when I set Him before me, that I shall really do either the one or the other. The less is always included in the greater. If I have Christ, I shall surely have edification; but if I seek the latter instead of the former — if I make it my object, I shall lose both.

But, further, how many there are who attend Christian assemblies with unpurged consciences, unjudged hearts, and unmortified flesh! Prayerless and faithless, cold and barren, they take their seats on the benches, without any object at all. They go mechanically, because it is customary to go, but they are not governed by any distinct object. To such, the assembly is the merest religious formality, and they themselves act as a drain upon others. They are actually in the way — a most positive hindrance to general blessing and freshness.

Thus, we see, there are various causes conspiring to sap the springs of life and vigour in the public meetings, and various

reasons for the generally low tone and enfeebled testimony amongst us. To get at the bottom of these, there should be a very deep work of conscience. The enquiry, "Lord, is it I?" should come forth from many a heart. It is perfectly vain to hope for any permanent blessing or restoration until we are all brought thoroughly down into the place of true contrition and self-judgment. If ever we are to start again upon a course of testimony for Christ, we must start from His very feet, having taken our place there in the genuine sense of what we are, and where we have failed and come short. Not one can throw stones at another. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God, and the testimony of God's Son. We have all contributed, according to our mode and measure, to the woefully death-like condition of things around us.

Nor is it a mere church question — a mere difference of judgement as to points of truth, however important in themselves. No, brethren; the world, the flesh, and the devil are at the bottom of our present sorrowful condition and we are each called upon, by every argument which the love of Christ can put before us, to judge ourselves individually — judge ourselves thoroughly in the presence of God; and I am convinced that when this process of judgement has gone on, we shall find that one of the most fruitful sources of weakness and failure will be suggested by the expression, "Thou and thy house; or the Christian at home." I never can form a correct judgement of a man from seeing him or hearing him in a meeting. He may seem a very spiritual person, and teach very beautiful and very true things; but let me go home with him, and there I learn the true state of things. He may speak like an angel from heaven, but if his house be not ruled according to the mind of God, he will not be a real witness for Christ.

Now, under the term "house," three things are included, viz., the house itself, the children, and the servants. All these, whether taken together or separately, should bear the distinct stamp of God. The house of a man of God should be ruled for God, in His name and for His glory. The head of a Christian household is the representative of God. Whether as a father, or as a master, he is, to his household an expression of the power of God; and he is bound to walk in the intelligent recognition and practical development of this fact. It is on

this principle he is to provide for and govern the whole. Hence, If any provide not for his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." By neglecting the sphere over which God has set him, he proves his ignorance of, and unlikeness to, the One whom he is called to represent.

This is plain enough. If I want to know how I am to provide for and rule my house, I have only carefully to study the way in which God provides for and rules His house. This is the true way to learn. Nor is it here a question as to the actual conversion of the constituent parts of the household. Not at all; what I desire to press upon all Christian heads of houses is, that the whole affair, from one end to the other, should distinctly wear the stamp of God's presence and God's authority — that there should be a clear acknowledgement of God on the part of every member. That everything should be so conducted as to elicit the confession, "*God is here;*" and all this not that the head of the house may be praised for his moral influence and judicious management, but simply that God may be glorified. This is not too much to aim at; yea, we should never rest satisfied with anything less. A Christian's house should be but a miniature representation of the house of God, not so much in the actual condition of individual members, as in the moral order and godly arrangement of the whole.

Some may shake their heads and say, This is all very fine, but where will you get it? I only ask, Does the word of God teach a Christian man so to rule his house? If so, woe be to me if I refuse or fail to do so. That there has been the most grievous failure in the management of our houses, every honest conscience must admit; but nothing can be more shameful than for a man calmly and deliberately to sit down satisfied with a disordered condition of his house because he cannot attain to the standard which God has set before him. All I have to do is to follow the line which scripture has laid down, and the blessing must assuredly follow, for God cannot deny Himself. But if I, in unbelief of heart, say I cannot reach the blessing, of course I never shall. Every field of blessing or privilege which God opens before us, demands an energy of faith to enter. Like Canaan of old, to the children of Israel; there it lay, but they had to go thither, for the word was, "every place that thy foot shall

tread upon." Thus it is ever. Faith takes possession of what God gives. We should aim at everything which tends to glorify Him who has made us all we are or ever shall be.

But what can be more dishonouring to God than to see the house of His servant the very reverse of what He would have it? And yet, were we to judge from what constantly meets our view, it would seem as if many Christians thought that their houses had nothing whatever to do with their testimony. Most humbling is it to meet with some who, so far as they are personally concerned, seem nice Christians, but who entirely fail in the management of their houses. They speak of separation from the world, but their houses present the most distressingly worldly appearance. They speak of the world being crucified to them, and of their being crucified to the world, and yet the world is stamped on the very face of their whole establishment. Everything seems designed to minister to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Magnificent pier-glasses to reflect the flesh; sumptuous carpets, sofas, and loungers for the ease of the flesh; glittering chandeliers for the pride and vanity of the flesh. But it may be said, it is taking low ground to descend to such particulars. I reply, the daughters of Zion might just as well have passed the same comment upon the following solemn appeal: "In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, the rings, and nose jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils." (Isa. 3:18-23.)

This was descending to very minute particulars. The same might be said of the following passage from Amos: "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David." (Amos 6:1-5.) The Spirit of God can descend to particulars when the particulars are there to be descended to. But, it may be further

objected, "We must furnish our houses according to our rank in life." Wherever this objection is urged, it reveals very fully the real ground of the objector's soul. That ground is the world, unquestionably. "*Our rank in life!*" What does this really mean, as applied to those who profess to be *dead*? To talk of our rank in life, is to deny the very foundations of Christianity. If we have rank in life, then it follows that we must be alive as men in the flesh — men according to nature, and then the law has its full force against us, "For the law hath dominion over a man so long as he liveth." Hence this rank in life becomes a most serious matter.

But, let me ask, how did we get rank in life? or, in what life is it? If it be in this life, then we are liars whenever we talk of being "crucified with Christ" — "dead with Christ" — "buried with Christ" — "risen with Christ" — "outside the camp with Christ" — "not in the flesh" — "not of the world that fadeth away." All these are so many splendid lies to those possessing, or pretending to, a rank in this life. This is the real truth of the matter; and we must allow the truth to reach and act upon our consciences, that it may influence our lives. What, then, is the only life in which we have a rank? The resurrection life of Christ. Redeeming love has given us a rank in this life, and truly we know that worldly furniture, costly array, ridiculous parade and retinue, have nothing to do with rank in this life. Ah! no; the circumstances which comport with rank in heavenly life are, holiness of character, purity of life, spiritual power, profound humility, separation from everything which directly savours of the flesh and the world. To furnish our persons and our houses with these things, would be furnishing them "according to our rank in life." But in point of fact, this objection does really bring out the true principle at the heart's core. It has already been remarked that the house reveals the moral condition of the man; and this objection confirms that statement. People who talk, or even think, of rank in life, have, "in their hearts, turned back again into Egypt." And what does God say will be the end of such? "I will carry you away beyond Babylon." Yes, it is greatly to be feared, that the great millstone of Revelation 18 presents but too true a picture of the end of much of the sickly, spurious, hollow Christianity of the present day.

It may, however, be further urged that Christianity affords no warrant for filthy and irregular houses. This is most true. I know few things more distressing and dishonouring, than to see the house of a Christian characterised by filth and confusion. Such things could never exist in connection with a really spiritual or even a well-adjusted mind. You may set it down that there must be something radically wrong wherever such things exist. Here, in an especial manner, the house of God presents itself before us as a blessed model. Over the door of that house may be seen inscribed this wholesome motto, "Let all things be done decently, and in order;" and all who love God and His house will desire to carry out this precept at home.

The next point suggested by the expression, "Thou and thy house," is the management of our children. This is a sore and deeply-humbling point to many of us, inasmuch as it discloses a fearful amount of failure. The condition of the children tends, more than anything, to bring out the condition of the parent. The real measure of my surrender of the world, and my subjugation of nature, will constantly be shown in my thoughts about and treatment of my children. I profess to have given up the world, so far as I am personally concerned; but then I have children. Have I given up the world for them as well? Some may say, How can I? They are in nature, and must have the world. Here again the true moral condition of the heart is revealed. The world is really not given up, and my children are made an excuse for grasping again what I professed to have given up, but my heart retained all the while. Are my children part of myself, or are they not? Part of myself, assuredly. Well, then, if I profess to have relinquished the world for myself, and yet am seeking it for them, what is it but the wretched anomaly of a man half in Egypt and half in Canaan? We know where such an one is wholly, and in reality. He is wholly and really in Egypt. Yes, my brethren, here is where we have to judge ourselves. Our children tell a tale. The music master, and the dancing master, are surely not the agents which the Spirit of God would select to help our children along, nor do they, by any means, comport with that high-toned Nazariteship to which we are called. These things prove that Christ is not the chosen and amply sufficient portion of our souls. What is sufficient for me, is sufficient for those who are part of me. And

shall I be so base as to train my children for the devil and the world? Shall I minister to and pamper that in them which I profess to mortify in myself? It is a grievous mistake, and we shall find it so. If my children are in Egypt, I am there myself. If my children savour of Babylon, I savour of it myself: If my children belong to a corrupt worldly religious system, I belong to it myself, in principle. "Thou and thy house" are one; God has made them one; and "what he has joined together, let no man put asunder."

This is a solemn and searching truth, in the light of which we may clearly see the evil of urging our children along a path upon which we profess to have for ever turned our backs, as believing firmly that it terminates in hell fire. We profess to count the world's literature, its honours, its riches, its distinctions, its pleasures, all "dung and dross," yet these very things, which we have declared to be only hindrances to us in our Christian course, and which, as such, we have professed to cast aside, we are diligently setting before our children as things perfectly essential to their progress. In so doing, we entirely forget that things which act as clogs to us, cannot possibly act as helps to our children.* It were infinitely better to throw off the mask, and declare plainly, that we have not given up the world at all; and nothing ever made this thoroughly manifest but our children. The Lord, I believe, in righteous judgement, is taking up the families of brethren, to show in them the actual condition of the testimony amongst us. In many cases, it is well known, that the children of Christians are the wildest and most ungodly in the neighbourhood. Should this be so? Would God accept a testimony at the hand of those who have it so? Would it be thus if we were walking faithfully before God as to our houses? These enquiries must be answered in the negative. If only I get the principle of "Thou and thy house" firmly fixed in my conscience, and intelligently wrought into my mind, I shall see it to be my place to count upon God, and cry to Him, just as much for the testimony of my house as for my own testimony. In reality I cannot separate them. I may attempt it, but it is vain. How often has one felt a pang at hearing such words as these, "Such an one is a very dear, godly, devoted brother; but, oh! he has the boldest and wildest children in the neighbourhood, and his house is a sad mess of misrule and confusion." I ask, what is the testimony of such an one worth, in the

judgement of God? Little indeed. Saved he may be; but is salvation all we want? Is there no testimony to be given? and if there is, what is it? and where is it to be seen? Is it confined to the benches of a meeting room, or is it to be seen in the midst of a man's house? The heart can answer.

{*The Christian parent may ask, What am I to teach my child? The answer is simple. Teach him only such things as will prove useful to him as a servant of Christ. Do not teach him aught which you know would prove a positive source of defilement or weakness to him; should he remain here. We are seldom at a loss to know what kind of food to give our children. We are tolerably well aware of what would prove nourishing and what would prove the reverse. Now, were the instincts of the new nature as true and as energetic in us, as those of the old, we should, I am persuaded, be at as little loss to decide in reference to what we should teach our children. In this, as in everything else, it may be said, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." If we have a deep sense of Christ's glory, and a sincere desire to promote it, we shall not be left in perplexity; but if our body is not "full of light," we may be assured our "eye" is not "single."}

But it may be urged, Our children will crave a little worldly enjoyment, and we must indulge them. We cannot put old heads upon young shoulders. I reply, our own hearts often crave a little of the world likewise. Shall we indulge their craving? No; but judge it. Exactly so. Do the same in reference to your children's craving. If I find my children going out after the world, I should immediately judge and chasten myself before God, crying to Him to enable me to put it down, so that the testimony may not suffer. But I cannot but believe that, if the parent's heart is, from its centre to its circumference, purged of the world, its principles, and its lusts, it will exert a mighty influence upon his whole house. This is what makes this entire question one of such vast magnitude and practical weight. Is my house a just criterion by which to judge of my real condition? I believe the whole teaching of scripture is in favour of an affirmative. This makes the matter peculiarly solemn. How am I walking before my family? Is my whole course and character so unequivocal that all can see that my one supreme object is Christ,

and that I would just as soon, if I could, unlock the portals of hell, and let my children in, as educate them for the world, or seek the world for them?

This I feel to be a startling inquiry; yet it is one which we are bound to follow up to the uttermost. What has called into existence, in many cases, that awful profanity, that disposition to scoff at sacred things, that utter distaste for the scriptures, and for meetings where the scriptures are brought forward, that sceptical and infidel spirit, so sadly apparent in the children of Christian professors? Will any one undertake to say that the parents have nothing to do with this, in the judgement of God? May not much of this be justly traced to the sad incongruity between the professed principles and the actual practices of the parents? I believe it may. Children are shrewd observers. They very soon begin to discover what their parents are really at. They will gather this, too, much more speedily and accurately from their *doings*, than from their *prayings* or their *sayings*; and, although the parents may teach that the world and its ways are bad, and though they may pray that their children may know the Lord, yet, inasmuch as they are educating them for the world, and seeking most industriously to push them on in it, grasping at, and getting in by, every opening, and congratulating themselves when they have succeeded in settling them there, it necessarily follows that the children begin to say in their hearts, "The world is a good place after all, for my parents thank God on getting me a berth in it, and look upon it as a most marked opening of Providence. All that peculiar talk of theirs, therefore, about being dead to the world, and being risen with Christ — the world's being under judgement, and their being strangers and pilgrims therein — all this must be rank nonsense, or else Christians, so called, must be rank deceivers." Will any one say that such reasoning as this has not passed through the mind of many a professor's child? I cannot doubt it. The grace of God, no doubt, is sovereign, and often triumphs over all our errors and failures; but oh! let us think of the testimony, and let us see that our houses are really ordered for God and not for Satan.

{I would, however, desire to remind the children of Christian parents that they are solemnly responsible to hearken to God's holy

word, quite irrespective of the conduct of their parents. God's truth is not affected by the actings of men; and wherever one has heard the testimony of God's love, in the death and resurrection of Christ, he is responsible for the use he makes thereof, even though he should not have seen its sacred influence and power exemplified in the life of his parents. I would press these facts upon the serious attention of all children of Christian parents.}

But it will be said, How are our children to get on? must they not earn their bread? Unquestionably. God formed us for work. The very fact of my having a pair of hands proves that I am not to be idle. But I need not push my son back into that world which I have left, in order to give him employment. The Most High God, the Possessor of heaven and earth, had one Son, His only begotten, the Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; He did not take up any of the learned professions, but was known as "the carpenter." Has this no voice for us? Christ has gone up on high and taken His seat at God's right hand. As thus risen, He is our Head, Representative, and Model; but He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. Are we following His steps in seeking to push our children on in that very world which crucified Him? Surely not: we are adopting the very opposite course; and the end will be accordingly. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." As we sow, in reference to our children, so shall we also reap. If we sow to the flesh and the world, we cannot expect to reap otherwise. But I would not, by any means, be understood to teach that a Christian parent ought to place his child below the level on which the Lord has placed himself I do not believe he would be warranted in so doing. If my calling be a godly one, it may suit my child as well as it suits myself. All cannot be carpenters, it is true; yet one feels that, in an age of progress like the present, where "onward and upward in the world" seems to be the great motto, there is a deep moral for the heart in the fact that the Son of God — the Creator and Sustainer of the universe — was only known amongst men, as "the carpenter." It, assuredly, teaches, that Christians should not be found seeking "great things" for their children.

However, it is not merely in reference to the object set forth in our children's education that we have failed, and so marred the testimony; but also in the matter of keeping them in general subjection to parental authority. On this point, there has been great deficiency amongst Christian parents. The spirit of the present age is that of insubordination. "Disobedient to parents" forms a trait in the apostasy of the last days; and we have specially helped on its development by an entirely false application of the principle of grace, as also by not seeing that there is involved in the parental relationship a principle of power exercised in righteousness, without which our houses must prove to be scenes of lawlessness and wild confusion. It is no grace to pamper an unsanctified will. We mourn over our own lack of a broken will, and yet we are strengthening the will in our children. It is always to my mind a manifest proof of the weakness of parental authority, as well as of ignorance of the way in which the servant of God should rule his house, to hear a parent say to a child, "*Will* you do so and so?" This question, simple as it seems, tends directly to create or minister to the very thing which you ought to put down, by every means in your power, and that is, the exercise of the child's will. Instead, therefore, of asking the child, "Will you do?" just tell him what he is to do, and let there not be in his mind the idea of calling in question your authority. The parent's will should be supreme with a child, because the parent stands in the place of God. All power belongs to God, and He has invested His servant with power, both as a father and a master. If, therefore, the child or the servant resist this power, it is resistance of God.

{“And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” (Eph. 6:4.) There is great danger of provoking our children to wrath by inordinate strictness and arbitrary treatment. We may constantly find ourselves seeking to mould and fashion our children according to our own tastes and peculiarities, rather than to “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” This is a very great mistake, and will surely issue in failure and confusion. We shall gain nothing, in the way of testimony for Christ, by moulding and fashioning nature into the most exquisite shapes. Moreover, it does not require faith to train and cultivate nature; but it does require it to bring up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Some, however, may say that the apostle in the above passage, is speaking of converted children. To this I reply, that there is nothing about conversion in the passage. It is not said, "Bring up your converted children," &c. Were it thus, it would settle the whole question. But it is simply said, "your children," which surely must mean all our children. Now, if I am to bring up all my children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, when am I to commence? Am I to wait till they grow up to be almost men and women? or am I to begin where all right-minded people begin the work, namely, at the beginning? Am I to allow them to run on in nature's folly and wildness, during the most important part of their career, without ever seeking to bring their consciences into the presence of God, as to their solemn responsibilities? Am I to suffer them to spend, in utter thoughtlessness, that period of life in which the elements of their future character are imparted? This would be the most refined cruelty. What should we say to a gardener who would allow the branches of his fruit-trees to assume all sorts of crooked and fantastic shapes ere he thought of commencing a proper system of training? We should, doubtless, pronounce him a fool and a madman. And yet such an one is wise in comparison with a parent who suspends the nurture and admonition of the Lord, until his children have made manifest progress in the nurture and admonition of the enemy.

But, it may be said, We must wait for evidences of conversion. To this I reply, that faith never waits for evidences, but acts on God's word, and the evidences are sure to follow. It is always a manifest proof of infidelity to wait for signs when God gives a command. If Israel had waited for a sign when God said, "Go forward," it would have been plain disobedience; and if the man with the withered hand had waited for some evidence of strength when Christ commanded him to stretch forth his hand, he might have carried his withered hand to the grave with him. So is it with parents. If they wait for signs and evidences before they obey God's word in Ephesians 6:4, they are certainly not walking by faith, but by sight. Besides, if we are to begin at the beginning to train our children, we must evidently begin before they are capable of giving what we might regard as evidences of conversion.

In this, as in everything else, our place is to obey, and leave results with God. The moral condition of the soul may be tested by the command; but where there is the disposition to obey, the power to do so will surely accompany the command, and the fruits of obedience will follow, "in due season, if we faint not."}

Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed." Observe, it is "God and his doctrine." Why? Because it is a question of power. The name of Christ and His doctrine would put the master and servant on a level, as members of one body. In Christ Jesus there is no distinction; but when I go abroad in the world, I encounter God's moral government, which makes one a master and another a servant; and any infringement upon that government will meet with certain judgement. Now it is of immense importance to have a clear understanding of the doctrine of God's moral government. It would settle many a difficulty, and solve many a question. This government is carried on with a righteous decision, which is peculiarly Solemnising. If we look through scripture, in reference to this subject, we shall find that, in every instance in which there has been error or failure, it has inevitably produced its own results. Adam took of the forbidden fruit, and he was instantly thrust forth from the garden, into a world groaning beneath the curse and weight of his sin. Nor was he ever replaced in Paradise. True, grace came in, and gave him a promise of a Deliverer; moreover, it clothed his naked shoulders. Nevertheless, his sin produced its own result. He made a false step, and he never recovered it. Again, Moses, at the waters of Meribah, uttered a hasty word, and immediately a righteous God forbad his entrance into Canaan. In his case, likewise, grace came in, and gave him something better; for it was much better from the top of Pisgah, to inspect the plains of Palestine in company with Jehovah, than to inhabit them in company with Israel. So also in David's case. He committed a sin, and the solemn denunciation was immediately issued, "The sword shall never depart from thy house." In his case, too, grace abounded, and he enjoyed a more profound sense of grace as he ascended the side of Mount Olivet with bare feet and covered head, than he ever had enjoyed amid the splendours of a throne;

nevertheless, his sin produced its own result. He made a false step, and he never recovered it.

Nor is the exemplification of this principle confined merely to Old Testament times. By no means. Look at the case of Barnabas. He gave utterance to the seemingly amiable desire to have the company of his nephew Mark, and, from that moment, he loses his honourable place in the records of the Holy Ghost. He is never heard of afterwards, and his place was supplied with a more wholly devoted heart.* Hence, God's moral government is a most momentous truth. It is such that, as surely as one does wrong, he will reap the fruit of it, no matter who he is, believer or unbeliever, saint or sinner. Grace may forgive the sin, and will, where it is confessed and judged; but, inasmuch as the principles of God's moral government have been interfered with, the offender must be made to feel his mistake. He has missed a step of the wheel, and he shall assuredly feel the consequences. This is a most solemn but specially wholesome truth, the action of which has been sadly clogged by false notions about grace. God never allows His grace to interfere with His moral government. He could not do so, because it would produce confusion, and "God is not the author of confusion."

{*It was nature in Barnabas that led him to wish for the company of one who "departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work." It was amiable nature, yet it was nature, and it triumphed, for he took Mark and sailed to Cyprus, his native country, where, in the freshness of his Christian course, he had sold his property, in order to be a more unshackled follower of Him who had not where to lay His head. (See Acts 4:36-37.) This is no uncommon case. Many set out with a surrender of heart! and nature with their respective claims. The blossom on the tree of Christian profession looks fair, and emits a fragrant perfume; but: alas! it is not followed by the rich and mellow fruit of autumn. The influences of earth and nature gather around the soul, and nip its beauteous blossoms, and all ends in barrenness and disappointment. This is very sad, and is always attended with the very worst moral effect upon the testimony. It is not at all a question of ceasing to be a saved person. Barnabas was a saved person. The influences of Mark and Cyprus could not blot out his name from the Lamb's book of

life, but they did most thoroughly blot out His name from the records of testimony and service here below. And was not this something to be lamented? Is there nought to be deplored or dreaded, save the loss of personal salvation? Most despicable is the selfishness that can think so. For what purpose does the blessed God take so much pains and trouble in maintaining His people here? Is it that they may be saved and made meet for glory? No such thing. Saved they are already, by the accomplished redemption of Christ and, therefore, meet for glory. There is no middle step between justification and glory, for "whom he justified them he also glorified." Why, therefore, does God leave us here? That we may be a testimony for Christ. Were it not for this, we might just as well be taken to heaven the moment of our conversion. May we have grace to understand this point, in all its fullness and practical power!}

It is here there has been So much failure in the management of our houses. We have forgotten the principle of righteous rule which God has set before us, and in the exercise of which He has given us an example. My reader must not confound the principle of God's government with the aspect of His character.* The two things are distinct. The former is righteousness, the latter is grace; but what I here desire to bring out is the fact that there is a principle of righteousness involved in the relationship of father and master, and if this principle receive not its due place in the management of the family, there must be confusion. If I see a strange child doing wrong, I have no divine authority to exercise righteous discipline towards him; but the moment I see my own child doing so, I put him under discipline. Why? because I am his father.

{*The epistles of Peter develop the doctrine of God's moral government. He it is who asks the question, "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" Now, some may find a difficulty in reconciling this enquiry with Paul's statement, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." It were needless to say that the two ideas are in perfect and beautiful harmony. The Lord Jesus Himself, who was the only perfect and unwavering follower of that which is good, who, from first to last, "went about doing good," found, in the end, the cross, the spear, the borrowed grave. The apostle Paul, who, beyond all

other men kept close to the Great Original which was set before him, was called to drink an unusually large cup of privation and persecution. And, to this moment, the more like Christ, and the more devoted to Him any one is, the more privation and persecution he will suffer. Were any one, in true devotedness to Christ and love to souls, to take his stand publicly in some Roman Catholic district, and there preach Christ, his life would be in imminent danger. Do all these facts interfere with Peter's enquiry? By no means. The direct tendency of God's moral government is to protect from injury all who are "followers of that which is good," and to bring down punishment upon all who are the reverse; but it never interferes with the higher path of ardent discipleship, or deprives any one of the privilege and dignity of being as like Christ as he will; "For unto you it is given, on behalf of Christ (*to uper Cristou*), not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him (*uper autou*) having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear in me." (Phil. 1:29, 30.) Here we are taught that it is an actual gift conferred upon us to be allowed to suffer for Christ, and this in the midst of a scene in which, on the ground of God's moral government, it can be said, "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" To recognize and be a subject of God's government is one thing, and to be a follower of a rejected and crucified Christ, is quite another. Even in Peter's epistle, which, as we have remarked, has, as its special theme, the doctrine of God's government, we read, "But, if doing well and suffering for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable to God. For unto this were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps." And again, "If any suffer as a Christian (from being morally like Christ), let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this matter."}

But it may be said, The parental relationship is one of love. True; it is founded in love: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us that we should be called the sons of God." But, although the relationship is founded in love, it is exercised in righteousness, for "The time is come when judgement must begin at the house of God." So also in Hebrews 12, we are taught that the very fact of our being genuine sons, brings us under the righteous discipline of the Father's hand. In John 17, too, the church is

committed to the care of the Holy Father to be kept by Him through His own name.

Now, in every case in which this great truth has been lost sight of by Christian parents, their houses have been thrown into confusion. They have not governed their children; and, as a consequence, their children have, in process of time, governed them, for there will be government somewhere; and if those into whose hands God has put the reins do not hold them properly, they will speedily fall into bad hands; and can there be a more melancholy sight than to see parents governed by their children? I believe, in God's sight, it presents a fearful moral blot, which must bring down His judgement. A parent who lets the reins of government drop from his hands, or who does not hold them steadily, has grievously failed in his high and holy position as the representative of God, and the depository of His power; nor do I believe that any one so failing can ever thoroughly regain his place, or be a proper witness for God in his day and generation. A subject of grace he may be; but then, a subject of grace, and a witness for God, are two widely different things. This will account for the sorrowful condition of many brethren. They have utterly failed to govern their houses, and hence they have lost their true position and moral influence — their energies are paralysed, their mouths closed, their testimony hushed; and if any such do lift the voice in some feeble way, the finger of scorn is instantly pointed at their families, and this cannot but send a blush to the cheek and a pang to the conscience.

Nor do people always take a correct view of this matter, and trace the failure up to its legitimate source. Many are too ready to look upon it as a natural and necessary thing that their children are to grow up wilful and worldly. They say, It is all very well while your children are young, but wait till they grow older, and you will see that you must let them go into the world. Now, I want to know, is it the mind of God that the children of His servants must necessarily grow up wilful and worldly? I never could believe any such thing. Well, then, if it be not His mind that they should so grow up — if He has graciously opened the same path to my house as He has opened to myself — if He has permitted me to select the same portion for my children as I have, through His grace, selected for

myself — if, after all this, my children grow up wilful and worldly, what am I to infer? Why, that I have grievously sinned and failed in my parental relationship and responsibilities — that I have wronged my children and dishonoured the Lord. Shall I go and make a general principle of this, and set it down that all the children of Christians must grow up as mine have? Shall I go and discourage young parents from taking God's ground in reference to their dear children, by setting before them my abominable failure, instead of encouraging them by setting before them God's infallible faithfulness to all who seek Him in the way of His appointment? To act thus would be to follow in the steps of the old prophet of Bethel, who, because he was in the midst of evil himself, sought to drag his brother in also, and had him slain by a lion for disobeying the word of the Lord.

But the sum of the matter is this, the wilfulness of my children reveals the wilfulness of my own heart, and a righteous God is using them to chasten me, because I have not chastened myself. This is a peculiarly solemn view of the case, and one that calls for deep searching of heart. To save myself trouble, I have let things take their course in my family, and now my children have grown up around me to be thorns in my side, because I trained them not for God. This is the history of thousands. We should ever bear in mind that our children, as well as ourselves, should be “set for the defence and confirmation of the gospel.” I feel persuaded that, could we only be led to regard our houses as a testimony for God, it would produce an immense reformation in our mode of ruling them. We should then seek a high tone of moral order, not that we might be spared any trouble or vexation, but rather that the testimony might not suffer through any confusion in our families. But let us not forget that, in order to subdue nature in our children, we must subdue it in ourselves. We can never subdue nature by nature. It is only as we have crushed it in ourselves, that we are in a position to crush it in our children. Moreover, there must be the clearest understanding and the fullest harmony between the father and mother. Their voice, their will, their authority, their influence, should be essentially one — one in the strictest sense of that word. Being themselves “no more twain, but one flesh,” they should ever appear before their children in the beauty and power of that oneness. In order to this,

they must wait much upon God together — they must be much in His presence, opening up all their hearts, and telling out all their need. Christians do frequently injure one another in this respect. It sometimes happens that one partner really desires to give up the world and subdue nature to an extent for which the other is not prepared, and this produces sad results. It sometimes leads to reserve, to shuffling, to management and generalship, to positive antagonism in the views and principles of husband and wife, so that they cannot really be said to be joined in the Lord. The effect of all this upon the children as they grow up is pernicious beyond all conception; and the influence which it exerts in deranging the entire house is quite incalculable. What the father commands the mother remits; what the father builds up the mother pulls down. Sometimes the father is represented as stern, severe, arbitrary, and exacting. The maternal influence acts outside, and independent of, the paternal; sometimes even it sets it aside altogether, so that the father's position becomes wretched in the extreme, and the whole family presents a most demoralised and ungodly appearance.* This is terrible. Children never could be properly trained under such circumstance; and as to testimony for Christ, the bare thought of it is monstrous. Wherever such a state of things prevails, there should be the deepest sorrow of heart before the Lord on account of it. His mercy is exhaustless, and His tender compassions fail not; and surely we may hope that, where there is true contrition and confession, God will graciously come in with healing and restoration. One thing is certain, that we should not go on content to have things so; therefore, let the one who feels the sorrow of heart cry mightily to God, day and night — cry to Him on the ground of His own truth and name, which are blasphemed by such things; and, be assured, He will hear and answer.

{*Nothing can be more melancholy than to hear a mother say to a child, "We must not let your father know anything about this." Where such a course of reserve and double dealing is adopted there must be something radically and awfully wrong, and it is a moral impossibility that anything like godly order can prevail, or right discipline be carried out. Either the father must, by inordinate severity or unwarrantable strictness, be "provoking his children to wrath," or the mother must be pampering the child's will at the

expense of the father's character and authority. In either case there is an effectual barrier to the testimony, and the children suffer grievous injury. Hence, Christian parents should see well to it that they always appear before their children, and also before their servants, in the power of that unity which flows from their being perfectly joined together in the Lord. If, unhappily, any shade of difference should arise in reference to the details of domestic government, let it be made a matter of private conference, prayer, and self-judgment in the presence of God; but never let the subjects of government see such a manifest proof of moral weakness, for it will surely cause them to despise the government. }

But let all be viewed in the light of testimony for God's Son. It is to further this we are left here. We are surely not left here merely to bring up families. We are left here to bring them up for God, with God, by God, and before God. To do all this, we must be much in His presence. A Christian parent should take great care not to punish his children merely to gratify his whims and tempers. He is to represent God in the midst of his family. This, when properly understood, will regulate everything. He is God's steward, likewise, and, in order rightly and intelligently to discharge the functions of his stewardship, he must have frequent, yea, unbroken, intercourse with his Master. He must be constantly betaking himself to His feet, to know what he is to do, and how he is to do it. This will make everything easy and happy. It is often the desire of one's heart to get an abstract rule for this, that, and the other thing, in the details of family arrangement. One may ask what sort of punishments, what sort of rewards, what sort of amusements, should a Christian parent adopt. Actual punishment will, I believe, rarely be called for, if the divine principle of government be carried out from the earliest date; and as to rewards, it would be better to put them in the light of expressions of love and approval. A child must be obedient — unqualifiedly and unhesitatingly obedient — not to get a reward, which is apt to feed emulation, a fruit of the flesh; but because God would have him so; and then, of course, it is quite allowable for the parent to express his approval in the shape of some little present. As to amusement, let it always, if possible, assume the character of some useful occupation. This is most salutary. It is a bad thing to cherish the thought in the mind of a child, that painted toys and

gilded baubles minister pleasure. With very young children, I have constantly found, that they derived more real, and certainly much more simple, pleasure from a piece of stick or paper, made out by themselves, than from the most expensive toy. Finally, let us, in all things, whether punishment, reward, or amusement, keep the eye on Christ, and earnestly seek the subjugation of the flesh in every shape and form. So shall our houses be a testimony for God, and all who enter them be constrained to say, "God is here."

As to the management of servants, in a Christian household, the principle is equally simple. The master, as the head of the house, is the expression of the power of God, and, as such, he must insist upon subjection and obedience. It is not a question of the Christianity of the servants, but simply of the order which should ever be maintained in a Christian household. Here, too, we must be on our guard against the mere indulgence of our own arbitrary temper. We have to remember that we have a Master in heaven, who has taught us to "give unto our servants that which is just and equal." If only we set the Lord before us, from day to day, and seek to exhibit Him in all our dealings with our servants, we shall be kept from error on every side.

I must now close. I have not written, the Lord knows, to wound any one. I feel the truth, importance, and deep solemnity of the points here put forward, and, also, my own lack of ability to bring them out with sufficient distinctness and power. However, I look to God to make them influential, and where He works, the very weakest agency will answer His end. To Him I now commend these pages, which have, I trust, been begun, continued, and ended in His holy presence. The thought has comforted me not a little that, at the very moment in which it was laid on my conscience to prepare this paper, a number of beloved brethren were actually assembled for humiliation, confession, and prayer, in immediate connection with the testimony of God's Son in these last days. I doubt not that a very leading point of confession has been failure in the government of the house; and if these pages should be used of God's Spirit to produce, even in one conscience, a deeper sense of this failure, and in one heart, a more earnest desire to meet the failure, in God's own way, I shall rejoice, and feel I have not written in vain.

May God Almighty, in His great grace, produce, by His Holy Spirit, in the hearts of all His beloved saints, a more ardent purpose of soul to raise, in this closing hour, a fuller, brighter, more vigorous and decided testimony for Christ, that so, ere the shout of the archangel and the trump of God are heard in the air, there may be a people prepared to meet and welcome the heavenly Bridegroom.

C. H. M.

Acts 20

"Publicly and from house to house"

The sentence which we have just penned is taken from Paul's farewell address to the elders of Ephesus, as recorded in Acts 20. It is a very suggestive sentence, and sets forth in a most forcible manner the intimate connection between the work of the teacher and that of the pastor. "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you," says the blessed apostle, "but have showed you and have taught you publicly, and from house to house. "

Paul was not only an apostle, he combined, in a striking way, the evangelist, the pastor and the teacher. The two last named are closely connected, as we see from Eph. 4: 11. It is important that this connection be understood and maintained. The teacher unfolds truth; the pastor applies it. The teacher enlightens the understanding; the pastor looks to the state of the heart. The teacher supplies the spiritual nutriment; the pastor sees to the use that is made of it. The teacher occupies himself more with the Word; the pastor looks after the soul. The teacher's work is for the most part public; the pastor's work, chiefly in private. When combined in one person, the teaching faculty imparts immense moral power to the pastor, and the pastoral element imparts affectionate tenderness to the teacher.

The reader must not confound a pastor with an elder or bishop. The two are quite distinct. Elder and bishop are frequently interchangeable, but pastor is never confounded with either. Elder is a local charge; pastor is a gift. We have nothing about elders or bishops in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, or Ephesians 4, though in these Scriptures we have the fullest unfolding of the subject of gifts. We must carefully distinguish between gift and local charge. Elders or bishops are for rule and oversight. Teachers and pastors are to feed and edify. An elder may be a teacher or pastor, but he must keep the two things distinct. They rest upon a different footing altogether, and are never to be confounded.

However, our object in this brief article is not to write a treatise on ministry, or to dwell elaborately upon the difference

between spiritual gift and local charge, but simply to offer to our readers a few words on the immense importance of the pastoral gift in the Church of God, in order that they may be stirred up to earnest prayer to the great Head of the Church, that He may graciously be pleased to shed forth this precious gift more abundantly in our midst. We are not straitened in Him. The treasury of spiritual life is not exhausted; and our Lord Christ loves His Church, and delights to nourish and cherish His body, and to *supply* its every need out of His own infinite fullness.

That there is urgent need of pastoral care throughout the Church of God, few can deny who know what pastorship is, and who are at all acquainted with the true condition of the Church. How rare is the true spiritual pastor! It is easy to take the name, and assume the office; but, in point of fact, pastorship is neither a name nor an office, but a living reality — a divinely-imparted gift — something communicated by the Head of the Church for the growth and blessing of His members. A true pastor is a man who is not only possessed of a real spiritual gift, but also animated by the very affections of the heart of Christ toward every lamb and sheep of His blood-bought flock.

Yes, we repeat it, "*every* lamb and sheep." A true pastor is a pastor all over the world. He is one who has a heart, a message, a ministry, for every member of the body of Christ. Not so the elder or bishop. His is a local charge, confined to the locality in which such charge is entrusted. But the pastor's range is the whole Church of God, as the evangelist's range is the wide, wide world. In New York, in London, in Paris, or Canton, a pastor is a pastor, and he has his blessed work everywhere. To imagine a pastor, confined to a certain congregation to which he is expected to discharge the functions of evangelist, teacher, elder, or bishop, is something altogether foreign to the teaching of the New Testament.

But how few real pastors are to be found in our midst! How rare is the pastor's gift, the pastor's heart! Where shall we find those who duly combine the two grand and important elements contained in the heading of this paper — "Publicly and from house to house"? A man may, perhaps, give us a brief address on the Lord's day, or a lecture on some week-day; but where is the "house to house" side of

the question? Where is the close, earnest, diligent looking after individual souls day by day? Very often it happens that the public teaching shoots completely over the head; it is the house to house teaching that is sure to come home to the heart. How frequently it happens that something uttered in public is entirely misunderstood and misapplied, until the loving pastoral visit during the week supplies the true meaning and just application.

Nor is this all. How much there is in a pastor's range that the public teacher never can compass! No doubt public teaching is most important; would that we had many times more of it than we have. The teacher's work is invaluable, and when mellowed by the deep and tender affection of a pastor's heart, can go a great way indeed in meeting the soul's manifold necessities. But the loving pastor who earnestly, prayerfully, and faithfully goes from house to house, can get at the deep exercises of the soul, the sorrows of the heart, the puzzling questions of the mind, the grave difficulties of the conscience. He can enter, in the profound sympathy of an affectionate heart, into the thousand little circumstances and sorrows of the path. He can kneel down with the tried, the tempted, the crushed, and the sorrowing one before the mercy-seat, and they can pour out their hearts together, and draw down sweet consolation from the God of all grace and the Father of mercies.

The public teacher cannot do this. No doubt, if, as we have said, he has something of the pastoral element in him, he can anticipate in his public address a great deal of the soul's private exercises, sorrows, and difficulties. But he cannot fully meet the soul's individual need. This is the pastor's holy work. It seems to us that a pastor is to the soul what a doctor is to the body. He must understand disease and medicine. He must be able to tell what is the matter. He must be able to discern the spiritual condition to apply the true remedy. Ah, how few are these pastors! It is one thing to take the title and another thing to do the work.

Christian reader, we earnestly entreat you to join us in fervent believing prayer to God to raise up true pastors amongst us. We are in sad need of them. The sheep of Christ are not fed and cared for. We are occupied so much with our own affairs, that we have not time to look after the beloved flock of Christ. And even on these

occasions, when too Lord's people assemble in public, how little there is for their precious souls! What long barren pauses and silence of poverty! What aimless hymns and prayers we hear! How little leading of the flock through the green pastures of Holy Scripture, and by the still waters of divine love! And then, all through the week, few loving pastoral calls, few tender solicitous inquiries after soul or body. There seems to be no time. Every moment is swallowed up in the business of providing for ourselves and our families. It is, alas! the old sad story; "All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's."

How different it was with the blessed apostle. He found time to make tents, and also to "teach publicly and from house to house." He was not only the earnest evangelist, ranging over continents and planting churches, but he was also the loving pastor, the tender nurse the skilful spiritual physician. He had a heart for Christ and for His body, the Church, and for every member of that body. Here lies the real secret of the matter. It is wonderful what a loving heart can accomplish. If I really love the Church, I shall desire its blessing and progress, and seek to promote these according to my ability.

May the Lord raise up in the midst of His people pastors and teachers after His own heart — men filled with His Spirit, and animated by a genuine love for His Church — men competent and ready to teach — "*publicly and from house to house.* "

Acts 22:14

“behold, *he prayeth.*” (Acts 22:14)

Prayer, in its proper place.

There is a strong tendency in the human mind to take a one-sided view of things. This should be carefully guarded against. It would ever be our wisdom to view things as God presents them to us, in His holy word. We should put things where He puts them, and leave them there. Were this more faithfully attended to, the truth would be much more clearly understood, and souls much better instructed. There is a divine place for everything, and every thing should be in a divine place. We should avoid putting right things in wrong places, just as carefully as we would avoid setting them aside altogether. The one may do as much damage as the other. Let any divine institution be taken out of its divinely-appointed place, and it must necessarily fail of its divinely-appointed end. This, I imagine, will hardly be questioned by any enlightened or well-regulated mind. It will be admitted, on all hands, to be wrong to put things in any place but just where God intended them to be.

Now, in proportion to the importance of a right thing is the importance of having it in its right place. This remark holds good, in an especial manner, with respect to the hallowed and most precious exercise of prayer. It is hard to imagine how any one, with the word of God in his hand, could presume to detract from the value of prayer. It is one of the very highest functions, and most important privileges of the Christian life. No sooner has the new nature been communicated, by the Holy Ghost, through faith in Christ, than it expresses itself in the sweet accents of prayer.

Prayer is the earnest breathing of the new man, drawn forth by the operation of the Holy Ghost, who dwells in all true believers. Hence, to find any one praying, is to find him manifesting divine life in one of its most touching and beautiful characteristics, namely dependence. There may be a vast amount of ignorance displayed in the prayer, both in its character and object; but the *spirit* of prayer is, unquestionably, divine. A child may ask for a great many foolish

things; but, clearly, he could not ask for anything, if he had not life. The ability and desire to ask are the infallible proofs of life. No sooner had Saul of Tarsus passed from death unto life, than the Lord says of him, "*Behold, he prayeth!*" (Acts 9) Doubtless, he had, as "a Pharisee of the Pharisees," said many "long prayers;" but, not until he "saw that Just One, and heard the voice of his mouth," could it be said of him, "*behold, he prayeth.*" (Acts 22:14)

Saying prayers, and praying, are two totally different things. A self-righteous Pharisee may excel in the former; none but a converted soul can enjoy the latter. The spirit of prayer is the spirit of the new man; the language of prayer is the distinct utterance of the new life. The moment a spiritual babe is born, into the new creation, it sends up a cry of helpless dependence toward the source of its birth. Who would dare to hush that cry? Let the babe be gently satisfied, not rudely silenced. The very cry which ignorance would seek to stifle, falls like sweetest music on a parent's ear. It is the proof of life. It evidences the existence of a new object around which the affections of a parent's heart may entwine themselves.

All this is plain enough. It commends itself to every renewed mind. The man who could think of hushing the accents of prayer must be wholly ignorant of the precious and beautiful mysteries of the new creation. The understanding of the praying one may need to be instructed; but oh! let not the spirit of prayer be quenched. Let the beams of divine revelation, in all their emancipating power, shine in upon the struggling conscience, but let not the breathings of the new life be interrupted.

The newly-converted soul may be in great darkness. The chilling mists of legalism may enwrap his spirit. He may not, as yet, be able to rest fully in Christ, and His accomplished work. His awakened conscience may not, as yet, have found its peace-giving answer in the precious blood of Jesus. Doubts and fears may sorely beset him. He may not know about the important doctrine of the two natures, and the continual conflict between them. He is bowed down beneath the humiliating sense of indwelling sin and sees not, as yet, the ample provision which redeeming love has made for that very thing, in the sacrifice and priesthood — the blood and advocacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. The joyous emotions which attended upon the

first moments of his conversion have passed away. The beams of the Sun of Righteousness are hidden by the heavy clouds which arise from within and around him. It is not with him as in days past. He marvels at the sad change which has come over him and well nigh doubts if he were ever converted at all.

Need we wonder, though such an one should cry mightily to God? Yea, the wonder would be if he could do aught else. How, then, should we treat him? Should we teach him not to pray? God forbid. This would be to do the work of Satan, who, assuredly, hates prayer most cordially. To drop a syllable which could even be understood as making little of an exercise so entirely divine, would be to fly in the face of the entire book of God, to deny the very example of Christ, and hinder the utterance of the Holy Ghost in the new-born soul.

The Old and New Testament Scriptures literally teem with exhortations and encouragements to pray. To quote the passages, would fill a volume. The blessed Master Himself has left His people an example as to the unceasing exercise of a spirit of prayer. He both prayed Himself and taught His disciples to pray. The same is true of the Holy Ghost in the apostles. (See the following passages: Luke 3:21; Luke 6:12; Luke 9:28, 29; Luke 11:1-13; Luke 18:1-8; Acts 1:14; Acts 4:31; Rom. 12:12; Rom. 15:30; Eph 6:18; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2-4; 1 Thess. 5:17; 2 Thess. 3:1, 2; 1 Tim. 2:1-8; Heb. 13:18; James 5:14, 15.)

If my reader will look out and ponder the foregoing passages, he will have a just view of the place which prayer occupies in the Christian economy. He will see that disciples are exhorted to pray; and he will note that it is only disciples who are exhorted. He will see that prayer is a grand prominent exercise of the house of God; and he will note that he must be in the house of God to engage in it. He will see that prayer is the undoubted utterance of the new life; and he will note that the life must be there to utter itself. He will see that prayer is an important part of the Christian's privilege; and he will note that it enters, in no wise, into the foundation of the Christian's peace.

Thus, he will be able to put prayer in its proper place; and how important it is that it should be so put How important it is that the anxious enquirer should see that the deep and solid foundations of his present and everlasting peace were laid in the work of the cross, eighteen centuries ago! How important that the blood of Jesus should stand out before the soul in clear and bold relief, and in its own solitary grandeur, as the alone foundation of the sinner's rest! A soul may be earnestly seeking and crying for salvation, and, all the while, be ignorant of the great fact that it is ready to his hand—that he is actually commanded to accept a free, full, present, personal, and eternal salvation—that Christ has done all—that a brimming cup of salvation is set before him, which faith has only to take and drink for its everlasting satisfaction. The gospel of God's free grace points to the rent veil — the empty tomb — the occupied throne above. (Matt. 28; Heb. 1 and Heb. 10) What do these things declare? What voice do they utter in the anxious sinner's ear? Salvation! salvation! salvation! The rent veil, the empty tomb, the occupied throne, do all cry out, salvation!

Reader, do you really want salvation? Then why not take it, as God's free gift? Are you looking to your own heart or to Christ's finished work for salvation? Is it needful, think you, to wait another moment in order to know that you are fully and for ever saved? If so then Christ's work was not finished; the ransom was not paid; something yet remains to be done. But Christ said, "*It is finished,*" and God says, "I have found a ransom." (Job 33; John 19) If you have to do, say, or think aught, to complete the work of salvation, then Christ would not be a whole, a perfect Saviour.

And, further, it would be a plain denial of Rom. 4:5, which says, "To him that *worketh not*, but believeth on him that *justifieth the ungodly*, his faith is counted for righteousness." Take heed that you are not mixing up your poor prayers with the glorious work of redemption, completed by the Lamb of God on the cross. Prayer is most precious; but, remember, "without faith it is impossible to please God;" (Heb. 11) and if you have faith, you have Christ, and having Christ, you have ALL. If you say you are crying for mercy, the word of God points you to mercy's copious stream flowing from the finished sacrifice. You have all your anxious heart can want in

Jesus, and He is God's free gift to you just as you are, where you are, *now*. If you had *to be* aught else but what you are, or *to go* anywhere else from where you are, then salvation would not be "by grace, through faith." (Eph. 2) If you are anxious to get salvation, and God desires you should have it, why need you be another moment without it? It is all ready. Christ died and rose again. The Holy Ghost testifies. The word is plain. "*Only believe.*"

Oh! may the Spirit of God lead anxious souls to find settled repose in Jesus. May He lead them to look away from all beside, straight to an all-sufficient atonement. May He give clearness of apprehension, and simplicity of faith to all; and may He especially endow all who stand up to teach and preach with ability, "rightly to divide the word of truth," so that they may not apply to the unregenerate sinner, or the anxious enquirer, such passages of scripture as refer only to the established believer. Very serious damage is done both to the truth of God, and to the souls of men, by an unskilful division and application of the word.

There must be spiritual life, before there can be spiritual action; and the *only* way to get spiritual life is by *believing* on the name of the Son of God.* (John 1:12, 13; John 3:14-16, 36; John 5:24; John 20:31.) If, therefore, the precepts of God's word be applied to persons who have not spiritual life to act upon them, confusion must be the result. The precious privileges of the Christian are formed into a heavy yoke for the unconverted. A strange system of half-law, half-gospel, is propounded, whereby true Christianity is robbed of its characteristic glory, and the souls of men are plunged in mist and perplexity. There is urgent need, just now, for clearness in setting forth the true ground of a sinner's peace. Hundreds and thousands of souls are being convicted of sin. They have gotten life, but not liberty. They are quickened, but not yet emancipated. They want a full, clear, unclouded gospel. The claims of a divinely awakened conscience can only be answered by the blood of the cross. If anything, no matter what, be added to the finished work of Christ, the soul must be filled with doubt and darkness.

{*When the gaoler at Philippi enquired of Paul and Silas "What must I do to be saved?" they, simply, replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thine house." (Acts 16:30,

31) It would, surely, be well if this method of dealing with an anxious inquirer were more faithfully adopted.}

May God grant us to know, more fully, the true place and value of simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and of earnest prayer in the Holy Ghost.

C. H. M.