

Light and Truth

By



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Light and Truth: Bible Thoughts and Themes

III.

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I.**The Christ Of God And
Christian History.**

"All that Jesus began both to do and teach."—

Acts 1:1

Our Bible is of God; yet it is also of man. It is both divine and human. It comes to us from God's Spirit; it comes also from man's spirit. It is written in the language of earth, yet its words are the words of Him "who speaketh from heaven." Natural, yet supernatural; simple, yet profound; undogmatical, yet authoritative; very like a common book, yet very unlike also; dealing often with seeming incredibilities and contradictions, yet never assuming any need for apology, or explanation, or retractation; a book for humanity at large, yet minutely special in its fitnesses for every case of every soul; carrying throughout its pages, from first to last, one unchanging estimate of sin as an infinite evil, yet always bringing out God's gracious mind toward the sinner, even in his condemnation of the guilt; such is the great Book with which man has to do, which man has to study, out of which man has to gather wisdom for eternity, one of the many volumes of that divine library which is one day to be thrown open to us, when that which is perfect is come, and that which is in part shall be done away.

It is just a common physician, a Gentile too, who writes this book of the "Acts of the Apostles"; and he writes it as a part of human history,— the history of his period. He indulges in no lofty language when relating the wonders on which he so

briefly touches. All is calm. The historian does justice to his history, yet he does not embellish. He tells his story well, but in few words; he neither colors nor elaborates. He makes his readers feel how thoroughly they can trust his narrative. It is man speaking to his fellowmen; yet it is heaven speaking to earth.

The names are human names, whether of persons or places; mostly Gentile, yet with these are associated divine words and scenes; everywhere we see human faces and hear human voices, yet also everywhere do we see the face and hear the voice of the Son of God. It is not the orator, or the philosopher, or the metaphysician we meet with in these chapters, it is "the ambassador for Christ"; his are the footsteps that we hear in every city, whether Corinth, or Athens, or Ephesus, or Antioch, or Rome.

All is unspeakably earnest. There is no jesting nor trifling anywhere. The reader may weep, but cannot smile. God is too near, and the cross too vivid, and the great throne too bright.

How so much of the divine and so much of the human can be woven together we do not try to say. The reader, if he be taught of God, will soon make discoveries for himself.

The book is very unlike what we should have expected. It is the preface to, or rather the first chapter of, church history, yet it bears not the slightest resemblance to any other church history which has yet been produced.

It contains everywhere the facts which constitute the gospel; and it proclaims also that gospel itself,—the glad tidings of God's free love to the chief of sinners.

The "former treatise" is the Gospel of Luke. It was written to this same Theophilus, a friend of the evangelist, loved and honoured. He who wrote it knew well the things which he was recording "from the very first"; and he wrote it to give increased certainty in regard to the things which Theophilus had already been instructed in (Luke 1:3, 4).

This first verse of the "Acts" carries us back to this former treatise, and gives us in few words its title or contents,—"a treatise of all that Jesus began both to do and teach." Wonderful and precious record! A "gospel" in very deed, filled with glad tidings from first to last; every chapter containing joy for the sons of men, by revealing to them the character, and preserving the deeds and words, of Him who did all things well, and who spake as never man spake. Our business, as readers of that gospel, is simply to extract the peace, and to listen to the love which it contains. Its burden is glory to God, peace on earth, goodwill to men. In it peculiarly shines the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

There seems almost a contradiction between this first verse of the Acts and the last of the fourth evangelist. John (21:25) tells us that the world could not contain the books which should be written concerning the sayings and doings of Jesus; whereas Luke speaks of noticing all things. But Luke evidently intends to tell us that he is giving us a specimen of all things, an accurate summary of the whole life of the Son of God on earth,—his words of grace and truth,—his deeds of compassion, and love, and power.

The expression, "all that Jesus began to do and teach," is a peculiar one, and seems to imply two things: first, that the

gospel was to be a record of the doings and sayings of Jesus from the very beginning, which it pre-eminently is, recording the previous prophecy, the angelic annunciation, the conception and birth of Jesus. Of the human side of Jesus, the Christ of God, Luke especially records the beginning. And all, from the very first, is grace and truth. The love of Father, Son, and Spirit is there. God is love. The grace of the Son of God to the sinner shines out gloriously in every page, in the doing and in the teaching. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." The record is part of human history; it relates to things on earth, not in heaven; and into that fragment of earthly story, God has woven the wonders of his surpassing love. But the expression "began" means, secondly, that this record is the beginning or fountain-head of all subsequent Christian history; that out of these doings and teachings have flowed all things connected with the church of God down to the last. It is a fountal record; a root; a wellspring; the source of a river which is still flowing amongst us, and refreshing the sons of men.

The "doings" of Christ here referred to are contained in the Gospels; the "teachings" of Christ are also contained in these. But the immediate developments of these are given us in subsequent scriptures; the development of the "doings" in the "Acts," that of the "teachings" in the epistles. In other words, the original source divided itself into two streams, and is still flowing in these. The Acts are the specimen of true church history as to doing; and the epistles the specimens of true church history as to doctrine. All then that is true and good in church history, throughout the ages, we are to connect with the life of Christ; and all that is evil, we are to connect with the evil one and his agencies,— adversaries of Christ Himself while here, and adversaries of His church in all after days, even till the day when the great prince of the power of the

air, the god of this world, is bound, and cast into the bottomless pit.

I. We connect all subsequent testimony with Christ's doings and sayings. All the testimony delivered by Christian witnesses goes back to Christ's life; and is as it were prolongation of His own voice, a continuation of His own doings; not to the early ages merely, nor even to the first age, but straight back to the very days of Christ when here. It is of His life and death that the witnesses speak; and it is that life and death that contain the power which their testimony embodies. The Holy Ghost takes these things and makes use of them. It is the belief of His testimony to the words and ways of Christ that saves and blesses the soul. It is no gospel of Christ that does not take us back to the three and thirty years of His sojourn here. In preaching, we stand at Bethlehem, or at Capernaum, or at Jerusalem. We seek to bring every hearer of our message into direct contact with these places and their events. The power of our testimony lies in the directness of its communication with the manger and the cross; as well as with all between. We set aside the eighteen centuries that have intervened, and (overleaping the ages) we go back to the great fountainhead, as if we were living in the day of Christ, and moving among His miracles and gracious words. Our testimony is of "all that Jesus began to do and to teach." It is Jesus Himself that is working His miracles before our very eyes, and speaking to us still.

II. We connect each individual conversion with Christ's sayings and doings. The soul, in the moment of its mighty change, is brought into direct communication with these; it is transported back over eighteen centuries, and feels itself in the very presence of Jesus of Nazareth,— speaking, working, loving, blessing, saving, pardoning, comforting. The sinner

looks in the face of Jesus, and Jesus looks in his; the link is knit; the intercourse has begun; and the world in which the saved man forever after lives is the world of Christ's sayings and doings, the world of which Christ is the center, the fullness, the glory, and the all. Virtue goes out from these sayings and doings of this personal Christ to lay hold on the sinner. And this is the beginning of his eternal history! Up till the moment in which he came into living contact with what Jesus was and did and taught, he had no true history; but from the moment of the vital contact his endless history began.

III. We connect each planting of a church with what Jesus did and taught. We see this very clearly in Luke's story of the planting of Christianity. Trace up the history of a church,—at Jerusalem, or Samaria, or Antioch, or Thessalonica,—to its true source, and you are landed at once among the scenes of Christ's life on earth. There is no church where there is no direct link of this kind. Apostolical succession is not simply a fable; but it is the utter destruction of all that constitutes the foundation of a church. A true church knows no distance of place or time between itself and its Lord's doings and teachings, whereas this ecclesiastical genealogy would throw up a mountain barrier between. Each Church begins just where each sinner begins,—with Jesus himself. Other foundation can no man lay; other soil can no church root itself in; round no other center can any church revolve. Christ is all and in all! Not numbers, nor bulk, nor wealth, nor influence, nor antiquity, nor organization, nor literature, nor music, nor vestments, nor administrative skill, nor various learning,—not all these together make up the glory of a church. For what is the temple if the shekinah be not there? What is a church or congregation if the Holy Ghost, revealing Christ in his grace and glory, be not the indwelling and in working energy?

IV. We connect each true revival of religion with when' Jesus did and preached. No quickening can be genuine save that which goes back to this, and takes its rise from this. Excitement, earnestness, impression, there may be; but only that is authentic, and divine, and abiding, which springs directly out of that which Jesus began to do and to teach. Not to produce a movement, but to evoke the vital and everlasting force contained in the life and death of the Son of God, is the "revivalism" of Scripture. Each minister, or evangelist, or sower of the seed requires to keep this in mind. How many revivals have been failures, and mere caricatures of Pentecost, by forgetfulness of this. The work of revival is not ours, but God's; and it is only in connection with such preaching and labour as takes us directly back to doings and sayings of Jesus that He will work. The human imitation of revival may be got up in connection with any exciting words or events, but the divine reality has but one beginning. It was this that made the Reformation so glorious. It brought the nations back, not simply to Pentecost, but to that which produced Pentecost, and to which Pentecost so signally pointed, the life and death of the Christ of God.

It is of that life and death that the Holy Ghost still makes use, in His operations in churches and individuals. Thus He witnesses for Christ. Thus He glorifies Christ. Thus He educes all the true spiritual movements of the world out of the one great fountain-head; and connects the genuine ecclesiastical history of each age, and nation, and city, and village directly with Bethlehem, and Nazareth, and Capernaum, and Golgotha. And it is in proportion as we ourselves realize this connection that we become what we profess to be, followers of Him who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor.

II.

Christ Filled With The Spirit.

"After that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles."—

Acts 1:2.

The special thing I ask you to notice is, that it was "through the Holy Ghost" that the Lord gave these instructions to his apostles.

The Holy Spirit is thus presented to us in connection with the words and deeds of Him who was Messiah, the Christ of God! The Spirit is the witness for the Son, and the Son is the witness for the Spirit.

The Lord Jesus was very God,—God and man; but He did not make use of his Godhead either to speak the words He spake, or to do the deeds which He did while here. His peculiar person, God and man, made Him a vessel for containing the Spirit without measure; and it was through that Spirit that he was sustained in his work. His name was Messiah, the Anointed, the Man filled with the Spirit. This temporary abnegation of the exercise of his divine power was part of his humiliation. This becoming poor though He was rich, this emptying of Himself though He was full, this making Himself of no reputation though He was the glorious one, this weakness which He manifested from the cradle to the cross,—all this was His condescension,—part of His qualification for His great work; in the doing of which He was to be made like unto His brethren dependent on the Father and on the Spirit

for everything. It is no stooping on the part of a creature to be dependent on God; but it was so on the part of Him who was Himself God over all.

Let us see how it was in this attitude of dependence that the Son of God lived His earthly life, and that it was through the Holy Spirit that He was from first to last fitted for all He did, and spoke, and passed through, on earth, as the substitute for sinners,—the humbled and dependent Son of man.

It was through the Holy Ghost that His humanity was conceived; the Holy Ghost coming upon His mother. Throughout His earlier years, before His ministry began, there was the exhibition of entire dependence, as we learn from those many psalms which are the utterances of His feelings and desires during that period of his life (See Psalms 16, 17, 18, 35, 69). But let us see what is recorded concerning His ministry and work.

I. His baptism. Then the Spirit was seen descending on Him in preparation for His mighty work. There was an anointing then. The Spirit of the Lord "rested" on Him; "fell" on Him; was "poured" out on Him. In the strength of that Spirit He went forth to do the work and fight the battle and endure the suffering appointed Him.

II. His temptation. "Then was Jesus led up [1] (from the bank of Jordan) of the Spirit to be tempted of the devil" (Matthew 4:1); "Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" (Luke 4:1). It was in the power of the Spirit that He was led into that great temptation; it was in the power of the Spirit that He was led through it; it was in the power of the Spirit that He was led out of it. That same Spirit which dwelt in Him

for these ends, dwells in us also for these ends. Jesus made use of no power save that of the Spirit to overcome, bringing Himself down to our level of creature•weakness; so we need nothing more save the power of the Spirit to overcome.

III. His preaching. After His temptation and victory, "He returned, in the power of the Spirit, into Galilee" (Luke 4:14). In that power "He taught in their synagogues" (verse 15); and when at Nazareth He refers specially to this, quoting the prophet's words, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor...to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." That same Spirit that filled apostles afterwards at Pentecost, and sent them forth to preach, filled Him, and caused His word to be "with power" (Luke 4:32). Thus, as the Spirit glorified Christ, so did Christ glorify the Spirit.

IV. His miracles. These were wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost. "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you" (Matthew 12:28). "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing such as were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38). Thus, even his own miracles were not wrought by his own Godhead•power, but by the Spirit of God, and thus careful is the inspired writer to shew us this, that we may know the community, the sympathy, the oneness between the head and the members.

V. His sacrifice. "Through the eternal Spirit He offered himself without spot to God" (Hebrews 9:14). It was by means of the indwelling Spirit that He presented Himself as the Lamb without blemish and without spot; so that His sacrifice, while it received its divine value and merit from His Godhead, was

the result of the power of the Holy Ghost. In the whole of His vicarious life and sacrificial death, we find the presence and power of that Spirit which was given to Him without measure, and which flows from Him to us.

VI. His instructions to His apostles. "Through the Holy Ghost He gave commandments to his apostles." This is a very remarkable statement, as shewing how, to the very end, it was through the Spirit that He did and said everything; and this even after His resurrection. It was not as "God over all" that He instructed His apostles, but as the man Christ Jesus, full of the Holy Ghost. Such was the Father's purpose concerning Him, and such His blessed condescension; becoming in all things, excepting sin, entirely like ourselves.

As Prophet, Priest, and King, he was anointed by the Spirit; and it was as one full of the Spirit, and on whom the Spirit rested (Isaiah 11:2), that He came to discharge these His offices. As our Moses, our Aaron, our David, our Melchizedec, he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Thus He came down to our level of human weakness, and consented to receive His strength and wisdom, as we do, from the indwelling Spirit. Thus we see His oneness with us and ours with Him; and thus, too, we see Him full of the Spirit for us, dispensing that Spirit to us according to our need, that we may come behind in no gift, but receive from Him grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

III.

Infallible Proofs.

"To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

Acts 1:3.

The Holy Spirit, speaking to us in Scripture, lays great stress on the certainty of the facts recorded there concerning Jesus. They must not only be great and marvelous, but true; not only true, but ascertained to be so by credible witnesses of all kinds; not only ascertained at the time, but handed on to us through such channels as to preclude doubt or uncertainty through all succeeding ages. The "proofs" at the time were "infallible," and they have lost none of their force and demonstration by the course of subsequent transmission. They are infallible still. They are more, both in number and weight, than we have for any historical facts in all past time; so that any attempt to cast doubt on the facts thus established, would imply the subversion of all history.

The things concerning Jesus are not only "most surely believed amongst us," but they are believed on the surest of all evidence. They are true; and we know them, of an absolute certainty, to be so. As of one great fact, so of all we may say, "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe" (John 19:35). And in regard to the words as well as the facts of the record, Jesus Himself made this appeal to the Jews, "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?"

These infallible proofs are in one sense human, yet in other divine. They are selected by God, made known to us by God, affirmed and confirmed to us by God, in the mighty signs and wonders with which He has accompanied them. God has accepted and adopted these proofs; and by His miracles He has declared that He reckons them sufficient. The Holy Ghost declares them to be "infallible" (τεχμήζια, true signs).

These facts, thus divinely demonstrated to us and placed beyond the shadow of a doubt, are those on which our faith rests. We know that the Son of God is come. We know that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. We know that He was born, and lived, and died, and was buried, and rose again. These things are the most certain of all certainties, and on their certainty we rest. They who bore witness of these things did not follow "cunningly devised fables," and we, in receiving their testimony, are not following "cunningly devised fables." All heaven and all earth say that they are true.

These facts, thus divinely attested, contain the good news which a sinner needs. They are simple facts, easy to be understood; yet all heaven is in them; all the love of God is in them; the favor of God is in them; the grace of Christ is in them; the pardon of sin is in them. Truly understood, these facts concerning the Son of God contain all that is needed for salvation.

God has not only attested these facts, but He has interpreted them for us. He has told us their meaning; and that meaning is a most gracious one. It speaks to our consciences, and pacifies them. It speaks to our hearts, and soothes them. "God is love" is the sum and burden of each of these blessed facts. In them we perceive this love of God;

and each of them speaks to us with a voice of invitation, and cheer, and kindness.

These well-established facts all point in one direction, and bear one testimony. It is of God Himself that they bear witness. In so far as they refer to man, they take for granted that he is utterly lost; but their chief reference is to God,—to God in connection with lost man. They present the sinner with the most certain of all warrants for placing his confidence in God,—in His love and in His truth. They bid man not look to himself, but to God. They say, there is nothing in or about yourself that you can trust; but there is everything in God to confide in. Your own heart may put a different construction on these facts; your eyes, and ears, and feelings may all suggest suspicion; but there are the facts,—attested by God, and interpreted by the Holy Ghost. Believe this interpretation; take God's own construction of them; read love in all of them,—love to the unlovable, to the worst of men, and the most obdurate of sinners. "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Study these facts. Your life is wrapped up in them. Your peace is there. Your hope is there. The health of your soul is there. Don't say, I know them all already; they are hackneyed and familiar. Would the thirsty man say this of the deep, clear well out of which he had so often quenched his thirst?

Study these facts again and again. If you find nothing in them the first, or second, or third time, go again a thousand times. Be assured that they really contain all the grace, and love, and peace which you need. They will yield these to you.

Study them with a believing mind. They are the rocks out of which the water will gush out to you.

These facts are unambiguous. They have but one meaning. They are as clear as they are bright. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." This laying down of life for worthless enemies is a fact which admits but of one construction; and he who looks it in the face, though he be the chief of sinners, must feel this. It means love, if it means anything at all. If it does not mean love, it means nothing.

And as this fact, or these facts, for we may call them either one or many, are plain beyond mistake in their gracious meaning, so they are the surest of all sure things, established and handed down to us upon "infallible proofs." It is the belief of these sure facts that lets into us all the heaven which they contain; that pours in peace and gladness; for in them is the great love of God deposited, and out of them this great love freely flows. "He that believeth is not condemned"; and he knoweth that he is not condemned, for the word of God is sure, and His testimony is true. He means what He says, when giving the promise of eternal life to every one who accepts the testimony.

IV.

The Last Interview.

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And, while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath-day's journey. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."—

Acts 1:6-14.

This is the last glimpse we get of Christ below; it is the end of his course on earth. These are his final words and

instructions. They concern not only his disciples, but his church in all ages. They are for us.

I. The question of the disciples. It is concerning the kingdom, Israel's dominion, which had for many years been taken away and given to the Gentiles. They were not so carnal in their views as some think; and they take for granted that the Lord recognized their views as in the main scriptural. They ask about (1) a kingdom; (2) a kingdom for Israel; (3) a kingdom that had been lost; (4) a kingdom that was to be restored; (5) a kingdom that was to be restored by Messiah. Their question is as to the time of all this? When shall all this be? Shall it be now?

II. The reproof (verse 7). He refuses to answer the question. He does not reprove them for being carnal in their expectations, or wrong in their prophetic views, or in their longing for the kingdom. But he rebukes their over eagerness to know the time. That was to be hidden. It was the Father's own secret. Of that day and hour knoweth no man, not the angels, "nor the Son" (Mark 13:32). We must beware of being too minute in our inquiries as to the time; but we may and ought to study what has been revealed concerning the coming kingdom. We ought to desire it.

III. The promise (verse 8). He couples his reproof with a promise. So like himself! He cannot rebuke, but he must add a word of love. (1.) The Holy Ghost is to come. (2.) They are to receive power. (3.) They are to be Christ's witnesses from Jerusalem unto the ends of the earth. There was much to be done and suffered ere the kingdom was restored. Here we get a glimpse of the interval, and of the work to be carried on during it.

IV. The ascension. The event is a very marvelous one, but most briefly and simply told, without a word of exclamation or surprise. He was taken up! Or as the Psalm expresses it, "Thou hast ascended on high" (Psalm 68:18). As the resurrection is sometimes ascribed to the Father's power, and sometimes to His own, so with the ascension. Enoch was the first, Elijah the second, the Son of God the third who thus ascended. Why had not Christ the pre-eminence in this? Time is not of consequence. He was in reality the great ascender, the opener of the gates; and to His ascension they owed theirs. Because He rose, they rose. It was on the credit of His ascension that they received the right of ascending. A cloud received Him out of their sight;—most likely the shekinah-cloud, descending to form his chariot ("He maketh the clouds his chariot"). This happened while they beheld, or while they were gazing on him, so that there could be no mistake. They saw him on the ground, and then they saw him rise.

V. The vision of angels. They are here as elsewhere called men, but, as interpreted in other places (Genesis 18:1, 19:1; Luke 24:4; John 20:12), "angels." They were two, for they come as witnesses; they are in white apparel to shew what they are. They appeared while the disciples were looking steadfastly toward heaven, gazing up at the spot from which their Lord had disappeared, as if the Lord, when passing upward, had seen their longing, wistful eyes, and dispatched two of his glorious attendants with a message both to comfort and to direct.

VI. The expostulation (verse 2). The disciples seem to have remained gazing as if fixed to the mountain. They could not leave the spot, nor withdraw their eyes. It would almost seem as if even the vision of the angels had not drawn away their gaze, but that they continued gazing up still till the angels

spoke. The angels use the words of recognition, "Men of Galilee." They speak as knowing the disciples. Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? What do you mean by this? What is the use of this? It was not for this that your Lord ascended. How often do we stand idly gazing or musing unprofitably! Hear the angels' expostulation.

VII. The promise (verse 2). This same Jesus, &c. He is not gone forever, nor has He forsaken the earth finally. He is to come again. He is to come the very same; not a different Christ, but the same. He is to come in the same way as He went. To the same spot too (Zechariah 14:4). The consolation here is not "you shall go to Him," but "He shall come to you;" not, "ye shall follow Him soon," but "He shall return to you." Such is the stress which Scripture lays on Christ's second coming. Not death, but His coming is the church's consolation.

VIII. The return home. They obey the angelic message, and withdraw their wistful eyes. They return to Jerusalem, no doubt comforting them selves with the thought of his return. How that journey would recall old scenes and words! They go back to the city that had crucified their Master; they go back not knowing exactly what to do; but content to wait till He should tell them. Henceforth there was a link between them and heaven such as they had never known before. They could understand, "Set your affection on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."

IX. The occupation (verse 13, 14). They go to the upper room, where they had eaten their last passover and supper with the Lord. They found the other disciples there. What fellowship would theirs be! But still they knew not what to do. Prayer is their only resource. So they pray, they "continue with one accord in prayer and supplication." Thus they wait

for His commands. Thus they gird themselves for their work. Thus they get themselves filled. Thus they trim their lamps. What an example for us! Let us watch and pray. Gazing up to heaven, or Olivet, will do nothing for us; but praying in the upper chamber will do everything.

V.

Man's Reception Of The Great Things Of God.

"And they were tell amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others, mocking, said, These men are full of new wine."—

Acts 2:12,13.

Here we have (1) the great things of God; (2) the impression made by them on man.

I. The great things of God. These great things are everywhere, for God is everywhere; and everywhere they produce much the same effects on man. There are the great things of the heavens above; the great things of earth and sea; the great things displayed in man himself the creature; the great things of the light and of the darkness, of the day and the night, of the storm and the calm, of summer and winter. There are also the great things recorded in his Word; the great things written in the Old Testament annals of Jehovah's doings; the great things of Paradise, of the deluge, of Sodom, of Egypt, of the Red sea, of the desert, of the land; the great things in the life of Abraham, of Jacob, of Moses, of Joshua, of Samson, of David, of Deborah, of Elijah, of Elisha, and of the prophets. These are all great things indeed. The mighty wonders of Jehovah; of him who is wonderful in working. All of them worthy of God. In the New Testament we have the great things of God; the great things of John Baptist's life, of Christ's life, of His disciples' ministry. These were all great things. But now at Pentecost begin newer and greater things; the greater things to which the Lord referred

(John 14:12), to be done by His disciples because of His going to the Father; the great things of an ascended Christ; the great things of the Holy Ghost; the great things of men filled with the Spirit, and sent forth to do the works of God in ways unknown before. For now is Jehovah's arm made bare; now is His power revealed; now He worketh a new thing in the earth. God had frequently before stepped in to do a new thing in the earth; to break in upon "nature's laws"; to interrupt its sequences; to shew himself in new forms and with a new voice to man. Now at Pentecost he does this in a marvelous way. It is He himself that is working and speaking; He the mighty Jehovah; coming down among men to shew Himself; taking hold of their lips and their hearts; claiming man, and man's soul, and man's tongue, and man's world for Himself. Earth shakes beneath His descending footsteps. It is but an infant, yet that infant's arrival is the signal for commotion. All Jerusalem is moved; and the vibration from that center goes forth throughout the world. Truly great is our Jehovah, and of great power! He has not forsaken man nor man's earth. He shews himself more signally than by lightning, or thunder or earthquake, or tempest; even by the Holy Ghost. Yes, it is the Holy Ghost that is the great doer of those miracles which startle earth, and penetrate the deaf, dead ear of man. He, no less than Father and Son, is the Lord God Omnipotent, who reigneth in heaven above and in the earth beneath.

II. The impression made by them on man. Let us mark the various words used throughout the narrative regarding this. (1) They were "confounded" (verse 6) or perplexed; (2) "amazed" (verse 7, and again verse 12); (3) "marveled" (verse 7); (4) "in doubt" (verse 12), or hesitated, or were puzzled, saying, What means this? (5) "mocked" (verse 13) or derided and scoffed greatly. Such are the words used to

denote the impression made by Pentecost, and the great things of God then wrought. There were different classes of men there, and different states of mind; some more serious, others more flippant; some more proud, others more humble; some more honest, others more crooked and oblique: the different classes and states of men may be reduced to three.

(1.) Wonder. Simple amazement, as that of men who gaze on something stupendous without drawing any conclusions, or thinking at all, or even asking, What does this mean? This takes in a large class of minds in all ages,—mere wonderers, perhaps admirers, of the "great things of God,"—no more. They are not led to think, nor broken down,—not humbled, hardly even solemnized. They exclaim, Wonderful! With that their religion begins and ends. They wonder, but believe not. They wonder, but love not. They wonder, but depart not from iniquity.

(2.) Perplexity. They know not what to think. They see and hear, and are puzzled. They ask, What meaneth this? Some of them do not stay to answer it, but conclude that all is mystery and uncertainty. Others do try to answer it, but get on wrong tracks; reasoning and philosophizing, instead of believing; trying rather to discern the difficulties of the case than its plainer features. Some love the perplexity, and hardly make an effort to deliver them selves from it. Others try in vain to extricate themselves, and "find no end, in wandering mazes lost." These "great things of God" were not meant to breed perplexity, nor to end in perplexity, yet how often do we find them doing both, through man's perversity, or cowardice, or love of sin and darkness. Perplexed spirit, look with honest eye at the great things of God. Look steadfastly. Light is yonder. Look and look again. The things are as clear and unambiguous as they are great.

(3.) Mockery. This is the worst, yet not the least common treatment which the great things of God receive at the hands of men. Yes, God and his great things are mocked at by man; his greatest things, such as the descent of the Spirit, most mocked at. The ways in which man attempts to explain away or account for the things of God, so as to excuse his believing them are very awful. When the Holy Spirit works in power, and by that exhibition of power confronts man face to face, man refuses to believe that it is God at all that is working. He resorts to various subterfuges or explanations. He ascribes it to excitement, to fanaticism, to ignorance, to folly, or even, as here, to drunkenness. How often have the great things of God thus been mocked! Thus the natural heart speaks out. Its unbelief gets vent to itself.

Let God's great things produce their due, their natural impression. Let us not resist that impression, but yield to it. God means that they should impress us. He speaks to us in love by them. He does not work them for mere show.

Let them overawe us. They were meant to do so. They were meant to solemnize us by their greatness; not to terrify, but to produce godly fear.

Let them break us down. Our hearts need breaking. And those things which produced conviction in Jerusalem were meant to do the same among us.

Let them lead us to faith. They were meant to furnish the basis of faith; to lead us to believe the greatness, the glory, and the love of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord. All the great things of God are in Him. He is the doer of them all. His name is "the mighty God."

VI.

The Cross, The Crucifiers, And The Crucified.

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, 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 Ghost."—

Acts 2:36-38.

This is part of the first sermon preached under the Christian dispensation. It was preached by Peter, who some seven weeks before had thrice denied the Lord; not by John the beloved disciple. It was preached in Jerusalem, not far from the spot where the Lord was crucified. It was preached to those who had slain Him. It was preached immediately after a remarkable outpouring of the Spirit, and by one full of the Spirit. It is strangely calm and unimpassioned; no exaggerated description, no strong language, no sensation. It is a simple narrative about Jesus. He who spoke it manifestly trusted to some power beyond his own to give effect to it; to something in the simple facts themselves to work the end desired. He spoke as a witness and a reprover; not as an orator or a logician. Yet, as for its simplicity, so for its effects, it is one of the most marvelous sermons ever preached. A child could understand it; yet three thousand men were overwhelmed by it. It is a true specimen of preaching or speaking in the Holy Ghost. Such should our preaching be.

This would keep us "abreast of the age"; this would meet the infidel and confound him; this would be better than eloquence or science, or the enticing words of man's wisdom. This would do the work of God.

The three verses which we have read bring before us (1) the crucified one; (2) the crucifiers; (3) the connection between the latter and the former, both for evil and good.

I. The crucified one. Let us note concerning this, (1.) Who He was,—"that same Jesus"; yes Jesus of Nazareth; He who was born at Bethlehem; who went about doing and speaking only good.

(2.) What was done to Him. He was betrayed, tried, condemned, crucified, slain. All hatred was displayed to Him; all shame poured upon Him; the vilest and most terrible of deaths was inflicted on Him.

(3.) By whom was this done. By "His own"; by "Israel," the house of Israel,—the Jews of Jerusalem. Not by Romans or Gentiles; but Jews; by them who ought to have been foremost to welcome Him.

(4.) What God has made Him,—"both Lord and Christ." The stone which the builders rejected has been made the head of the corner. "Both Lord and Christ"! All that the prophets predicted concerning the seed of the woman; all that Israel was expecting; all that could be comprehended, of power, and dignity, and authority, and glory, and excellency, in these two names, are given by God to this same Jesus. Whatever man may think of Him, God's thoughts of Him are of the highest kind. Whatever Israel may do to Him to shew hatred

and contempt, God treats Him as infinitely worthy of all honour in earth and heaven.

II. The crucifiers. They were, as we have seen, "the house of Israel"; but this is not the point to which I ask your attention here. They are accused of an awful crime. They had deliberately united to crucify.

(1.) An innocent man. One who had done nothing amiss; one against whom no charge was substantiated; one whom their own law would have acquitted of having done anything worthy of death.

(2.) A good man. A bad man may be, in respect of certain charges, quite innocent; but this man was more; He was righteous, and He was good; He had said and done nothing but what was good all His life. His had been a life of pure and holy love.

(3.) A prophet. One of their own rulers had confessed Him as a teacher sent from God; and his whole life proclaimed Him a prophet, greater in word and deed than any of their ancient ones.

(4.) The Lord of glory. The Son of God in the truest sense of the expression; Son of the Highest; equal with God; truly divine.

(5.) Their own Messiah. The very Christ whom their prophets predicted; whom they and their fathers had been expecting,—their King and Lord.

They were thus not merely murderers, but no ordinary ones; criminals in the highest and darkest sense; their hands red

with innocent blood; the blood of their own Messiah ; the blood of God.

III. The connection between the crucified and the crucifiers for evil amid for good.

(1.) For evil. For condemnation. It was this that they felt so awfully when the apostle had stated the simple facts. (1) They were pricked in their hearts; (2) they cried out, What shall we do? A full sense of their awful criminality flashed through them. They were murderers; the worst murderers the world ever saw; the murderers of their Lord and Christ. Then indeed condemnation,—infinite condemnation was theirs. They had perhaps not actually nailed Him to the tree, but they had concurred in the deed. They were guilty of His blood; and they did not seek to deny it. So is every sinner a concurrent in this infinite murder. This is God's charge against us, "Ye slew my Son."

(2.) For good. This connection for evil might be disannulled, and a new one formed. An opportunity was to be given for disavowing their deed, and that disavowal was not only to disconnect them with all the evil they had incurred, but was to connect them with all the good which Messiah came to bring. They would then be treated by God as if they had welcomed Him from the first. Not only would they receive remission of sins, but also the gift of the Holy Ghost. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved; believe in Him and thou shalt receive the Spirit; and with Him all present and eternal blessing.

VII.

Apostolical Generosity.

"Such as I have give I."—

Acts 3:6.

Here is a lame Jewish beggar lying at the beautiful gate of the temple; and here is a Galilean fisherman, quite as poor as the beggar, walking into the temple court. The beggar asks alms, and the fisherman stops a moment. He cannot refuse to give, but what has he? No silver or gold, nor anything that the man was begging for. But he bethinks himself. He is not, after all, so poor. He has something that the beggar knows not of,—a divine power,—but lately lodged in him by the coming down of the Holy Ghost. This divine power, and divine fullness he may use; and now for the first time the fisherman puts forth his God-given strength,—his divine fullness. He says, Look on me. The beggar looks, expecting gold. The fisherman takes him by the hand, and speaks the word,—power flows out, healing flows in,—the man is cured. Ah, here is the display of a most wondrous possession, in comparison of which silver and gold are nothing! Here is a man with whom God has put himself in connection; here is a man who has a whole magazine of heavenly blessing at his disposal, whose resources are beyond all human measure, though wholly unlike all that man values or cares for. The man I speak of is simply a believing man. Not a man of learning, or genius, or position, or culture, but simply a believing man. Such was the fisherman of Capernaum. It is the believing man that wields the scepter, that has access to the stores of the kingdom. Not many rich, not many wise, not many noble, are called.

I. A believing man is a man of large possessions. Silver and gold he may have none; but not the less on that account are his possessions great. "Having nothing, and yet possessing all things," is the apostle's description of him. "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come." All the past is his, all the present, and all the future. For He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, with Him freely gives us all things. We are made "partakers of Christ"; and God says to us, "All that I have is thine." But what we especially refer to here, is the gift of the Holy Ghost, the fullness of Christ, the power of blessing, the capacity for containing all Christ's boundless stores, "the grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." There is no end, no measure of his possessions, for they are summed up in the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. The miraculous gifts of the early age are specimens of what he possesses,—sparkles of the golden mine, drops of the inexhaustible fountain. He is rich beyond measure in all things whereby he can benefit his fellows. Like the sun in the sky, he is rich in radiance, which no eclipse, no cloud, can affect.

II. A believing man is a man of large liberalities. He cannot keep anything he has got to himself. He is constrained to communicate, to pour out, like the fountain, like the fragrance of the flower. He opens his hand and gives; he is ever giving, giving, knowing that it is more blessed to give than to receive. He may be poor in the things of earth, but he is rich in the things of heaven. "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have I give," is his feeling as he passes through this empty, beggared world. His joy is in pouring out, not in hoarding up. But, indeed, the heavenly gifts which constitute his possessions cannot be hoarded. They must be used, or they

will vanish away. Nothing more grieves the Spirit than the selfish keeping of His gifts, whether of blessing, or joy, or peace. If we are full of the Spirit, and sit down to enjoy that fullness alone, we shall be deprived of it. The Spirit will depart. We must be liberal, generous, ever opening hand and heart, saying to all we meet with, "What I have I give." Freely we receive, let us freely give.

III. A believing man is a man large sympathies. He pities the world in the midst of whose miseries and sins he lives, and would fain contribute to its relief. His faith has not hardened his heart, but has made him more sensitive, more tenderhearted, more sympathizing. His compassions are stirred every hour, and by every object,—compassions for the pains of the body, compassions for the sadness and the peril of the soul. His eye affects his heart, and he longs more and more to be the fountain of blessing, and comfort, and health. "Such as I have I give" is always the spirit in which he acts.

IV. A believing man is a man of large powers. He has power from God, and power with God. He is strong in weakness, and resistless in dependence. He is partaker of the power of Him with whom he is one; of Him who said, "All power is given me." His faith puts him in possession of a power for blessing which no one else knows; an invisible, secret power, but a power which, "according to his faith," he can wield wherever he goes. Mere "miraculous power," as it is called, he may not have, but he has something better and higher.

V. A believing man has large opportunities. He both has and he makes opportunities every hour; for his eye and ear are ever open as he passes through this poor, diseased, sorrowful, empty world. Others see not these, find not these opportunities; he is always seeing and finding them, on the

right hand and on the left, in his going out and coming in, at home, in the street, on the highway, in the railway carriage, in conversation, in company. Innumerable opportunities surround him.

VI. A believing man has large returns for his gifts. "Give and it shall be given; good measure, pressed down, and running over." Some of this now, most hereafter; an hundredfold for all he gives; the everlasting riches, glory, an inheritance, a kingdom. He gives in remembrance of the love that has given him so much; in sympathy with the wants of men around; in imitation of the example of Him who gave his Son, and of Him who gave Himself, and in prospect of the recompense of the reward when the Lord Himself shall return in glory, His reward with Him, and His work before Him.

Let us be generous, large-souled, noble-hearted, with hand and heart ever open, for the church needs this, and the world needs it more.

VIII.

The Restitution Of All Things.

"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; 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 hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."—

Acts 3:19-21.

Israel and the latter-day glory may be said to be the burden of this passage, that glory, according to the Old Testament prophets, being intimately connected with Israel's turning to the Lord. The word "when" means more exactly "in order to" (•π•• ••), and the exhortation would run thus, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." The passage divides itself into two parts,—(1) the practical; (2) the prophetic.

I. The practical. Of this there are three parts: (1.) Repentance. A thorough change of mind. Repent,—Pharisee and Sadducee,—repent all Israel. It was the Lord's own message,—John the Baptist's,—theirs from the first. Come down from your high thoughts; cease to think of earthly glories; become as little children, and be willing to receive the kingdom as such. (2.) Conversion. This is the fruit of repentance; a change of course must follow a change of mind. It is the Old Testament exhortation, "Turn ye, turn ye."

Be converted. (3.) Forgiveness. On repentance and conversion there follows pardon; pardon for Israel, pardon for us,— "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." The blotting out or washing away is a well-known Old Testament figure. David cried, "Blot out all mine iniquities"; and God speaks of Himself thus, "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions." Forgiveness is the burden of the gospel.

II. The prophetical. This part brings especially two things before us:

(1) the Lord's coming; (2) the glory of the latter day.

(1.) The Lord's coming It is described here a "sending" from the Father; "He shall send Jesus,"—Jesus who went up to heaven, and who is now in heaven, and is to remain there till the appointed time,—Jesus who before was preached,—this same Jesus. How special the Apostle is in describing this coming one! And as at His first advent He was the "sent one," so at His second, He is still to be the same the "sent of God" to suffer; the "sent of God" to reign. There is a coming, and a coming one. The Jewish church looked for a coming one, so does the Christian. He comes! Behold the Lord cometh! Behold He cometh with clouds! He comes in glory. He comes quickly. He comes as a thief. He comes as a Judge. He comes as a King. He comes as the second Adam. He comes as the true Melchizedec, the true Solomon. It is not our going to Him that is here referred to, but His coming to us. It is not death; it is not Jerusalem's destruction. It is the coming predicted by Enoch, by David, by Isaiah, and all the prophets. It is the coming which the church loves, and Satan dreads, and creation groans for, and Israel expects; before which

Antichrist is to be smitten, and in which all nations are to be blessed.

(2.) The glory of the latter day. This glory is described by a twofold figure.

(1.) Times of refreshing. The earth is parched, dried up, physically and morally. There has been a long drought, with few and partial showers. All things are withering; the whole creation groans; the church is parched; humanity is parched; all nations and kindreds, Jew and Gentile, are parched. But this is to be reversed. The windows of heaven are to be opened; the abundance of rain is to be given. The face of nature is to revive (see Isaiah 35; Hosea 14:5; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13). Of this refreshing there are to be "times"; it is not so much one as many; ages of refreshing; and all this "from the presence of the Lord." It is at the Lord's return that this begins; and it is during His presence here that this is to go on. And if an absent Lord has done so much, What will not a present Lord do? He will come down like rain upon the mown grass, like showers that water the earth (2 Samuel 23:4, Psalm 72:6-16).

(b) Times of restitution of all things. Restitution means setting things to right; as when it is said of the man with the withered hand, "His hand was restored whole as the other." This is the bringing back of Paradise; restoring and reorganizing all things under the dominion of the second Adam. (1.) Earth is to be set to right (Romans 8:19). (2.) Israel is to be set to right (Psalm 53:6, Isaiah 54:11-14, 60:1-22). (3.) The Gentiles shall be set to right (Psalm 72:8; Daniel 7:14). (4.) The church shall be set to right (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 20.). She shall be saved, glorified, crowned. Thus all things above and beneath shall share in the

restitution,—“New heavens and a new earth.” Hence it is said, “Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad,” &c.

Up till the time of this restitution, Christ is to remain in heaven. But when the fullness of the times is come, then He descends, and the voice is heard, “Behold, I make all things new.”

For that coming we wait; for that restitution we wait; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God. Are our desires really toward it? There is a glorious time coming. All men count on it. A millennium is in the creed of every body. But what is it to be? A mere triumph of art, and science, and human intellect; of music, and painting, and philosophy, and literature, with cathedrals to shed a religious light on all? That would be man's millennium. The triumph of infidelity, or pantheism, or atheism? That would be Satan's millennium. The triumph of religion and morality? That would be the millennium of the greater portion of the professing church. But God's millennium is that in which Christ is present and personal King,—in which the Spirit is poured out universally,—and Christ reigns supreme in hearts and nations everywhere.

IX.

The World's True Prophet.

"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. This is that Moses which said unto the children of Israel, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me; him shall ye hear."—

Acts 3:22; 7:37.

Israel needed a prophet (a prophet in God's sense of the name), and God gave them one,—Moses, who is always referred to in Scripture as the greatest of Israel's prophets and teachers. He was the first in point of time; for though, in a sense, Enoch, and Noah, and Job, and Abraham, and Jacob were prophets, yet their prophet-life is so brief as to be hardly recognizable, and their prophet-words so few as to be contained in a few sentences. But the words of Israel's great prophet occupy a large section of the Bible,—five, we might say six, of its longest books, and some of its Psalms. No one, either in Old Testament days or New, not even Paul, has written half so much as Moses. As prophet, poet, teacher, lawgiver, historian, psalmist, he has spoken with a fullness such as belongs to no other. Reckoning the Old Testament by pages, not chapters, we find, say 580 pages in all; of these Moses has written 170, or nearly a third of the Old Testament,—at least considerably more than a fourth. What prophet among all the prophets of Israel has there been like unto Moses? Samuel, and David, and Isaiah, and Ezekiel, and Daniel are not so great as he. He stands first, and he stands

alone. His birth, his education, his life, his death, his burial are all marvelous, but his career as a prophet is more marvelous still.

As Israel needed a prophet, and such a prophet, so does our world; and God has given us such: a prophet like unto Moses, but greater than Moses,—a prophet for all ages and nations.

The world needs a prophet, (1) perfect, well-instructed, filled with true wisdom; (2) authoritative, one who speaks, not from conjecture or in virtue of superior talent or position, but from authority, "as one having authority"; (3) divine, a teacher sent direct from God,—nay, a teacher who is God himself; nothing less than this will do, the world needs God for its teacher. It cannot teach itself.

Such must be the world's true teacher. Less than this will just leave it groping in darkness; guessing, but not knowing; conjecturing, but not certain; reasoning, but not believing. Only a teacher such as the above can bring our race to its true and steadfast resting-place of "we know." Nothing less can reveal God, for no man hath seen God; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He alone can declare Him. Nothing less can really satisfy either conscience or intellect. Man's vision is both dim and limited; we need something from on high to clear it and to carry us beyond it,—something that will settle all doubts, that will end all disputings, that will give certainty, and confidence, and light. In a dark world like ours, we need something far beyond what man can furnish, beyond what philosophy or science can affirm. These can go but a little way. They bring us but to the conclusion of Socrates, that we know nothing

"Well did'st thou speak, Athena's wisest son,

All that we know is,—nothing can be known."

God has given us such an one; not for Israel only, but for the world. He has given us the Prophet like unto Moses, but greater than Moses; He has sent His Son, as the world's prophet, the world's teacher, the world's light,—perfect, authoritative, divine. He is all that is described in the passage before us.

I. He is of our brethren. He is one like ourselves, not an angel,—a true man. Yes, man is the prophet of humanity, the teacher of the race. It is from human lips that we learn the words and truths of God. A human voice announces to us the things of God, and through human tears He sees the coming woes of Jerusalem and of the world. He is a Jew, but He is a man, with a human heart, and conscience, and understanding.

II. He is raised up to God. Not self-called, nor man called, nor man sent; but "raised up by God," as Moses was, God's prophet in the highest sense.

III. He is like unto Moses. In many respects is He like Moses, and in many ways are these words fulfilled. He is like Moses.

(1.) Because God speaks with Him face to face. Numbers 12:8: "With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold." Deuteronomy 34:10: "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." How true was this of the Son of God; only in a much higher degree of Him than of Moses! The only-begotten Son, in the bosom of the Father.

(2.) Because He is Mediator and Intercessor. As Moses was the mediator between God and Israel, as he pleaded for Israel and prevailed, so with the Son of God; only in a far higher sense and degree. The true Mediator is the prophet like unto Moses, Jesus, "the Word made flesh."

(3.) He is like unto Moses, because He is Israel's King. Moses was the only prophet who was also king,—"he was king in Jerusalem," he was Israel's captain. So with the Son of God. He was a "leader and commander to the people." He was more so than Moses; not only prophet and king, but priest as well; Melchizedec, the royal priest, or priestly king. "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King."

(4.) He is like unto Moses because He is a worker of miracles. Of all the miracles wrought, those of Moses were the most stupendous, and are referred to in Scripture as such. The great miracle-worker of the Bible was Moses, though most of his miracles were in connection with death, not life, judgment, rather than mercy. The Son of God wrought far greater and more numerous miracles. The mighty works done by Him were not only mightier than those of Moses, but more gracious and beneficent.

(5.) He is like Moses because He is Israel's great Teacher. Moses taught Israel much, taught the world much; Christ much more,—far more numerous and marvelous words, so that if all were recorded, the world could not contain the books that should be written. Never man spake like this man.

(6.) He is like Moses because of His meekness. The man Moses was meek above all others; so was Jesus, meek and lowly. Learn of me, says this prophet like unto Moses, for I am meek and lowly.

(7.) He is like Moses because rejected of men. As Moses was rejected of his brethren (Acts 7:35), so was Jesus despised and rejected of men. He is the rejected Prophet. The one Prophet that can really teach is He whom men refuse! They will not come to Him for wisdom, or light, or life. God's great Prophet is rejected by that world to which He is sent. Yet God's message is, "Him shall ye hear;" and the world's condemnation will be that they would not hear Him. Hearken unto me, He says; listen and be blest; hear and your souls shall live!

X.

Israel Beloved Of God.

"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 hundreds 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."—

Acts 3:25,26.

"To the Jew first"; "beginning at Jerusalem"; this was God's order, and it is so still. The Jew has not been displaced from his blessed position of being entitled to have the first presentation or proclamation of Christ. This was not merely at Pentecost, to prove them, and see whether they would receive Him,—that if they rejected Him they might henceforth have no such first place in the preaching of the gospel; it was so at all times, and in all places to which the apostles went. The Jews' rejection of Jesus, their crucifixion of the Lord of glory, their persecution of his disciples, did not annul their privileges, shewing that the New Testament, or "Gentile" dispensation, was in one sense a simple prolongation of the old or Abrahamic economy; all the spiritual privileges and gifts unfolded and dispensed at Pentecost being first presented to the Jew, as his especial birthright. Not only pardon and righteousness, but sonship, heirship, membership of the one body, the one church, the one family, were first placed within his offer, as a son of Abraham, with whom the one covenant was established. The Christian church was no new thing in the earth; it was the continuation of the one body which

began to be formed when first the seed of the woman was announced, and was afterwards more fully developed under the Abrahamic promise; and yet more fully developed when the ascended Christ shed down His Spirit, first on Abraham's sons, and then on the far off Gentiles.

They are still beloved for their fathers' sakes. God's gifts and calling are without repentance: for God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. It is not merely that they were the chief of sinners, and that "Jerusalem sinners" bring most glory to Christ, but God forgets not Abraham and his seed; they are the nation whom he delighteth to honour; and when Gentiles come into the church they are accounted as Abraham's seed, for "they that be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham;" they are the wild branches grafted into the good old olive tree, which has never been uprooted nor cast away. The New Testament church gets its sap, its vitality, from this connection; and New Testament saints are what they are by reason of their being made "partakers of the root and fatness of the olive tree." These are memorable words, never to be forgotten by those who would unduly elevate the saints of the New Testament: "If the root be holy so are the branches"; the Gentiles are but after all branches of the old tree, inserted in room of those broken off; and we derive our holiness from the holiness of the root. Are the branches better than the root and stem? Shall the New Testament branches (whose day of cutting off is coming, Romans 11:21, 22) boast against that olive tree to which they owe everything? Shall they say, Ah, we are a new thing in the earth? we possess a standing far above Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob? "Boast not against the branches, but, if thou boast (remember), that thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." It is this pride and boasting against the

branches that we see in some of the haughty heresies of modern times.

The designations of honour, and the intimations of privilege as still possessed by the sons of Abraham (as given in these two verses), are worthy of notice.

I. They are the children of the Prophets. The prophets are those referred to in the previous verse: "these prophets" who have age after age prophesied of blessing to Israel. The whole nation here gets the singular name,—a name of peculiar honour,—sons of prophets! As if every son of Abraham were connected with that great prophetic peerage or nobility which God raised up in Israel. That link with prophets remains unbroken. It is still their name.

II. They are the children of the covenant. To them belonged "the adoption (the sonship in its widest sense, the Abba Father privilege now, and the resurrection glory hereafter), and the glory, and the covenant, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises" (Romans 9:4). The covenant with Abraham, so dwelt upon by the apostle in his epistle to the Galatians, was specially theirs; that covenant which comprised within its vast limits and mighty fullness all blessing,—all blessing for themselves and for the world, for Abraham was "heir of the world" (Romans 4:13). This worldwide, this everlasting covenant was theirs; and it is on their covenant we enter when we believe, "for in thy seed shall all kindreds of the earth be blessed."

III. They are they to whom God first sends His risen Son. Christ's resurrection is first of all for them, his kinsmen according to the flesh, the children of the covenant. Pentecost was first of all for them. The first fruits of the New Testament

church was taken from among them. It was in Jerusalem that the great ingathering began. God sent His risen son to Israel first that He might bless them, that He might turn every one of them from their iniquities. Could anything more distinctly mark the continuity of that great election of all ages, called the church, than this? that election which David so often sung of as the "congregation of the saints," or "church of the holy ones"? that body which Solomon celebrated as the bride, all fair and without spot, to which the Psalmist pointed in his "song of loves" (Psalm 45) as the queen, the daughter, the glorious one, whose name is to be remembered for ever and ever.

1. God's love to Israel. He looks down on them, yearns over them, pities them, says, "How shall I give thee up?" And this love the many waters have not quenched, nor the floods drowned. They are monuments of sin abounding, and of grace abounding yet more. What good news of God's free love do they preach to us Gentiles!

2. God's purpose concerning Israel. He sends His risen Son to them just now, even in their unbelief; but He has glorious things in store for them hereafter, when the day of their rejection ends, and they are gathered into their land, and rejoice in their rebuilt cities once more. Great shall be Israel's glory then. Oh that it were come!

3. God's desire that we should feel toward Israel as He does. We ought to enter into His mind concerning the beloved nation. He loves them; so should we. He stretches out his hands to them; so should we. In endeavoring to bless them, we shall be blessed ourselves.

XI.

The World's Treason Against Its King.

"Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?" —

Acts 4:25.

This quotation by the apostle gives us the inspired key to the second Psalm. That which Herod and Pilate, with the Jewish multitude and Gentile soldiery, did at Jerusalem against Christ, was the beginning of that great fulfillment of the second Psalm which has in different ways been going on ever since, and will go on until the Lord come the second time to destroy his enemies. They "hated" Him, and raged against Him, and slew Him, saying, "This is the heir, come let us kill Him." But He rose again; and by His resurrection was declared to be the only begotten of the Father.

David here seems to be looking round him on Jerusalem and the whole earth. He hears tumultuous sounds, "Crucify Him," begun at Golgotha, and prolonged through all lands and ages. It is the raging of Jew and Gentile against Messiah: "We will not have this man to reign over us." They "set themselves" (king and people), and "take counsel together against Jehovah and His Messiah," trying to burst their bonds, and castaway their cords. The whole history of earth for these eighteen centuries has been the history of its hatred of Jesus, and its rage against the Father. This feeling has been modified, disguised, subdued at different times, but never quenched. It is shewing itself in the infidelity of our day, and will yet shew itself more extensively and awfully. Modern

laxity, or "liberalism," or "indifference," or "free thinking" is another phase of it. Hatred of the Christ of God is the root and source of modern lawlessness and scepticism.

The prophet asks, "Why do," or "why have the heathen raged, and the people (Israel) imagined a vain thing?" Let us study his question. It will lead us beneath the surface of modern society, modern thought, modern progress, modern politics.

The fact. The world, Jew and Gentile, does rage, and has been raging. We have Christ's own testimony to this, "They hated me;" "His citizens hated Him." More or less this hatred has spoken out. It speaks out in all unbelief, for all unbelief is hatred of the Son of God. It spoke out in the early persecutions, in the later ones under Popery. It spoke out at the French revolution, and is gathering strength to speak out again. It speaks out in man's hatred of the cross, and the blood, and the gospel. It speaks out in our ungodly literature. It speaks out in our worldliness. It speaks out in the elevation of the church, or the priest, or the intellect, or the "verifying faculty" into the place of the Son of God. Its words are smooth as butter, yet are they drawn swords. It uses the holiest words for its own purposes, so as to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect. One of the great characteristics of the whole interval between Christ's first and second coming is the world's rage, secret and open, against the Father and the Son.

II. The impotence of their rage. It is very useless anger. It accomplishes nothing. It is like an angry child striking a huge rock with its fist. It is the mere display of impotent hatred, or the temporary gratification of their dislike of God, and their rejection of His purpose regarding His Son. For, mark,

(1.) It won't alter the purpose of God. That purpose shall stand. It is from eternity to eternity. It specially centers on Messiah and His kingdom. The "decree" is "declared,"—thou art my Son! I have set thee on Zion as King. Earth is thine inheritance.

(2.) It won't make Him afraid. "Are we stronger than He," asks the apostle. "Hast thou an arm like God," asked Job. No! all the rage of earth, the power of its nations, the resistance of man's will and intellect, will not make God afraid. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh."

(3.) It won't shake the eternal throne. That throne is forever. It stands in heaven like the steadfast stars, which clouds blot out for a day, but cannot dim. It stands on earth like the ocean-rock on which the waves dash themselves to pieces.

(4.) It won't change truth into error or error into truth. It tries to do this. But in vain. It wages war against truth, it holds fellowship with error and falsehood, but it effects nothing. It calls light darkness, and darkness light; good evil, and evil good; but the light and the darkness, the good and evil, still remain as they were. All the enlightenment of the age, all the appliances of modern progress, are impotent against God and His Christ, against His truth, and His church, and His word.

III. The reason of their rage. The root of this we find thus stated, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." This is God's key to the antagonism between the world and the church. They rage,

(1.) Because they hate God Himself. This we have already noticed. Man's natural heart is enmity to God.

(2.) They hate His government. They hate His law, His authority, His whole rule. They hate His Sabbath and His sanctuary. They refuse to be controlled. They claim liberty and independence for themselves. "Who is Lord over us." "We are lords, we will come no more unto thee." Socialism, self-dependence, self-will are the indications of their hatred.

(3.) They hate His Son. The Christ of God is the object of their special hatred, as He Himself tells us, "They have hated me." They hate Him as the Son of God; as God's prophet; God's priest; God's king. They hate His person, His work, His cross, His gospel, His claims on their allegiance and love.

(4.) They hate His Bible. A God-written book is offensive to them. It trammels them. It humbles their intellect. It leaves no scope for speculation. It regulates and circumscribes thought. It is authoritative. An uninspired or half inspired book they would listen to; a "man-inspired," a "genius-inspired" book they would admire; but a book whose words are the very words of God they cannot away with.

IV. God's reasons for allowing this. Why not arrest the blasphemy? Why suffer all this dishonour, and opposition, and sin? (1.) To shew what the evil of sin is. One, of God's great lessons to men and angels is sin's evil, "the exceeding sinfulness of sin."

(2.) To shew the abysses of the human heart. What a breadth and length, what a depth and height of evil does it contain! What a hell is the heart of man!

(3.) To shew His power and grace. Great as is the evil, it is not too powerful for Him. He can say, "Thus far, and no

farther." And then He can shew that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. There is salvation to the uttermost; pardon for the chief of sinners; restoration and cleansing for such an earth as ours.

V. God's time for interposing; The close of the Psalm shews that He will interfere at length. He is not slack concerning His promises and threats. And the time for interposition is the coming of His own Son. That is the day of wrath and vengeance. Then His tolerance of evil will be done. Man in his ideas of "toleration" seems to think that God will be as tolerant of sin as he is; that He will not take vengeance; that He will not be so intolerant as to cast any creature into hell! But the day will declare it. Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment! Oh, kiss the Son! The long-suffering of our God is salvation!

XII.

Man's Rejection Of The Christ Of God.

"For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together."—

Acts 4:27.

There are two special points here calling for our notice; (1) Man's rejection of the Christ of God; (2) Man's confederacy or conspiracy against Him.

I. Man's rejection of the Christ of God. The accusation which our passage brings against man refers specially to the cross. It was there the awful rejection-scene took place. All His life through, Jesus was suffering rejection; but it was on the cross that this was consummated. Herod and Pilate, Israel and the Gentiles, with one voice refused Him; and by crucifying Him declared what they thought of Him and his claims. Not this man, but Barabbas! Release for the robber; crucifixion for Jesus of Nazareth! The cross is man's declaration of his mind toward Christ. For the crucifixion-scene is a continuous thing. Jesus is "evidently set forth crucified among us" (Galatians 3:1). He has been held up to view throughout the ages; and universal refusal (save among the few called ones) has been the result. Man,—not the man of this age or the other, but of all ages,—"will have none of Him." The cry is, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Who is it that is thus rejected? He is (1) the Christ; (2) the Holy Child; (3) the Anointed of the Father. The special aspect of character and office under which this Jesus is said to be refused is the last

of these three,—the Anointed one,—the Messiah,—the Christ of God. Personally then, as the Christ, He was openly rejected; and officially it was the same. For the anointing points even more to the office than the person. The anointing of old was for three offices,— prophet, priest, and king. In these three offices,—as God's prophet, priest, and king, he was rejected; and is still rejected and despised.

(1.) Man rejects Him as prophet. He was truly a teacher come from God; never man spake like this man; He was the "word of God"; the "truth of God"; the "wisdom of God"; in Him were "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"; He was the prophet "like unto Moses"; nay he was that prophet who gathered together and embodied in Himself all the prophets of the past, from Enoch downward. Man heard as though he heard not, he refused his words, he refused himself; he preferred other wisdom and other prophets. Israel did so, preferring the teaching of their scribes and rabbins to his. Greece did so, preferring the philosophy of Aristotle and Plato, nay, counting Christ's doctrine foolishness, and Himself a foolish, unintellectual teacher in comparison with its philosophers. This rejection of "Christ the prophet" has led in all ages to the introduction of error, man always seeking to be his own teacher; and specially in these last days, worshipping his own intellect, and listening to his own intuitions, or learning, or eloquence, or philosophy. Christ, the world's one prophet, has been, and is rejected by the world. Man will be his own prophet; he will be "as God" (Genesis 3), delighting in his own visions, and fancies, and ideas of "progress," not dreading error as poison and as sin, nor prizing truth as life and health,—nor rejoicing in authoritative truth (sent from God) as that which can alone deliver him from all uncertainty, and darkness, and bondage. He repudiates the thought that authoritative (revealed) truth is freedom and blessedness, and

unauthoritative (or uncertain) truth is bondage and sorrow. Christ, God's great prophet, speaking with authority, has no favor in his eyes. "Our lips are our own, who is lord over us" (Psalm 12:4).

(2.) Man rejects Him as Priest. The special crime of Christendom hitherto, as represented by Popery, has been the denial of Christ's priesthood, and the preference of a human, or ecclesiastical, or self-made priesthood. But modern infidelity is in another way doing the same thing. It speaks simply of the priesthood of intellect and genius or the priesthood of humanity,—a human, self-constituted priesthood. It rejects the Great High Priest; it denies his sacrifice; it repudiates the altar and the blood. The efforts of modern philosophy and of a large school of theology are directed against sacrificial, or representative, or mediatorial priesthood. Christ's priesthood is thus a thing of scorn. We need no priest (says the world) to reconcile us to God, to introduce us by his propitiation into the presence of God!

(3.) Man rejects Him as King. Christ is God's King; He is the world's King. He holds the reins of earth, and wields its scepter.' He claims earth's homage and submission; He demands that all its goodly and glorious things should be laid at His feet as King of nations; that kings must rule as He would rule were He visibly on the throne; by the same laws, maxims, principles. But this the world cannot tolerate. Kings say, Let us break His bonds; and men say, We will not have this man to reign over us. Earth rejects Christ's kingship and kingdom. It will have none of Him! It will not own Him as earth's real sovereign; it hates the idea of a holy king, administering holy laws; wielding a holy scepter; carrying out a holy legislation; making everything subservient to the glory of Christ, and conducive to the honour of his kingdom.

II. Man's conspiracy against Christ. It is not passive non•acknowledgment of Christ that the world is chargeable with; it is actual denial; nay, it is confederacy,—combination,—against Him and His authority. It is treason, rebellion, organized resistance to his claims,—to all His rights, as prophet, priest, and king,—specially the last. The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take council together; the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing (Psalm 2:1). The united cry is, "We will not have this man to reign over us"; or, "This is the heir, come let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." The professing church, no less than the world, will form part of this universal conspiracy; a conspiracy against Jehovah and against His anointed Son. No king but Caesar! Not this man, but Barabbas! In the political obliteration of all difference between truth and error, between Christ and antichrist, we see this conspiracy; as well as in the denial that government, legislature, politics, should be religious, should be distinctly on the side of Christ. The state must be of no religion, is one of the watchwords of our times. The throne is not the representative of Christ, but is the mere center of social order! So speaks the infidelity of our day.

In this respect the political theories of all parties and of all nations are very much alike. Under different names and formulas they unite in displacing Christ from His seat as earth's only King and true Lawgiver. They honour and elevate error as if it were truth; and they dishonour and depreciate truth as if it were error.

The root of all this is man's hatred of Christ, man's rebelliousness against divine authority and Messianic rule; man's lawlessness and self•will; his rejection of any will beyond what is human. In Christ we have the embodiment of

God's will, and this man rejects; in antichrist the embodiment of man's will, and this the world accepts; for to be independent of the superhuman and supernatural, to be a God to himself, is man's ambition.

XIII.

The Risen Christ And The Power Of The Gospel.

"And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all."—

Acts 4:33.

It was not one shower that fell in those Pentecostal days, but many. The Holy Ghost did not come once for all, as some say, so that we ought not to pray for His coming, or His being shed down. Several times in this book we read of His "coming," his "falling," His being "shed down" (2:2-4, 33, 4:31; 8:15, 17; 10:44; 11:15; 19:6). It is right and scriptural that we should pray for the Holy Spirit. He came first at Pentecost in great power, but He is always "coming," always "falling," always being "shed down." Every conversion is a coming of the Spirit, every revival is a coming of the Spirit. He is not done with coming; He is not wearied with coming. He came in many ways at first, with miracles, signs, and wonders; He has come in other ways since; He comes still to sinners and to saints. He comes as the glorifier of Christ; as the enemy of Satan; as the ingatherer of the lost, as the up builder of the church of God.

Here we have (1) the resurrection; (2) the testimony; (3) the power (4) the grace, or free love of God.

I. The resurrection. It is not so much with death as with resurrection that the apostles had to do, at least in Jerusalem and Judea. The death was a believed fact there, not needing

witnesses. It was resurrection that was the point in question. The Jews knew that He had died; but did He rise again? This was the question. Resurrection, then, was the special subject of apostolic preaching. He is risen, was the message. Tidings of a risen Christ they proclaimed everywhere. Besides the question of the fact, there was also the question of who this risen one was. The Jews believed in the death of Jesus of Nazareth, but they knew not who this Jesus was. And as to resurrection, they knew not the fact itself, and they knew not who the risen one really was. The risen one, said these apostles, is the Lord Jesus; Jesus, who died and rose, is Lord and God. His resurrection has proved Him to be such. God suffered the Jews to slay Him, but He would not suffer His Holy One to see corruption. He raised Him: and by doing so, affirmed Him to be His Son,—the Messiah promised to the fathers,—Lord and King. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus! How much was contained in this! It is a simple fact,—a fragment of history, but it contains much. In its fullness is wrapped up all life and blessing.

II. The testimony. It was the testimony of apostles; and yet it was not as apostles, or with official authority, that they testified, but as men of integrity and good sense, who saw with their eyes, and heard with their ears. The witnesses were unexceptionable; their testimony was thoroughly trustworthy. They spake what they had seen, and testified what they had heard. And this not once nor twice, but continually, wherever they went. They might be in the temple;—they stood up to testify; they might be in the synagogue;—they stood up to testify. Among Jews and Gentiles they testified, coming forward and bearing witness to the resurrection, as a truth, a fact, a reality. That testimony of apostles is also the testimony of the Holy Ghost. It is not as inspired men that, first of all, they speak; yet they are such; and their testimony is the

testimony of the Holy Ghost. Yes, it comes to this at last. We have the testimony of God himself. And if we receive the witness of man, the witness of God is greater. Let us listen, then, to the divine testimony, and believe the resurrection on the testimony of God himself. In the belief of that testimony is life.

III. The power. "With great power gave the apostles witness." The word which they spoke was in itself a word of power. Being the word concerning the resurrection, it was in itself "power"; for that event was the special display and embodiment of the mighty power of God. But apart from this, the "great power" here spoken of was exhibited, (1.) In the accompanying miracles, by which God identified Himself with the apostolic testimony, declaring that their testimony was His truth; for of this the miracles were the seal. (2.) In the accompanying power exercised over, and in, men's souls. God wrought in men's hearts through means of this resurrection truth. God used the apostle's testimony concerning the resurrection of His Son, for awakening and converting souls. As divine power accompanied the stretching out of Moses' rod over the Red Sea; as divine power accompanied Joshua's words to sun and moon; so was it here. Divine power accompanied the testimony. The truth itself was fitted to penetrate and convince; but when urged home by divine power it was irresistible. It smote like a two-edged sword, and yet it healed, and blessed, and comforted, and pacified. God made bare His arm, He unsheathed His sword; He smote, and shook the hearts of thousands, It is this power, this divine power, that we need. Nothing less than this will pierce human hearts, or break down human wills. Divine power! This is what is so often lacking in the ministry. It can only be obtained by men in communion with the God of power. It is nearness to

Him that receives this. Then God identifies Himself with us and with our words.

IV. The grace. It is "great grace"; free love in no ordinary measure. Grace means generally the free love itself; sometimes it denotes the effects or operations of free love, subduing, sanctifying, and renewing. It means both here,—love and its effects, the free love of Him who loved the world, manifesting itself in connection with a declared testimony. The fountainhead of blessing is the free love of God; and this love or grace uses the channel of resurrection and resurrection truth for getting vent to itself upon the sons of men. Never had love been outpoured so plenteously, or with such amazing results. This "great grace" was all subduing, irresistible. It carried all before it. When love arises clothed in omnipotence, who or what can withstand it? And it was all in connection with a risen Christ.

It was thus that the work began, and still goes on! This is our testimony still,—a testimony concerning the risen Christ. This is the very core and kernel of our preaching. Our glad tidings are, "The Lord is risen." It is a risen Lord that we follow. It is to a risen Lord that we are conformed,—a risen Prophet,—a risen Priest—a risen King!

Christ is risen! Then we know that the whole work is done; that the channel is clear and free; recognized as such by the Father. The expiation was finished on the cross; resurrection was not its completion, but the divine recognition of its having been already finished and accepted.

Yes; Christ is risen! Why then be cast down and disquieted? If this be a true testimony which we have heard, why should we not go upon our way rejoicing? This risen Christ is all we

need. In this risen Christ we take refuge, and find all fullness in His empty tomb. He rose! Is not that the best of tidings for a dead world? He rose! And all that are His shall arise when He comes again.

XIV.

Man's Partnership With Satan In His Sins.

"Why hath Satan filled thine heart?"—

Acts 5:3.

These are awful words; the question a very startling one. Why hath Satan filled thine heart? How has he got in at all? How and why has he contrived to fill thine heart? One might say, Better ask himself; he is more likely to know; the robber best knows how he got into the house. But the words evidently imply that it was the sinner's own doing, and that he alone is to blame. It was he who willingly let in the flood,— opened the gates to the enemy.

There is such a being as Satan. As truly as we are, so truly is he. Strange, how men deny the supernatural! What pride! Are we the only beings in the universe? And must there be neither angel nor devil because we do not see, or hear, or touch them? How unreasonable and presumptuous is such skepticism! Yet some of the men who deny the Bible statements as to good and evil spirits, are the men who contend that the stars are inhabited. If science or philosophy will teach them anything of the supernatural they will credit it; but divine revelation is to be set aside.

There are some who ascribe too much to Satan, in order to excuse them selves. Our first mother did so. "The serpent beguiled me." She rejects personal responsibility, implying that the disobedience was not her fault. The serpent pointed out the tempting object, and used arguments, but there his

power ended, unless she had admitted him by yielding. Satan's temptations are no excuse for our sins; nor do they in the least shift responsibility.

The apostle's question to Ananias was certainly a very peculiar and unexpected one. The bringing in of Satan's agency here seems at first sight abrupt—almost out of place. It seemed a mere question of deceit and covetousness. But the apostle, in the power of the Holy Ghost, looked deeper. Even had the circumstances been those of mere common life there might have been the agency of Satan; and we may well ask, How much of Satan is there in the lies of everyday life—so sadly common; for Satan has from the beginning had much to do with lies. He is a liar and the father of lies. But here the circumstances are very peculiar. It is a lie in connection with church membership; a lie by which an attempt is made to deceive apostles who were known to be directly the ministers of the God of truth; a lie in connection with a very high profession of religion; a lie in connection with the first foundation of the church. And it is strange to find Satan here, in the beginning of the church, just as in Paradise at the origin of the race, as if wherever there is any special work of God, whether in Paradise or in Jerusalem, Satan must find his way to it, to prevent or to destroy it by his wiles and lies.

The apostle's question takes for granted that this alliance with Satan was an aggravation of guilt, not a diminution of it. He addresses Ananias, not as a poor helpless creature whom Satan had made his victim and his tool, but as one who had sought Satan's help, who had taken him into partnership, as if without his help he could not have ventured on such a crime, as one who had opened the gate and let in the hosts of the evil one, as his allies and abettors. This was the gravamen, the worst part and consummation of his guilt. He had "done

evil with both hands earnestly." Like Saul, the king, going to Endor for help, so had he gone to hell, and entered into alliance with the evil one—making him his adviser, his counselor, his auxiliary. Yes, these are awful words, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart?"

The apostle's question brings Satan before us, not simply as the enemy of the church, but as the direct antagonist of the Holy Ghost, as if having fought with the Son of God and been overcome, he now entered into conflict with the Spirit of God, to do battle with Him and with the church in whom He dwells.

Satanic influence is a solemn subject, especially in connection with the last days, when the devil comes down, having great wrath, and fills the church and the world with the strong delusions by which men are to be led captive. When this is fully accomplished, then the "spirit of the times" will be "from beneath," and "public opinion" will be the echo of hell, the veritable inspiration of the evil one,—of the prince of this world, as an angel of light. Not "the world" merely, but "the church" shall be influenced by him, so that he shall deceive, if possible, the very elect. The air of the present day seems already impregnated with his hellish vapor of error and falsehood.

Let us consider Satan in connection with the following things, not as palliating guilt or excusing the offender, but as increasing the heinousness of the crime and darkening the character of the sinner.

1. In connection with lies. He is a liar, and the forger of lies; the hater of truth and uprightness. A lie is his own peculiar property and offspring. Let this connection with the evil one render lying of every kind peculiarly hateful; whether it be the

lie of pretending to be what we are not, or of pretending to believe what we do not; or of subscribing creeds which we in our heart repudiate. This last is one of the worst; and it is too common. We find it even among apparently spiritual men.

2. In connection with errors. Apostacy from the faith, departure from the truth, whether in the form of irreverent and reckless speculation, and audacious skepticism, or the questionings of intellectual pride; these are the manifestations of the evil one.

3. In connection with forms. Ceremonies and shows, which look devout and religious—these are Satan's special inventions, and they are singularly efficacious in beguiling a large class of minds, to whom pictorialism, and sentimentalism, and beauty, and music, are the essentials of religion.

4. In connection with unbelief. It may be unbelief in reference to the gospel, or the Bible; in reference to God and His grace, or Christ and his love. Satan is the great suggester of doubt and distrust, the creator thoughts.

5. In connection with his own original falsehood in Paradise. He is uttering the old words of intellect "ye shall be as gods;" or trying to persuade God is too good to punish His creatures for ever by resuscitating the ancient falsehood, "ye shall not surely die."

Be sober, be vigilant! Him resist! It is not "with" or "flee from," but resist, and he will flee from you. Wrestle with principalities and powers. Yield not, but fight, till you overcome.

XV.

Apostolic Testimony To An Ascended Christ.

"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

Acts 5:30,35.

Here is true apostolic testimony; testimony for Christ; testimony for the risen Saviour; testimony before enemies, the council of the Jews, in the temple; in spite of threats, with death in prospect. It is brief testimony, but it contains the whole gospel; good news to the sinner wrapped up in a few plain facts, each one of which is as the light of a new sun. Let us take this testimony, as thus given, in the five following parts.

I. The death. "Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree." The council would not name His name; they spoke of "this man." Peter names Him—Jesus. They said, "ye intend to bring this man's blood upon us;" that is, your object is to prove us His murderers. Peter answers: Yes, it is; ye slew Him, ye hanged Him on a tree; ye who ought to have bid Him welcome as your Christ. Israel's rulers were Messiah's murderers! Two charges are here against them: (1.) they slew Him; they said, Away with Him; they condemned Him; they were guilty of His blood. Yes; he died; and by their hands He died. (2.) They hanged Him on a tree; they doomed Him to the worst of deaths, heaping shame upon Him as the worst of criminals. The great fact is then proved beyond

doubt. His friends proclaim it; His enemies admit that they did the deed. Jesus has died. On this certainty our gospel rests itself.

II. The resurrection. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus. Here we have (1) resurrection, the actual bringing up out of the grave of Him who went down into it. (2) The resurrection of Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth rises as well as dies; the same Jesus in body, soul, and spirit; it is a certainty, established by infallible proofs. (3) His resurrection by God. It is not by chance or natural laws, but by God. God Himself steps in and does the work, that men may know that He acknowledges Jesus as His Son. (4) His resurrection is by the God of Israel, the God of Abraham. It is Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, that raises Him, and thereby proclaims Him Messiah, the promise and hope of the fathers. What a testimony this was to Israel, and to the whole world! "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased?"

III. The exaltation. For Jesus there is more than resurrection. He is not only brought up from the grave, but lifted up on high. He passes from Joseph's tomb to the throne of the majesty in the heavens; from the lowest to the highest place in the universe, with only one intermediate step, viz., His forty days sojourn on earth. And this exaltation is not only to the right hand of God, but specially by His right hand. God, the God of Israel, is the doer of it, by His own right hand and His holy arm. It is an act of divine and glorious power. Every part of this work in behalf of Jesus is the doing of Jehovah. He would have it known how He loves and honours Him; and takes Him to be with Him, like Enoch, "because He pleased Him."

IV.

The honour and the title. A Prince and a Saviour. As a Prince He is Israel's Prince; the Prince of life; the Prince of the kings of the earth. All power is His in heaven and earth. He is King of kings; for he has overcome, and, as the Conqueror, has received power over the nations. As a Saviour, He has deliverance for the lost in His hand. He came down from heaven to seek and save the lost; He has gone up to heaven on the same errand of grace. His name is Jesus, or Jehovah the Saviour; mighty to save; able to save to the uttermost, neither is there salvation in any other. The words do not mean that it was by His exaltation that He was constituted Prince and Saviour; they no doubt intimate that this exaltation was His open and visible installation in heaven as such. But they more directly imply that it was in virtue of His being Prince and Saviour that He was exalted. The exaltation owned Him as such already. The honour and the title were His when on the cross and in the grave; and because of this He is exalted to a seat worthy of these. It is with this Prince and Saviour that we have to do. He is able and willing to save. His names and titles assure us of this. Let us learn the meaning of these, and extract from them the good news which they so plentifully contain. This Prince and Saviour is Jesus of Nazareth; bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.

V. The office. To give repentance unto Israel and the forgiveness of sins. He is qualified by His office as well, as His person to do this. God has exalted Him for this very purpose. As Joseph was set next to Pharaoh to distribute Egypt's corn, so Jesus is set on the Father's right hand to dispense all the fullness of God. Thus we have the security of the Father as well as of the Son for the discharge of His gracious office. He cannot fail; He will not disappoint. Two things specially He is exalted to give. (1.) Repentance, that is a change of mind;

the new heart and the right spirit; alteration of views; deliverance from the evil heart of unbelief. He says, Repent, and He gives repentance. (2.) Forgiveness. "Thy sins be forgiven thee" were His frequent words on earth. They are the same still. He pardons in the Father's name and in His own. "Neither do I condemn thee," are the words which sound from the highest heaven to us. His person speaks pardon, His office speaks pardon, His lips speak pardon and His hands are full of pardon. "Forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin," is His character and His prerogative.

It is with this Jesus that we have to do. The thought of this should banish fear and root out unbelief. All that He is and has is at our disposal. Let us go and get it.

XVI.

The History Of A Called Sinner.

"And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken: The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall skew thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him when as yet lie had no child." —

Acts 7:2-5.

Here is, in brief, the history of one whom God had chosen, and called, and justified; of a sinner saved by God's free and sovereign love; delivered from a present evil world; who obtained mercy of the Lord.

It has two sides or aspects; one pertaining to God, the other to Abraham; the divine and the human. We find these two aspects in every genuine conversion. Not God alone, nor man alone; but both. Not man first, and then God; but God first, and then man; not man seeking God, but God seeking man.

I. The divine. In Abraham's case this consists of two parts: first, the vision; and, secondly, the command.

(1.) The vision. The God of glory appeared. This I suppose to mean that he appeared as the God of glory (or the glory), and in His glory. It was a divine vision, a true appearance, such as in after years appeared to Jacob at Bethel, and to Moses in the bush, and to John in Patmos. It was God coming down and breaking in upon Abraham's idolatry; bursting in upon his chambers of imagery, and revealing Himself! Here was (1) the divine suddenly appearing in the midst of the human, (2) the true in the midst of the untrue; (3) the heavenly in the midst of the earthly; (4) the real in the midst of the unreal. So is it with every genuine conversion; there may not be the actual vision; there may not be the glory which appeared to Abraham in Ur, and to Saul on his way to Damascus; but in all cases, it is God breaking in upon man and man's idolatry; the light of the knowledge of the glory flashing into a soul; the light dispelling the darkness; the true dispersing the untrue; the heavenly supplanting the earthly. This is conversion. It is God coming near; coming in!

(2.) The command. Get thee out—go to the land I shall point to. It thus consists of two parts: calling out from, and calling in to. Come out and be separate; quit your old ways, old haunts, old friends, old lusts; decide for God, decide against the world. Set out for Canaan, the true land of promise, the world to come. It is a very peremptory command. It admits of no compromise, no delay, no lingering. Up, flee, escape, get thee out, look not back, remember Lot's wife. Thus no alternative is left; no excuse is allowed. It is a divine command, urgent and explicit. It addresses itself to every man; it comes up to every sinner; every dweller in Chaldea, or Sodom, or Egypt—every worldling. "Get thee out." Tarry not. Make haste, the danger is great, the time is short.

II. The human. This consists of four parts.

(1.) The obedience. "He came out of the land of the Chaldeans." He hesitated not, but rose up and obeyed. God said, Get out, and he came out. He did not question; he did not make excuses; he did not say, Let me go and bid my kindred farewell. He arose and went. All ties were in a moment broken,—kindred, country, gods, home, property; he forsook all, took up his cross, and went. It is this that God expects of us still. Instantaneous compliance with His command!

(2.) The pilgrimage. He is not led into Canaan at once; and even when brought there, it is to live as a stranger and pilgrim, in the midst of enemies. It is to a life of wandering that he is called; sure of a home somewhere, but not sure of it in any special place; sure of a blessed termination, but not sure of a smooth or easy journey. Abraham's life is ours. Pilgrims and strangers we are upon the earth sure that God has called us, and will care for us and keep us, yet not knowing our way, nor knowing what is to be the nature of that way.

(3.) The tribulation. In Abraham's case it was considerable. Lot's worldliness, that was a trial; the destruction of Lot's family, and of Sodom, that was a trial; the death of Sarah, that was a trial. He had many a sorrow. But the special tribulation is seen, not in himself, but in his seed-toil, bondage, persecution, oppression. Israel in Egypt is a specimen of what we are called to from this Egypt-world. All that will live godly in Christ will suffer persecution. The road to the kingdom is rugged and perilous.

(4.) The inheritance at last. Not Babylon, nor Egypt, but the land flowing with milk and honey; God's land; Immanuel's

land, for himself and his seed for ever—Jerusalem, the holy city. Our inheritance is sure and glorious; not only better than Babylon and Egypt, but better than the earthly Canaan and Jerusalem; incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. We are not only Abraham's sons and heirs, but heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus.

Thus our whole life here is one of faith, from first to last. It begins by God's coming to us, and revealing Himself in His glory; speaking to us, "Get thee out." And then having conducted us through the pilgrimage, it ends with, "Enter in." Our exit from Egypt begins our true life; our entrance into the New Jerusalem is its consummation!

Get thee out, is God's message to each worldling; to each dweller in Babylon, each lingerer in Sodom. Get thee out; this is no rest. All is danger. All is sin. Get thee out, and become the heir of the kingdom.

XVII.

Consuming And Unconsuming Fire.

"And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him, in thee wilderness of mount Sinai, an angel of the Lord in aflame of fire in bush." —

Acts 7:30.

"And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight; why the bush is not burnt. And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee that I have sent thee; When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain."—

Exodus 3:2,3,5,2.

The desert shrubs are like dry stubble. We have seen them set fire to; and in a few seconds they were burnt to ashes. This made the sight which Moses saw more remarkable, though even in an ordinary "bush," anywhere, it would have seemed strange that fire should blaze through all its parts, and yet not consume it at all.

This fire was the Shekinah, or fiery emblem of Jehovah's presence, the same as was seen in Paradise as a flaming sword, and afterwards made the pillar-cloud its chariot, and

its dwelling the holy of holies. It was "the glory," the visible symbol of Him who is a "consuming fire."

"The bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." This excited wonder on the part of Moses, and he turned aside to see why it was so. Then he found that God had come down to that spot, and that within a certain distance from that bush on fire, had made it "holy ground," like "the holy of holies" where the Shekinah dwelt. That it was God Himself who was in that fire is evident from what follows—"Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God."

This "bush," or rather this whole scene, was to be a "token" to Moses,—a pledge of all subsequent fulfillments of the divine promise (Exodus 3:12). And a glorious sign it was!

It was in the "desert", neither in Egypt nor in Canaan; God alone was there; there could be no mistake. It was Jehovah who thus appeared. And the appearance was near what was known as "the Mount of God," and where the glory had dwelt. The mount had probably been the abode of the glory long before the days of Moses. Now that glory came down from the mount to dwell in a desert tree. It shewed itself to this Egyptian exile—this Midianite shepherd,—when busy with his flock. After forty years quiet sojourn here, amid the solitude of pastoral life, Moses is favored with this wondrous prophetic vision; a vision telling much of God, and much of Israel's future story.

It is no common fire. It is the fire of God; the fire which of all others is most fitted to destroy. It is the fire that burned up the sacrifices, that burned Korah and his company, yet it does not burn this shrub. There is nothing in the bush itself to prevent the burning, yet it burns not. It is the fire that made

the whole mountain quake and melt, yet it scorches not a leaf of this bush. How is this?

The fire is the special symbol of divine holiness as directed against sin,—wrath burning against the sinner. Why does it not consume? Because of the blood—the blood of the sacrifice. It is the blood alone that prevents the fire from destroying. The fire is not quenched; it burns; but it does not consume. The blood makes the sinner impervious to the devouring flame.

Burning, yet not consumed! Holy wrath raging in the midst of a handful of leaves, yet not a leaf touched! Let us consider this.

I. In Christ Himself. On Him the divine wrath came down in power. "Thy wrath lieth hard upon me." It was this wrath that produced the agony of Gethsemane, and the outcry on the cross. Under that wrath He dies but He rises again, "by the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Hebrews 13:20). With His own sacrificial blood he met the Father's wrath against sin, and satisfied his righteousness and holiness. The full wrath came; and on the cross He bore it all. He was made sin for us; He was made a curse for us; the cup which was filled for us was drained by Him, nay, turned for us into the cup of blessing. It is with propitiated holiness that the sinner has now to do.

II. In Israel. Again and again has Israel been under wrath. The wrath of God has waxed hot against them, and He would have consumed them; but the blood which speaketh better things than that of Abel pleaded for them, and pleadeth still. It still stays the wrath. It still prevents the fire from destroying the chosen nation. How often in that very desert was Israel

like that desert bush, enveloped in flame, ready to be consumed. "Let me alone that my anger may wax hot against them." Yet Israel lives on—unconsumed—immortal—ever in the fire, or the fire in her, yet still imperishable-beloved for the fathers' sakes, and preserved by the better blood of the nobler victim.

III. In the church. I do not speak of the nominal or visible church; I speak of the true church, and of the searching fire which a holy God has often let loose against her. I cannot call it the wrath of God in her case; it has been the wrath of man; yet it has been permitted of God; and it has tried, and searched, and sifted, and refined—but not consumed. The church's motto is, *Nec tamen consumebatur*: Burning, yet unconsumed. She has age after age been cast into the furnace, but has been unhurt.

IV. The earth. The curse has been upon the earth for man's sin; God's wrath rests upon creation, so that it groans. Nothing but this wrath could produce such a state of things as we see over all the earth. Earth seems ever ready for the devouring fire; it will ere long be set on fire; but it will not be consumed. It will emerge more beautiful and perfect: a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. And what shall prevent its consumption? The blood shed on Calvary,—the blood of the great Sacrifice,—that alone. It is to that blood that man and man's earth owe not only present deliverance from wrath, but future glory.

V. The saint. Each redeemed soul is a brand plucked out of the fire at first; and his daily life is like that of the apostle, "as dying, yet behold we live"; troubled, oppressed, persecuted, yet not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. He is ever in the furnace, yet the fire consumes not. This is the daily life of

all who follow Christ. Through much tribulation they enter the kingdom. In a sense, we drink of the cup which He drank of; we fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ.

O sinner! what is to be thy doom? The fire without the saving blood! Fire, wrath, everlasting burnings without help or remedy. By the fire and by the blood we beseech you to flee from the wrath to come!

XVIII.

The Exodus, The Journey, And The Rest.

"He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years." —

Acts 7:36.

Let me note the following points here: (1) the judgment; (2) the deliverance; (3) the discipline; (4) the rest.

I. The judgment. It was judgment or wrath against Egypt, Israel's oppressor, and in favor of Israel. It was terrible judgment—first the ten plagues, and then the overwhelming in the Red Sea. These were the "terrible things in righteousness" by which God condemned Egypt ere He set Israel free. "I gave Egypt for thy ransom." That which might have fallen on Israel fell on Egypt, and Israel went free. There never were judgments on a nation like those which fell on Egypt. And Israel might be said to be the occasion. "Let my people go that they may serve me," was God's message to Pharaoh, but he refused; he risked the judgment, and the judgment came. It was a judgment for Israel to remember forever. Every one of these ten plagues was connected with them and their deliverance. And the last act of vengeance at the Red Sea was still more strikingly on their account. They stood still, and not only saw the salvation of God in their own deliverance, but in the destruction of their foes. Truly Jehovah, their God, was a jealous God; a consuming fire. The God who pardons and delivers His own is a God who takes

vengeance on them who know Him not. Israel saw the wrath, but it fell not on them.

II. The deliverance. He brought them out of the land of Egypt and the house of bondage. It was Jehovah's own doing; by His own right hand and His stretched out arm He did it. It was a complete and glorious deliverance. Our deliverance from this present evil world is like that from Egypt. It is a deliverance (1) from idolatry; (2) from bondage; (3) from oppression; (4) from death. And then it is (1) a divine deliverance; (2) a free deliverance; (3) a complete deliverance; (4) an irreversible deliverance; (5) a glorious deliverance; (6) a certain deliverance; not ambiguous nor unconscious, as if a man might be out of Egypt, and yet not know it, but certain, so that the delivered one knows that he is free. Am I then delivered? This is the great question. And am I acting, and speaking, and living like a delivered man? Does the love of the Deliverer constrain me?

III. The discipline. In Israel's case it was the discipline of the desert, where they were placed alone with God. There Jehovah proved and tried them, and saw what was in their heart. That desert discipline brought out their unbelief, murmuring, foolishness, and distrust of God. For they were placed in circumstances in which God was all—leader, protector, feeder, companion, healer. They were thrown entirely upon Him. Our discipline, after deliverance, is that of the desert, though there are many points of difference. There was danger to Israel, that was discipline, and so is it to us; enemies, that was discipline, so to us; a waste and weary land, that was discipline, so to us; continual changes, that was discipline, so to us; heat and weariness, that was discipline, so to us; no earthly storehouse for bread, nor earthly well for water, that was discipline, so to us. Every day

was trial, discipline, often chastisement and rebuke, so to us. The words to us are very explicit, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten,"—"Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." God is daily searching us, sifting us, trying us, to bring out the evil that is in us, that we may know ourselves, and that He may have fresh opportunities of bringing out all His supplies and resources. He brings us as He did Israel, into neediness, and straits, and sickness, and danger, and poverty, and sorrow, and care, that He may get opportunities of displaying all His love and fullness. Let us not grudge Him these; they will soon be at an end. It is only here, on this sad poor earth, that He can have such opportunities. When we reach the kingdom, our sin, and emptiness, and weakness, and grief will be done. It is only now and here that God can thus display Himself in His grace, and longsuffering, and plenteousness.

IV. The rest. Israel reached his rest after forty years' wandering. The expression, "brought them out," may refer either to Egypt or the wilderness, for from both He brought them out. But Israel's rest was earthly and temporary, ours is heavenly and eternal. "There remaineth a rest for the people of God." We that have believed do "enter into rest." Let us fear lest, a promise being left us of entering into this rest, any of us should seem to come short of it. There are three steps or stages, (1) out of Egypt; (2) through the wilderness; (3) into the rest.

Yes, there is rest. (1) Rest even here as the earnest; (2) Rest at death, for blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; they rest from their labours;

(2) Rest when the Lord comes, "to you who are troubled, rest with us."

It is rest from weariness, rest from labour, rest from care and sorrow, rest from pain and sickness, rest from sin, and conflict, and fear;— everlasting rest, in the land of rest, the new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

O rest of the weary, come! O day of rest, dawn! Then farewell to the wilderness, and welcome the Canaan of peace, the Paradise of God. The days of our mourning shall lie ended. The songs and everlasting joy shall then begin.

XIX.

The House And Its Dwellers.

"Solomon built him an house."—

Acts 7:47.

"Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house."—Psalm 84:4.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). Concerning these we read: "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the earth hath He given to the children of men" (Psalm 115:16).

Thus heaven is in a special manner the dwelling of God; and earth is as specially the dwelling of man. That which is heavenly is spiritual, that which is earthly is material: the upper is divine, the lower is human. Both are, in their measure and after their kind, glorious; but "the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another."

The two spheres were made for intercourse, not for isolation; yet their distinctiveness is never lost sight of in Scripture. They are not mingled, yet they are not separated. God has to do with both; yet man also has to do with both. They form one vast palace, of which God occupies the higher, man the under chambers; the two parts connected together—at present invisibly, hereafter visibly—by that which Jacob's ladder symbolized, and to which the Lord referred, saying, "Hereafter shall ye see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man."

Thus between these two regions there is correspondence and communion. God comes down to man, and man goes up to God. God takes up his dwelling in man's house, and man in God's. "Lo! I am with you alway," is the one side; "so shall we ever be with the Lord," is the other. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men," is the one side; "made us sit together in heavenly places," is the other. "The word made flesh," is the one side; "partakers of the divine nature," is the other. "I will come in to him and sup with him," is the one side; "and he with me," is the other.

Looking thus at these two great divisions,—the upper and the lower, the heavenly and the earthly,—we see how true are the words of our second text, "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house;" and how true also the counterpart, "Blessed are they in whose house Thou dwellest.' For whether it be man taking up his abode with God, or God taking up His abode with man, it is blessedness—blessedness unspeakable, and full of glory. In the former case, we realize the hymn, which says—

"What must it be to dwell above,
At God's right hand, where Jesus reigns
Since the sweet earnest of His love
O'erwhelms us on these dreary plains!
In the latter case, we take up the church's joyful
utterance:

"Lo! He comes with clouds descending,
Once for favored sinners slain;
Thousand thousand saints attending
Swell the triumph of His train.
Hallelujah!
Jesus comes on earth to reign."

But these two great divisions are brought out in another form, and a lesser scale, here below. God has a house on earth, and man has a house on earth. Between these there is (or ought to be) the same connection as that adverted to above. God visits man, man visits God. Such is the exchange; but the first visit is always on the side of God. It is this that begins the intercourse. God comes to man; He stretches out the hand of friendship; He asks for reconciliation; He presents forgiveness; He knocks at man's door; He enters man's house; He takes possession of man's heart. He is first in love, first in desire for reunion, first in proposals of peace. The Son of God came soliciting our friendship; and today, O man, He solicits yours; and He does so with all earnestness and sincerity. He solicits it because He wants it; He desires it, longs for it, on your account as well as His own; for without it there is a blank in His heart as well as yours.

On earth He sought entrance into human houses, human hearts. He is seeking it still. It is indeed, in one sense, a light matter to be shut out of such. What is it to Him, to whom the heaven of heavens belong, to be shut out of a stable, a ruin, a den of wild beasts? It would not dim His glory, nor lessen His blessedness, though every creature heart should shut Him out, and every human dwelling close the door against Him. His heaven would be as bright, His crown as glorious, His inheritance as infinite, his possession of the Father's love as sure and eternal. Yet, in His boundless grace, He seeks admission into the sinner's polluted habitation! He entreats this, urges reason upon reason for it—as if His whole blessedness depended upon the sinner's compliance; as if being excluded from that human heart were the next thing to His being shut out from heaven!

He knocks, He pleads, He counsels, He weeps. He knocks: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." He pleads: "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord; thought your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow." He counsels: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich." He weeps: "When He beheld the city, He wept over it, saying, O that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace!"

Yes, it is thy house, O man, that He is seeking to enter and possess. "Today I must abide at thy house." It may be now the house of sin, the house of pleasure, the haunt of lewdness, and drunkenness, and blasphemy, the habitation of devils, and the abode of every unclean spirit; yet not the less is He bent on entering it; not the less does He desire to make it an habitation of God, a temple of the Holy Ghost. Do you not see Him approach? Do you not hear His knock? Do you not recognize His voice: "Open unto me;" "Today I must abide at thy house"? What will you gain by shutting Him out? What will you not gain by allowing Him to enter and take possession? Hear, then, His voice; open the door; bid Him welcome; say, "Come in, Thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest Thou without?" Come in and dwell; come in and fill; come in now, and abide for evermore!

But it is not of this side of the case that David speaks in the 84th Psalm. It is not of the blessedness tasted in God's coming to us, but of the blessedness tasted in our coming to God, and abiding in His house: "Blessed are they who dwell in Thy house." God's dwelling with man is spoken of elsewhere; but in this psalm the theme is man's dwelling with God, in God's own house.

I. The House.—There was on earth once a house which Jehovah called His own. He had a land, a city, a mountain, to which He laid special claim, as belonging peculiarly to Himself, Judea, Jerusalem, and Zion; but He had also a dwelling, a habitation where His glory dwelt, which is presence filled, and of which He said, "This is my rest; here I will dwell, for I have desired it." And is it not a great thing to be said of this earth (in distinction from all other spheres), God had a land in it which He called His inheritance; a city in that land which He called His metropolis, "the city of the Great King;" and a building in that city which was named, by preeminence, 'the house of God'? Though the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, yet He chose for Himself a local habitation, and built for Himself a place of special abode. For many an age it was simply a tent, of stakes, and boards, and curtains; in after ages it was a palace, of marble, and gold, and cedar, and brass; but whether it was named Jehovah's tent or Jehovah's temple, it was still the place of His habitation, where He delighted to dwell, and into which He gathered the sons of men for holy worship. Of this David sung: "Honour and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary." There is the gathering of His people, there is the congregation of His saints. And joy is there, and praise is there, and the joyful sound of the harp and psaltery is there, and the happy utterance of hearts is there. "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." It was not the marble, or the gold, or the cedar, or the fine-twined linen, that made it what it was,—Jehovah's house. It would have been his habitation even in the absence of all these, if He had chosen to manifest His glory there. But He appointed these external adornments and material excellences that the outward beauty might tell of

the inner, the lower proclaim the higher, the material the spiritual, the earthly the heavenly, the human the divine.

Whatever its materials were, however, it was "a house," a place for dwelling. It was Jehovah's house, a place which He might inhabit, and into which He might invite His earthly guests, to commune with them, and to rejoice with them; they feasting with Him, and He with them, upon the sacrifice of the brazen altar, and the shew bread of the golden table.

It was but one house, and in this respect unlike the many mansions of our Father's house. But its oneness better served its purpose here, as a symbol of the one Jehovah; a protest against the many temples and the many gods of idolatry; a representation of the one family and the one home; the one Shepherd, the one fold, and the one flock; a proclamation of the one covenant, the one cross, the one blood, the one meeting-place between the sinner and God; the visible and divine affirmation that there is but the one altar, the one layer, the one lamp, the one censer, the one incense, the one mercy-seat, and the one priesthood for the redeemed out of every kindred, and nation, and tongue, and people; the clear announcement, to both eye and ear, of the one peace, the one reconciliation, the one cleansing, the one forgiveness, the one ransom, the one light, and the one glory.

And these are the things which make up the glad tidings of great joy to us, in these last days, concerning the Word made flesh; the Lamb of God, in whom we see God, and meet with God, and dwell with God, as in "a house not made with hands."

II. The dwellers. They of old were Israel. To them pertained the house, and the altar, and the mercy-seat, and the glory.

They had constant access; and some of them, in turn, dwelt in the house of God. Yet they were but representatives of the race; the sons, not of Abraham only, but of Adam; for that house, in certain of its parts, was thrown open to the strangers of every nation, to the men from the ends of the earth. Thus the house of God, built specially for Israel, in Israel's land, symbolized the universal temple, in which the sinners of every nation meet with God, the God of the Gentile as well as the Jew.

But how could any sinner, Jew or Gentile, find entrance into the dwelling of the Holy One, in whose sight no sinner can stand? No doubt the gate stood open all the day; but that was not enough. It told the possibility of entrance; but that was all. It did not, of itself, announce welcome or acceptance. Something else was needed for that. Inside the gate, just at the entrance, stood the altar of sacrifice; and it was the bloodshed there that emboldened the sinner to go in. The open gate might say, Enter; but it was the blood alone that could say, Enter boldly. Up to that altar the entering sinner went; and, recognizing it as that which gave to him the right of entrance and the privilege of worship— identifying himself, as it were, with that altar, and with the penal death there exhibited in the shed blood—he went calmly forward to worship Jehovah, assured, by means of that altar, that it was a safe thing for himself, and a glorifying thing to God, for sinners such as he, to take up their dwelling there.

The cross of Christ is our altar. It is the blood of the cross that gives assurance to the sinner of a welcome on the part of God, and a warrant to worship Him in His house. That cross calls us out of the world, and beckons us to God and to His house. It says, "Come out, and be separate;" it says also, "I will receive you; come in, and dwell with me."

The dwellers there are sinners; some of them the chief of sinners. All that they can say for themselves is, that they did not come unbidden. And if challenged for their boldness in taking up their abode in Jehovah's house, they answer, "God invited me. I came in by the open gate; I came past the altar, and partook there of the cleansing of the blood. Who, then, can frown upon us, or cast us out, or say that we are unfit to remain? Who is he that condemneth? Who can lay anything to our charge?"

Yes, they are dwellers! Not comers, or visitors, or spectators, but dwellers. They shall go no more out; for that which brought them in keeps them in. That which assured them of a welcome at first, assures them of perpetual and unchangeable acceptance and favor; and therefore they hold the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end, remembering the true and blessed words: "Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Hebrew 3:6). And if any one, looking at them in holy wonderment, asks the well-known question, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" the answer is, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple" (Revelation 7:13-15).

III. The blessedness.—"Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house." This blessedness is something true; for it is that which God calls by such a name, and that name His own, for He is the blessed God. It is not sentimentalism, nor fancy, nor excitement; it is blessedness, genuine, abiding, and divine;

filling the soul, satisfying the heart, healing and comforting the whole man.

It is, however, the exclusive property of those who dwell in God's house. None but they enjoy it. Others may have something like it; but all that goes under this name, if enjoyed anywhere else than in God's house, God's presence, is a dream, a vanity, a counterfeit. Outside of God's presence is only darkness and sadness; at the best but fancied, transitory gladness. Outside there is the show, the glitter, the laughter, the dance, the revel, the lust, the jollity, the gaiety, the pomp, the absorbing excitement of pleasure, and the still snore absorbing excitement of business. But what are these? Are they blessedness? Do they not leave the poor heart poorer, the empty heart more empty, and the whole man weary and dissatisfied? Yes. And such must all enjoyment be that is "outside" the house of God—that is apart from God, and away from his presence. The satisfying joy is within, not without the place where God dwelleth.

This blessedness is both negative and positive. It arises out of that which we are freed from, and that which we gain.

1.

The negative. On entering the house of God, we are delivered from the dangers which beset all who remain outside. From the wrath to come we are delivered; and that is blessedness. From the anguish of a troubled conscience we are delivered; and that is blessedness. From the burden of guilt and the dread of God's judgment we are delivered; and that is blessedness. We are safe, we are forgiven, we are plucked from the hands of enemies; and that is blessedness. And while this is true of the redeemed sinner here, it is much

more so of him hereafter, when he enters the New Jerusalem, the many mansions. Death is not there, nor sickness, nor sin, nor pain, nor night, nor the curse, nor any evil. "He shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on him, nor any heat." Surely this is blessedness!

2. The positive. It is one thing to cease from labour, and pain, and fear, and weariness, and quite another to have the active enjoyment of all that our nature can contain. The stone rests, the sleeper rests, the dead body rests; but the rest tasted here by us, and the rest in store for us hereafter, is something more than this.

The sources of the blessedness into which we are introduced into the presence of God here by reconciliation, and into His visible presence hereafter, when we are caught up into the clouds to meet Him in the air, are such as the following:—

(1.) Love. Jehovah's house is specially the abode of love. It was love that thought of such a house for us; it was love that planned it, and love that built it. It is love too that fills it, and provides all its excellencies. Wrath is not here, nor terror, nor coldness; but only love, free love, holy love; love that has regarded us in our low estate, when we were wanderers outside, and that has not deserted us now that we are brought into Jehovah's sacred courts. The love of Father, Son, and Spirit is here. The whole atmosphere is that of love. And this is blessedness! Whether we be speaking of God's house of old for Israel, or His sanctuaries now scattered over earth, or the future house of our Father, with its many mansions, into which we shall all be gathered—this is true. Love is in all these—the past, the present, and the future. It is love that is proclaimed here; the love that seeks the lost, and rejoices

over the saved; the love which, coming down from above, kindles love in these cold hearts of ours; love which calls forth the song of the redeemed: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

It is to the enjoyment of this divine love that we invite those that are without. It is love for the unloving and unloveable; for the lost, for the weary, for the heavy-laden, that they may no longer stand or roam without, in the midst of a cold, heartless, and unloving world, but may come in and share the true-hearted affection, the divine and infinite loving-kindness which, like sunshine, fills the house where the God of love has taken up His abode. Ye whose hearts yearn for love, come and find it here. It is free. Ye who have experienced the vanity of human love, and the bitterness of disappointed affection, come here, and find in God that which man's heart has not to give you—an infinitely gracious Being to love you, and an infinitely glorious object for you to love. What a word of power and gladness is that which the apostle uses, when, in writing to the saints at Rome, he calls them "beloved of God!" Surely this is blessedness!

(2.) *Companionship.* It is not into a cell we enter, a prison, a desert, a place of isolation. It is into a home, a well-replenished habitation, a well-peopled city. Israel's temple was such, to which the tribes went up. Our sanctuaries, our communion tables are such. The future inheritance of the saints in light will be so, for a multitude that no man can number is there. There is the companionship of "the general assembly and church of the first-born." There is the companionship of angels. Above all, there is the companionship of God; of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Blessed are they who dwell in a house where such companionship is found!

Much of life's happiness is derived from the fellowship of heart with heart, and the communion of saints is no small portion of our joy, even here. It is not good for man to be alone, in any sense. And as the solitary desert-palm forms a singularly melancholy object, so is the man who has no one with whom to hold fellowship. But the house of God is not for solitude, but for companionship—the interchange of heart with heart, each one bearing another's burdens, and God especially bearing all burdens; each one speaking to his neighbor of his joy, out of the fullness of his heart; and God Himself, out of the fullness of His heart, speaking to all, and communing with all, giving us to know the reality both of divine and human companionship, and in that the reality of blessedness.

Here, on earth, companionship is imperfect, and is sometimes a hindrance, a vexation. Not so hereafter, in the "house not made with hands," the city of habitation, the eternal tabernacle. There, there is neither the loneliness of solitude nor the vexation of imperfect companionship. No sad desert palm-tree yonder; no pelican in the wilderness; no owl of the desert; no sparrow alone upon the house-top; but true companionship, happy communion; each heart helping to fill the other with its fullness of light and joy, for all have enough and to spare; God Himself, by His presence, keeping up the communication, in all its parts and aspects, and filling us with all the fullness of God—the "fullness of Him that filleth all in all."

(3.) Service.—"They serve Him day and night in his temple." "His servants shall serve Him." It is to serve, as well as to reign, that we are called; to serve the living and the true God; to serve Him as his priests and kings. It is the service of

praise and of work. It is service in the sanctuary, and service throughout the whole of God's universe. It is service of mind and body; service of the whole man; service which brings into happy play all the activities of our renewed nature. It is service in which there shall be no failure, no weariness, and no end. It is not merely liberty, but honour and glory. It is service, in the performance of which we shall fill up that place in God's creation for which we were intended. It is higher than angelical service; for they are but ministering spirits, but we are kings and priests. Ours is priestly, royal service; service on a higher scale and level, which none can rightly render but they who have been redeemed from among men, and brought out of the bondage of hell into the liberty of heaven.

Such service is, in all its parts, blessedness. David knew the blessedness of service in his day. God's Davids since, in all ages, have known the like blessedness, in the midst of weakness and imperfection here. But the full blessedness is in reserve for the everlasting ages, when, in incorruption and immortality, we shall do the work of God, and celebrate his praises in his house and city forever.

Come, then, and share this blessedness. Come and serve; come and praise. Enter now into His house engage yourselves for His service. Work for Him now, and here, for it is blessed so to do. Quit time world's hard service; become servants of the living God. This is blessedness!

(4.) Glory. At present it is not glory, save in anticipation. Earth is not glorious; and God's house upon earth, however fair to look upon, however goodly in its architecture, or its situation, or its adornments, is not glorious, in the true sense. Our dwelling is not amid the glory yet. In a sense, we may speak

of glory now; for all things in the house of God are connected with the King of Glory, and with the glory to be revealed. These walls are glorious, for they echo with the name of this Glorious One. The psalms we sing, and the words we utter, are glorious, for they are all of Him. This book is glorious, for He is its Alpha and Omega. There is glory in the bread of communion, for it tells of His broken body; there is glory in the cup, for it proclaims His shed blood. There is thus glory, even now, in what we see and hear; for here we behold His glory; and here, in His temple, doth every one speak of His glory.

But the glory is coming, in its fullness; the glory of the house, and its indwellers; the glory of the temple, and its worshippers; the glory of the city, and its citizens. And if the foretaste of the future glory be blessedness, what will not the reality and the fullness be? What will be the blessedness of that day, when "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads"; when the palm-bearing multitude shall not merely enter in through the gates into the city, but when they shall stand before the presence and throne of God, nay, when they shall sit upon the throne of Christ; when they shall enter into the meaning of the words, "Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb"?

Christian brethren, learn the blessedness of your calling. It is liberating, quickening, sanctifying, strengthening blessedness. Let it flow in more and more. So shall you shine as lights in the world; so shall your life be truly useful. It is a joyful Christianity, a happy religion that tells upon the world, and that truly represents and reveals Him who is the infinitely Blessed One.

Ye who are still outside—to whom belongs nothing but the irksomeness of a hollow profession at best, and perhaps not even that— come in and partake of the blessedness. Quit your vanities, and betake yourselves to the joy of God. Come out from your halls of pleasure, or your haunts of sin, and take up your dwelling with God. You are hewing out for yourselves cisterns that can hold no water; you are bowing down to idols that cannot save you in the day of wrath; you are heaping up treasure for the last days; you are flinging away your immortality; drinking a sweet but poisoned cup; trampling under foot the blood of the Son of God, doing despite to the Spirit of grace.

XX.

Jehovah's Greatness.

"Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet."—

Acts 7:48.

"Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord: do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord."—

Jeremiah 23:23, 24.

It is of the greatness of Jehovah that these words speak. It is with a great God that we have to do; as great as He is loving, and wise, and true, and holy. "Ascribe ye greatness to our God." Creation says that God is great; sun, moon, and stars; sea and mountains; storms and earthquakes. The Law says God is great. Heaven says God is great. Hell says God is great. The Cross says God is great. The Gospel says God is great. There is nothing little about Him—His works, His words, His ways, His judgments, His mercies. All are on a mighty scale. He is a great God.

I. He is all-present. He is here, He is yonder; as much yonder as here; on the sea and the dry land; at home and abroad, the same Jehovah everywhere. We are as near Him in the road, in the market, in the shop, in the fields, in the railway carriage, in the ship, as in the closet and the church. He is

omnipresent-present everywhere; present Himself truly; not representatively, but really and personally; as much in the desert as in Canaan; as much in India as in Britain. It is with an all-present God that we have to do. In Him we live and move.

II. He is all-seeing. His eye is everywhere; at all times; in all regions and places. As really as every man sees and knows himself, so really does God see and know every man. He sees into the darkest chamber, the deepest dungeon, the most secret cave; on the sea or under the sea, on the mountains or under them, is the same to that eye which is as a damning fire. Who can hide from Him?

III. He is all-filling. It is not merely that He is everywhere, and sees everything; but He fills everything, every place, heaven and earth; more fully and powerfully than light or air He fills everything. Where can we find an empty spot, a void in the universe, a place that is not filled with God? They may be empty of everything else, but they are full of Him. He is the fullness that filleth all in all.

(1.) Let us be reverent and solemn. Levity and folly cannot dwell in His presence, reverence and godly fear are what He expects. Bow reverently before Him, and speak reverently of Him; worship Him. "The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods."

(2.) Let us be humble. He is not our equal, but infinitely far above us. It becomes us to lie low. We are creatures, we are sinners; let us lie lowly. Abjure high thoughts of self. Learn our poverty and helplessness.

(3.) Let us lean on Him. He is so near, so very near; near in all His power, and greatness, and love. Let us rest on Him. His arm is ever stretched out for us to lean upon, for support, for defense, for rest. The greater He is, the more suited to be the prop of such feeble sinners. His strength suits our weakness.

(4.) Let us beware of insincerity in dealing with Him. He sees and fills everything. All things are naked and open in time eyes of Him with whom we have to do. He sees us through and through; searches us. We cannot impose on Him. Of what use is an insincere religion, a hollow profession, lip worship, with Him? What mockery is there in all such hypocrisy! Were God not so great, we might indulge in dishonest service, eye-service; but with so great a God, we must be sincere. A heathen may be a hypocrite, for his god cannot search him; but our God sees us through. Let us be sincere before Him.

(5.) Let us beware of superficial religion. A man may be superficial even when not insincere. But with a God like this, how deep, how real, should our religion be! Let our faith, our repentance, our love, be deep: let them go down to the very depths of our inner man. Let us not be deceived. God is not mocked.

(6.) Let the wicked tremble. With what a great and terrible God they have to do! This God is their Judge; He will one day arrest them; one day take vengeance on them. He is infinitely great—all-present, all-seeing, all-filling. What a God is this! Shall we not fear before Him? Shall we not tremble at the thought of being unreconciled? With such a God for our enemy, what hope have we of safety? He is a God of love, yet no less of holiness and judgment.

XXI.

The Throne, The Footstool, And The House.

"Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?"—

Acts 7:49.

His is one of a great cluster of passages, a constellation of bright texts, that declare the infinite glory of that God with whom we have to do; the God who spared not His own Son; the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (See 1 Kings 8:27; Isaiah 57:15, 66:1, 2; John 4:21-24; Acts 17:24.) In these we find such things as these: (1.) the infinite greatness of God; His greatness is unsearchable and boundless. (2.) The glorious majesty of God; His is the throne of heaven, the royalty of the universe; King of kings and Lord of lords. (3.) The exceeding power of God; He created the heavens and the earth; and yet these are but particles of dust; "the Lord God Almighty is His name." (4.) The eternity of God; He "only hath immortality," the "King eternal, immortal, and invisible," "from everlasting to everlasting God." (5.) The nearness of God; He is not far from any of us; "in Him we live, and move, and have our being"; He is the nearest of all near beings, nothing can come between us and Him. (6.) The condescension of God; He looks to man, thinks on man, stoops to man, longs to make man His dwelling, as if a human heart were a nobler temple and throne than the heaven of heavens. (7.) The love of God; it is not mere condescension, it is love, true, pure, and pitying love; His desire is to revive the spirit of the humble, to revive the heart of the contrite ones, for He will

not contend for ever, neither will He be always wroth, lest the spirit should fail before Him, and the souls which He has made.

With what power and pregnancy of meaning, after reading such texts, do the Lord's words come to us, "Woman, believe me the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

I. Does God want a throne? If so, He must provide it himself. Man cannot. No throne that man ever built or conceived is glorious enough for the infinite Jehovah. He has provided it. He has built the heavens with all their glory and splendor; both these heavens above us, and the heaven of heavens beyond; all are His erection, His adornment, His upholding. "All these things have my hands built, saith the Lord." On that "glorious high throne" He sits; from that He rules the universe. It is the throne of thrones, as He is the King of kings. "Let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our maker" (Psalm 95:6). "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne" (Psalm 89:14). Let us cherish reverence and godly fear towards such a God; and put away all levity, all vanity, all pride in approaching such a throne! It is, we know, a throne of grace; yet it is a throne of majesty and glory. Let us stand in awe. Let us be solemn. Let us be earnest. Whilst we draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith, let us also approach with reverence and godly fear. It is a mercy-seat; but it is the mercy-seat of the Holy One.

II. Does God want a footstool? Then He must make it Himself. Even a footstool for so glorious a God is beyond man's power to create. But He has built a footstool for Himself with his own hands—a place for the soles of his feet; a place under which his enemies shall be thrust, and around which his subjects shall gather in loving adoration, in happy praise and prayer. Earth is his footstool; and here are we living upon that footstool of God. Do we remember this? Do we avail ourselves of this? Do we use it as He wishes us to do, and as our need requires? Is it not an honour for this globe of ours to be called the footstool of God? And does not this make us feel His nearness, and awaken in us the reverence which such a nearness ought to produce? "We will go into his tabernacles, we will worship at his footstool" (Psalm 132:7).

III. Does God want a house? He must build it for Himself. Man cannot. His own hands must build His dwelling. That dwelling must correspond in glory and greatness with the throne and the footstool. God wants a temple, a habitation—not merely a tabernacle like that of Moses, or a marble edifice like that of Solomon,—but a habitation which will last, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. This temple is the Church of God, which is the "temple of the Holy Ghost"; nay, we ourselves individually are the temple: "Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost" (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19). Thus he spoke of old by his prophet (Isaiah 57:15), "I dwell in the high and holy place" (yes, He "inhabiteth eternity"), but it is the spirit of the contrite and humble that He specially makes His abode. As if looking all around through the universe for a habitation, He finds none so suitable, none so glorious as the broken heart of one of His creatures which He has made. Give Him then a house, O man, the house which He wants. Let Him dwell in you. Let

Him make a temple of you. Let Him manifest His presence and 'His glory in you.

IV Does God want a rest? If so, who can provide it? Not man. He cannot give himself rest. Only God Himself. He found rest on the seventh day in the new creation which He had pronounced very good. That rest was disturbed by man's sin; and not till the coming new creation will God's full rest be obtained, in a world ransomed by blood and restored by His power. But meanwhile He is seeking a rest. And where sin is, there can be no rest for a holy being. Only where the blood is that cleanseth sin can He rest. Hence the altar, from the beginning, was his place of rest; and afterwards the tabernacle and temple where that altar stood. That altar is represented by the cross of Christ. So that we may say the cross is the resting-place. There God has found rest; and in the soul of every one who is gathered to that cross and sprinkled with that blood. The soul on which the blood of sprinkling rests is one of God's resting places. All this He has provided for Himself. All these His hands have made. There "He rests in his love." Thus we find rest in God, and God finds rest in us. We are his resting place and He is ours. We joy in Him, and He in us. He is our temple (Revelation 21:22), and we are His (Ephesians 2:22); we dwell in Him, and He in us.

XXII.

The Joyful Traveller On His Way Home.

"He went on his way rejoicing."—

Acts 8:39.

He was a heathen; he had lived among heathen; he was returning to his heathen brethren and a heathen land, yet "he went on his way rejoicing." He had not become richer in earth's goods; he had not been loaded with the world's honours; he had not secured an alliance with the Roman emperor, yet he went upon his way rejoicing. So should it be with us. This is the description of a Christian's life and walk on earth.

I. Where did his joy come from? He had not brought it with him. He had come up on the mere report that went abroad through heathendom of the temple, and altar, and sacrifices at Jerusalem; he was but groping his way to the true mercy seat; he seems to have left Jerusalem much as he came, with but a glimmer of light. Where, then, did his joy come from? Not from within, but from without. It came from what he heard from Philip, or rather from what he read in Isaiah. But how did that statement bring him joy? It told him of a sin-bearer—long predicted, come at length. It was the knowledge of this sin-bearer that sent him on his way rejoicing. There had previously been a burden and a sorrow upon him. Sin oppressed him. Unpardoned sin made him a sorrowful man. He had come from Ethiopia to Jerusalem with this burden; he was going away with it, much as he came, when the Holy Spirit turned his eye to the Sin•bearer, the Lamb of God. He

saw that the sin-bearing work was done; he accepted the divine testimony to that finished work; and in the acceptance of that testimony he found immediate joy. That testimony was to him a joyful sound. He went upon his way rejoicing. What he read was as blessed as it was true.

II. Where should our joy come from? From the same testimony to the same finished work. The passage of Scripture may be different; that matters not. There are a thousand passages, and a thousand testimonies, all bearing on the one cross, the one propitiation, the one Lamb of God, the one blood, the one sacrifice. Any one of these testimonies in the hand of the Holy Spirit can pour in gladness into the soul. The sinner is not happy. His sin comes between him and joy. The more he knows of sin, the more his sorrow increases; the heavier his burden grows. That burden must be removed ere he can taste of joy; and it can only be removed by approaching the cross. The hand of the crucified One is the only hand which can lift it off. The sorrowful soul looks to the cross and is lightened. That which he sees there speaks peace to him, and bids him go upon his way rejoicing. Time source of peace is one, for former ages and for this. There is but one well of living water, out of which all the flock from the beginning has been watered by the good Shepherd: one treasure house of joy, out of which the family of faith has been made rich.

We are called to make use of this storehouse of joy. If we do not, we sin. We despise the provision which God has made for the sinner's joy. It is a free and open fullness, and great is our guilt if we remain unfilled. It is our sin as well as our calamity if we go not on our way rejoicing. God means us to be joyful men. He has made provision for our being so. He calls on us to be so. He makes the refusal to be joyful one item of our

condemnation. "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth" (Isaiah 64:5); we are to "hold fast the rejoicing of the hope" (Hebrew 3:6); to "rejoice in the Lord" ; to "rejoice in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:1-3).

How then does it happen that so few are like this Ethiopian ruler? The question is much more momentous than is commonly supposed. For it is generally assumed that a Christian man may be all right, and yet have no joy. Why is there so little joy among Christians?

(1.) Not because God does not wish them to have it. It is not forbidden fruit. He has again and again bidden them rejoice and be glad. He has not left them doubt as to what is His will upon this subject.

(2.) Not because joy dishonours Him. Popery may say so, because her object is to keep men in bondage; but the gospel does not say so. Gloom dishonours God; joy honours Him. It speaks well of Him, and shews men what a God of goodness and grace He is.

(3.) Not because joy is not safe for us to have. True joy is the safest of all things. It makes a man steadfast and earnest. It enables him to keep his balance in this world. It gives him genuine strength of will. It makes him strict and circumspect. It is one of God's ways for keeping us in the narrow way. It is the Christian's true ballast.

(4.) Not because God's sovereignty interposes. God's sovereignty no more comes between a Christian man and joy than it comes between him and holiness. It no more keeps a man sorrowing than it keeps him sinning. It is a libel on God's

sovereignty to say that it keeps a man from rejoicing in the Lord.

(5.) Not because joy was not meant for these days. Some say it was only meant as a cordial for days of persecution, not for the church's more prosperous times. How untrue. Joy was for all times, circumstances, ages, the last as well the first.

(6.) Not because it unnerves us for work. "The joy of the Lord is our strength." There is nothing so unnerving as gloom and depression; nothing so invigorating and strengthening as joy. We work with far greater success and earnestness when full of joy.

Nay, it is one of the fruits of the Spirit; it is repeatedly recommended by the apostles; it was practiced by the early churches; it is one of the special marks of a believing man: "whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." The possession of it makes us shine as lights in the world, and attracts men to Christ. Oh how it cheers, sustains, strengthens, revives us from day to day! There is little joy among us, chiefly because there is so little simple believing of the good news.

It is joy from God; joy in God; it is the joy of God. To all this we are called. That which we believe is full of joy; "glad tidings of great joy"; the news of the propitiation finished on the cross. Should we not, then, go upon our way rejoicing?

That which we possess is full of joy. The present favor and love of God. That which we hope for is full of joy. We hope for a coming Lord; for resurrection-glory; for an everlasting city and kingdom. Should we not go on our way rejoicing?

Ah, surely we do injustice to Christ, to His grace, to His word, to His gospel, if we are not joyful. We misrepresent Him. We bring up a false report of Him, and of His love; of His cross, and of His blood; of His peace, and His pleasant land.

XXIII.

The Interview With Jesus The Sinner's Turning Point.

"But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus."—

Acts 9:27.

This is Barnabas's account of Saul's conversion. The event was no common one; never has such a peculiar miracle been heard of before or since; it was a thing much to be remembered by the church of God; it was brought about in a very marvelous way, yet the relation of it here is singularly brief and simple—"He had seen the Lord in the way, and He had spoken unto him."

Had some of us moderns narrated the wonderful event, we should have entered largely into descriptions of many points connected with it; the setting out from Jerusalem, the journey, the scenery and adventures by the way, the hills and plains of Palestine, the magnificence of the mountain-gorges of Lebanon, the noble plain of Syria, in the center of which Damascus sparkles like a gem, specially the spot of the striking down—the glory, the terror, the voices; but Barnabas passes all these by, and draws our notice to one single point, which to him, and to the Holy Spirit by whom he spake, was the one important thing in the scene, the meeting between Saul and Jesus; between the persecutor and the object of his persecution; between the sinner and the Lord.

It was a strange meeting this of two as different as are light and darkness—two opposing hosts—Christ and Antichrist. Which is to prevail? And what shall be the issue? Life or death? Shall man or God be the conqueror? Once before there had been a meeting of this kind between man and God—on the cross of Christ. The issue of that meeting was the death of the Son of God. Man conquered. Earth and hell prevailed. But here the issue is reversed. Man is conquered. God prevails. Yet the result of the victory is the life, not the death of the conquered one. The vanquished one does not die, but live. God has triumphed, yet man has triumphed too. For the battle and the victory were not like man's battle and victory of hatred, but the battle and victory of love. It was love overcoming hatred, not hatred overcoming love. In such a case, what but life could be the issue?

The details of the conversion are not given us in these words, only the means by which it was accomplished. What the process was we are left to learn from the means employed; "he had seen the Lord in the way, and He had spoken to him." He had set out from Jerusalem an enemy to Christ, and he reached Damascus a friend. What had produced the change? He had seen the Lord in the way. He left the one city an unbeliever in the gospel, he came to the other a believer in it. How was this? He had seen the Lord in the way. This is the history of his conversion, the secret of his change; this accounts for it all; we do not wonder at it now.

(1.) He had seen the Lord. (2.) The Lord had spoken to him.

I. He had seen the Lord. Not every one that saw the Lord was converted. Judas saw Him, Pilate saw Him, the thief saw Him, yet they remained unconverted. Still, when conversion does

take place, this is its cause. What did Saul see? He saw the glory, which as a Jew he knew to be the Shekinah, or glory of Jehovah; and he saw the human form of the Son of man; he saw Him as Jehovah and as Jesus. To Jesus of Nazareth belonged that heavenly glory which he knew to be the glory of the Lord God of Israel. True, he was blinded by this glory, but not the less did he see it. As the Lord shewed Himself to Thomas to be truly man, so did He shew Himself to Saul to be truly God. Yes, the Lord shewed Himself to Saul, amid that sight was irresistible. Flesh and blood had nothing to do with it. The vision was divine, and the power accompanying it was Almighty. Who could resist it? It bore down hatred, unbelief, self-will, self-righteousness; all these fell down before it like the walls of Jericho before the trumpets of Israel.

II. The Lord had spoken to him. The substance of His words was, "I am Jesus;" but that contained much. It must have utterly confounded him; for it tore up by the root every part of his former self, shewing him by a word, himself as one of the worst of criminals—the persecutor of the Son of God. It told him that all was wrong with him, his creed, his religion, his faith, his hope, his life, all was wrong. It said, Thou art a sinner, thou art an unbeliever, thou art a persecutor of the saints of God, a murderer of the Son of God. His blood is upon thee, and the blood of His saints. And proud as thou art in thy self-righteousness, thinking thyself a great one, armed with power to slay and to destroy, thou art a poor helpless worm fighting against God; kicking against the pricks. But I am Jesus; I am the Saviour. Thus the Lord spoke to Saul, and what He said was an entire reversal of every idea that was in Saul's mind regarding Jesus and regarding himself. A minute before none was so excellent or righteous in his own eyes as this Saul, this Pharisee, this Hebrew of the Hebrews, this keeper of the law; none so contemptible as Jesus of Nazareth.

Now all is reversed. Saul has decreased, and Jesus has increased. Saul is cast down to the ground, and Jesus of Nazareth set on high. Could any change be more entire? Could any transformation be more simple? Yet what does it amount to? Each has been set in his own place, and has got his proper value and honour assigned to him. That is all. Saul is Saul, and Jesus is Jesus. Man is man, and God is God. The sinner is the sinner, and the Saviour is the Saviour. This is the rationale, the explanation of the whole process. This is the key to the change, the secret of the conversion.

This is in substance the history of every conversion. Only let a sinner see Jesus, and all is changed. All the varieties of experience may be reduced to this; and all the biographies of saints, common or wonderful, resolve themselves into this: "They saw the Lord in the way, and He spoke to them." They are not all so sudden or so direct as Saul's; but they all tell the same story. They do not all see Him in the same way, nor hear the same words; but they "see and hear"; and of that which they see and hear Christ is the Alpha and the Omega. In spurious conversions there is something faulty here. Something perhaps is seen or heard, but it is not that which Saul of Tarsus saw and heard. It is about feelings, or doctrines, or visions; but not about Jesus of Nazareth.

This is all that a sinner can say about his conversion. No doubt he can tell of many subordinate things, many details; but the sum is this, "He saw the Lord in the way." Remember some of the New Testament conversions—Andrew and Simon leave Capernaum one morning in their boat to fish—careless Jews, like the other fishermen of the lake. They return changed. What has befallen them in the course of the day? Ask them the secret of their change. They will tell it at once, "They saw the Lord in the way." So with Matthew at the

receipt of custom. So with Zaccheus on his sycamore. So with blind Bartimaeus; and so with all the rest. Ask any, ask all of them how their change took place. In substance they will return the same answer, "They saw the Lord in the way." There might be some differences as to what, they saw and heard; but it all bore on these two points, who and what Jesus is, who and what we are ourselves.

Our first meeting with Jesus will not be our last. It will be daily true of us. "They have seen the Lord in the way." We go out burdened, we come in unburdened. How is this? We have seen the Lord in the way. We awake perhaps weary and troubled, and set out on the day's duties with a sigh; we have not gone far when all weariness departs, and trouble is exchanged for gladness. How was this? We met the Lord in the way. We lie down perhaps oppressed and fretted, we awake with a light and merry heart. How was this? The Lord met us in the night watches. We begin some Sabbath under the pressure of sin; we are weak and tempted; fightings without and fears within. But ere the evening has fallen around us we are singing, "who is he that condemneth"?—"thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory." How is this? We saw the Lord in the way. It may be that, as in the days of His flesh, we came across His path or He ours, it matters not. In either case, we meet Him; He speaks, and all is well. Sometimes we recognize Him at once; sometimes the relief comes so natural that, like Mary, "We know not that it is Jesus," but that matters little. Seen or unseen, He has effected the cure.

Ah, this is the cure for all sickness; this is the secret of all strength; this is deliverance from all perplexity; this is consolation under all sorrow. Nothing else will do. This will. And He is always to be met with. He is never far off.

Sinner, have you not seen the Lord? He proposes a meeting; a meeting that will settle everything between you and Him; a meeting at which He will turn a Saul into a Paul, opening your eyes, and bringing you out of darkness into marvelous light. Grant Him this meeting and all is well.

XXIV.

No Difference.

"What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."—

Acts 10:15.

The words here are very expressive—"What God hath cleansed," or hallowed, that "do not thou defile," or "make unholy"; that is, "treat as unclean." If God makes clean, who are we to dispute this? Shall we raise a wall that God has thrown down?

There was then a distinction between clean and unclean—indicated by the calling of Abraham, but more explicitly by the Levitical rites and laws; yet appointed from the beginning, for we read of it in the time of Noah; a distinction applicable (1) to men; (2) to food; (3) to dwellings; (4) to land; (5) to animals. All this was to remind men of the distinction between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent—the church and the world.

This distinction was a divine one; made by God for special ends. It was not man's doing at all; nor did it come by chance, nor by reason of the superiority of one nation physically and intellectually. It was constituted (1.) By God's will; His purpose drew the line, and marked off the Jew from the Gentile. (2.) His word; His revelation raised the wall, and pointed it out. (3.) Sacrifices. All the Mosaic rites were not only intimations that a separation had been made, but they were parts of the dividing wall.

This distinction was meant as God's standing testimony to certain things; a testimony not of a day, but which lasted some sixteen centuries in Israel, and some four thousand years in all; which was in force when Christ came, and which He observed; though sometimes going beyond it in dealing with Gentiles, such as the centurion, or the woman of Tyre.

This distinction declared such truths as the following (1.) That all creature hood is not necessarily on the same simple level; and that creatures, though all the work of God, may enjoy different measures of His favor. (2.) That these differences are the result of God's sovereignty, and not the fruit of man's will, or the creature's own merit or demerit. (3.) That there is such a thing as consecration to God (a being specially set apart), enjoyed by men, or nations, or places, or things—this outer consecration being the symbol of inner holiness. Such was the testimony kept up by God, in and through Israel. Holiness to the Lord, was inscribed upon them and their land. They were a people brought nigh to God, while others were afar off. So is it with the church still, in contrast with the world.

But at Christ's death there was a change. The distinction had served its purpose. If continued longer, it would defeat its object (as it was beginning to do in the case of the Pharisees), and give prominence to the mere outward privilege. God interposed, and threw down the middle wall of partition; not rejecting the Jew, yet accepting the Gentile; not obliterating national distinctions, but making these no longer of any importance, and attaching to them no spiritual or religious privilege. Without lowering the Jew, he lifted up the Gentile; not making the Jew unclean, but the Gentile clean; so that from that time there should be (so far as access to God was concerned) "neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free." It

was respecting this that the revelation was made to Peter in the vision or trance. He was taught that the Gentile was now made as clean as the Jew; that God had done it, and that even he, though the apostle of the circumcision, must at once accept the verdict, "What God hath cleansed, that do not defile." Let us, then, learn from this the divine lessons

I. The one broad level of humanity, in the sight of God, for blessing. There are various levels in other respects, various ranks and differences; national, personal, intellectual, educational; rich and poor, bond and free, male and female, savage and civilized; but here, in connection with spiritual blessing—acceptance, favor, and the like, all these disappear. God' has made of one blood all nations of the earth. He is no respecter of persons; nay, many that are last shall be first.

II. The rebuke here given to national pride. The Jew despised the Samaritan, and the Samaritan the Jew; both despising the Gentile. There was the pride of birth, the pride of descent, the pride of race. Here was God's rebuke to all such pride. "What God hath cleansed that defile not." Let us beware of national pride; boasting of ourselves, our national prowess, our national genius, our national arts, or our national progress. Who maketh us to differ?

III. The rebuke given to spiritual pride. This spiritual pride is twofold—the personal and the ecclesiastical. In the former, it comes from the idea of being better, or holier, or sounder in faith, or more advanced in doctrine than others; and the superciliousness thus arising shews itself in words and deeds in many ways; and is most offensive both to God and man. In the latter, it comes from the idea of belonging to a superior church, a purer or more apostolic church; and the pride of churchmanship is the greatest and most offensive of all. It is

quite as imperious and haughty as Judaism in its worst age. The pride of rank or family is nothing to it. It stoops not, but only to revile or hate. It acknowledges no man to be clean but the members of its own sect.

IV. The open door for all. There is no restriction now. God's free love goes out unconditionally,—without restriction or qualification,—to the lost. No one need ask the question, Am I at liberty to go to God as I am? The door stands wide open. The entrance is free. The invitation is to all. God's message is to "every creature" in the everlasting gospel. The righteousness of God is unto all. There is no hindrance now, and no exception. "Ho every one," is God's voice of sincere and earnest pity to the sons of men. Come, taste my love; enjoy my pardon; become my sons and daughters!

XXV.

Peace To The Far Off And The Near.

"Preaching peace by Jesus Christ."—

Acts 10:36.

It is of "peace" that we are now to speak; that which the Holy Ghost calls peace; that which is the theme of the Bible from first to last; that which is the need of earth; that which is the possession of heaven.

Learn, then, (1) what peace is; (2) what it is not; (3) where it comes from; (4) how we get it; (5) what it does for us.

I. What it is. It means sometimes friendship or reconciliation; and sometimes the state of soul resulting from these. It is the quieting of the soul after any excitement, or vexation, or trouble of conscience. In our text it specially means reconciliation with God; the removal of His anger, and the renewal of broken friendship (Isaiah 12:1, 2). Peace here is equivalent to peace with God; though it may include, as the consequence of this, peace of soul—the peace of God. It is the calming of the storm by the stilling of the raging winds; it is the soul's calm, a divine and heavenly calm—from God Himself. O man of earth, is this peace yours?

II. What it is not. It is not mere indifference. The frozen lake is calm; but that is not the calm we desire. The sea on the lee side of some island•cliff is calm, but that is simply because the wind is blowing in a particular way. It is not the security of self-righteousness. That is unreal peace—a hollow security.

It is not the peace of prosperity, or pleasure, or earthly ease. There is the world's peace, and the devil's peace, and the peace of a seared conscience; but these are not what God calls peace. It is not anything that arises from forgetting God, or from imagining Him to be such an one as ourselves, or from losing sight of sin, or obliterating the law, or denying the cross. Bible peace is something different from all these.

III. Where it comes from. It does not come from self, or sin, or the flesh, or the world. Nor does it come from the law, or our own goodness, or our prayers, or religiousness. It comes directly and solely from Jesus Christ; from Himself and from His cross; from Him as Jesus, from Him as the Christ. In Him we have the love of God and the righteousness of God; and in the knowledge of these two there is peace for the sinner. All that can be comprehended in that word "peace" is contained in Him, and comes from Him. He is the Prince of peace; the way of peace; the fountain and the river of peace. "He is our peace"; "He has made peace through the blood of His cross." That which makes peace, and which gives peace, has been finished and perfected in Him upon the cross. Peace is not a thing to be made by us. It was made by Him; He finished the reconciling work, the peace-making work, eighteen hundred years ago. It is done. The foundation has been laid in Zion. The well of peace was then filled and opened. Be ye reconciled, is our message now. And this message of peace is to all; for He who is our peace is Lord of all. God so loved the world that He gave His Son. Who is there among the troubled sons of Adam that can say, There is no ground and no message of peace for me? Your need of it is your warrant for receiving it; and the cry to you is, "Whosoever will."

IV. How we get it. Our text says it is "preached" to us; or more exactly, "the good news of it are brought to us." The

pacifying, conscience•purging work is done; and God has sent us His account of it. The Holy Ghost has put on record His testimony concerning it, for our sakes. God has not done a work and then hidden it; leaving it to us to find it out. He has lifted up His voice; He has sent abroad His messengers, commanding them to preach "the gospel" to every creature, that is, to say to every creature that it is for him. We believe this divine record, this testimony of the Holy Ghost, and the peace contained in Him who is testified of, flows into us. He that hath the Son hath life, hath peace. We believe, and are at peace; being justified by faith, we have peace with God. It is not first faith, and then reflection upon our own faith, that gives peace; that would be extracting peace from our own faith, not from the finished work of Golgotha; that would be believing in our own faith, not in Jesus. Our simple reception of the testimony of the Holy Ghost does for us all we need.

V. What it does for us. (1.) It purifies. No peace, no purity. It is not first purity then peace, but first peace then purity. (2.) It liberates. Being filled with peace, we are free. The possession of this peace is the liberty of the soul. Without peace we are in bondage and darkness. (3.) It satisfies; it fills the soul; it takes away weariness and emptiness. (4.) It animates. Till peace takes possession of us we are sluggish in the cause of God. Peace makes us zealous, brave, self-denied; willing to spend and be spent, to do and suffer. It makes our faces shine. It turns our eye onward to the Lord's appearing. So long as we are not in peace, we are afraid of His coming; when peace fills us we desire it. We say, Come, Lord Jesus. What is there that this peace cannot do for us?

XXVI.

Forgiveness Through The Name Of Jesus.

"To him give all the prophets witness, that, through his name, who sooner believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."—Acts 10:43.

"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," said the angel to John (Revelation 19:10); that is, the burden of all prophecy is Jesus; He is the first and the last of the prophetic word. So here, Peter says, "To Him give all the prophets witness"; or, "to this man it is that all time prophets bear witness."

And who is this man? The previous verses are the answer. His name is Jesus of Nazareth. He was a man anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. He went about doing good. He healed all who were oppressed of the devil. God was with Him. He was slain, and hanged on a tree. He was raised up the third day. He was shewn openly to chosen witnesses. He was to be preached not only as Saviour, but as Judge of the living and the dead. This is the man. Of this man not only all the apostles and disciples have spoken, but all the prophets of old. Their testimony finds its fulfillment in Him. Their words converge on Him.

Their testimony is that of the Holy Ghost. It was He who drew the marvelous picture of Messiah in the Old Testament, in which we find the exact and perfect portrait of the man Christ Jesus. This portrait was not sketched at once, but in parts and fragments, in different ages. It was outlined in Paradise, and afterwards filled in by holy men, who, without

concert with each other, did their various parts as taught by the Holy Ghost.

"This man" is then the man of prophecy, the man of the Bible, the man of the ages. It is He of whom all the prophets have spoken, and to whom the heathen traditions dimly point. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell. Let us hear the prophetic and the apostolic testimony to Him as given here. Let us learn what there is in Him for us.

I. There is remission of sins. It is this that is man's first need. He is condemned; under wrath; the sentence has gone out against him. His iniquities have come between him and God, between him and peace, between him and heaven. Unpardoned sin is a burden too heavy to be borne. Not sin merely as a disease or misfortune, but sin as a legal and judicial thing; a thing which inexorable law must deal with; a thing which the righteous Judge has condemned and must condemn. Of this sin there is remission; and God sends man remission as the first thing needed; that with which the rectification of all his spiritual disorders must begin; that which is absolutely needful in all his dealings with God, and in all his hopes of the kingdom. Forgiveness! This is God's first message to man. Forgiveness free and ample; sure and immediate; conscious and happy; eternal and irreversible. Forgiveness without reserve; forgiveness to the chief of sinners; forgiveness of all sins. In this forgiveness is, of course, wrapped up peace with God, peace of conscience, "the answer of a good conscience toward God," the removal of the heavy burden that weighed the sinner down, of the dark cloud that overshadows all his life. O man, hast thou found remission? Hast thou tasted forgiveness,—such a forgiveness as God only can give,—He who is the "Lord God,

merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and slow to wrath; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin,"—He who says, when forgiving Israel, "I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart and with my whole soul" (Jeremiah 32:41),—He "who forgiveth all our iniquities, and removes our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:3, 12),—He with whom there is forgiveness that He may be feared,—He who, through the lips of His only begotten Son, said once to a sinning woman on earth, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven?" O man, if thou hast not found this forgiveness, rest not till thou hast, for what is life without it? And if thou art still uncertain about it, rest not till thou hast made it a certainty, for uncertainty on such a point as this is bondage, and darkness, and sorrow.

II. There is remission of sins through His name. His "name" means that which He is revealed and declared to be; that by which He is distinguished from all others; that which interprets and proclaims His true character. It is not merely His "names," though these are all expressive of His grace and fullness, but His "name," His whole revealed character as the "only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Forgiveness comes to the sinner through that which Jesus is declared to be and to have done; and we, in going to God for pardon have respect simply to that which is in Him, not to any one thing in us, as qualifying us for pardon. As unforgiven, we go to Him for forgiveness; as condemned, we go to Him for "no condemnation"; and all through His name; that name of love, and power, and blessing, in naming which before the Father we get all we need.

III. This remission of sins comes to us by believing. Out of His name we extract the pardon simply by believing what God

has told us about that name. "He that believeth is not condemned." In believing we take the remission which God has deposited for us in His Son; and, being justified by faith, we have peace with God. Believe and be forgiven is God's message to us. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Not working, or feeling, or striving, but believing, brings us pardon.[2] We consent to do nothing and be nothing in the matter of pardon, but to let God do it all. For faith is no effort. The effort to act faith, as some speak, shews that we neither know what faith is, nor what we are to believe.

IV. This remission of sins is for any who will take it. Here we have the well known "whosoever," assuring that to this proffer of pardon there is no limit and no exception. It is wide as sin; it is wide as the name of sinner; it is wide as the free love of God. That no man is pardoned till he believes, is the declaration of scripture; that every man is pardoned who believes, is no less so; but that to every man to whom God sends the gospel, He sends with it and in it the offer of forgiveness, is as certainly the truth of God. He sends His word abroad; and in that word is Christ, and in that Christ is pardon; so that to the condemned and ruined ones of earth He presents a simple word, and a full Christ, and a free pardon.

Poor child of earth, on whom condemnation rests, take the proffered pardon at His hand; take it as thou art; take it at once; take it and rejoice in deliverance from the wrath to come! "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins."

It is not "work and be saved," or "feel and be saved"; it is, "believe and be saved."

XXVII.

The Baptism Of The Holy Ghost.

"And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning."—

Acts 11:15.

This is one of the many repetitions of the Pentecostal scene which occurred in early days. Most unscriptural is the statement of some that the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost was a thing done once for all, not to be repeated, and that we are not to pray for or expect such things again. The whole of the "Acts of the Apostles" is a direct refutation of this piece of human fancy. Wherever the apostles went there was a repetition of Pentecost, whether at Jerusalem, or Samaria, or Antioch, or Corinth. Every conversion is a repetition of Pentecost; it is doing the same thing for an individual soul as was done for three thousand then, by a similar process, and by the same power—the power of the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost is the heritage of the church. The Old Testament saints possessed Him; and still more the New. This is our heritage, the heritage of every believing man. "We receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:14). He is the heritage of the last days as well as of the first. The possession of the Holy Ghost, the quickener, the teacher, the purifier, the energizer, the comforter; this is our privilege. He is the "seal," the "earnest" of the inheritance. His personal presence and indwelling (not vaguely, "in the church," as Romanists and many Protestants speak) in the soul is that which the Father has promised. It is this that

makes the true, and earnest, and holy man; it is the lack of this that makes time half-hearted disciple, the formalist, the whited sepulchre. Nothing less than this can satisfy us.

Let us note the different expressions used concerning Him and His work in the history of the early church:—"Baptized with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 1:5); "after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you" (1:8); "they were filled with the Holy Ghost" (2:4); "I will pour out of my Spirit"(2:17, 18); "He hath shed forth (poured out) this which ye now see and hear" (2:33); "ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (2:38) ; "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (4:31); "they received the Holy Ghost" (8:17); "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost" (10:38); "the Holy Ghost fell on all them who heard the word" (10:44); "on the Gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost" (10:45); "who have received the Holy Ghost" (10:47); "the Holy Ghost fell on them" (11:15); "John baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost" (11:16); "the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost" (13:52); "when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came on them" (19:6).

Such are the different ways in which the baptism of the Holy Ghost is represented; such the different figures under which the bestowal of this great gift on us is set forth; a coming down, a pouring out, an anointing, a shedding forth, a coming upon, a falling on. As water is poured on us, as oil anoints us, as showers fall upon, as fire descends upon, so does the Holy Spirit come into contact with, and operate upon us and within us.

In one sense, then, Christ is the life of the church, in another it is the Holy Spirit. The church is a body which the Spirit fills, energizes, quickens; without whom no external, or

ecclesiastical, or governmental organization is of any avail. In our day we look to externals, to pecuniary prosperity, to numbers, to bulk, to bustle, to schemes; or to talent, to intellect, to eloquence, to learning. What are all these without the Holy Ghost? The spirit of the age, no doubt, is slow to recognize this purely supernatural element; the idea of human progress and development which has taken possession of men cannot co-exist with it; the settled conviction of our age that men are finding their way upward by self-reliance, and personal energy, and that the world is quite able (only give it time and scope) to regenerate itself, is utterly at variance with it.

But in opposition to all this, God's idea of a church—its root, and life, and constitution, and work—finds its development only in an indwelling and inworking spirit. This book of the "Acts" reveals to us more of a church's true life, of a soul's true life, than all the philosophies of earth, all the refinements of the most advanced, or the most stereotyped, theologies of the day. The all-pervading, all-animating thing which makes a church what it is, a Christian what he is, is not a principle, or an idea, or a creed, or a dogma, or a rite, or a sentimentalism, or a sacrament, or a priesthood, but the personal Spirit, even He who is emphatically called in Scripture, "the Holy Ghost." Without Him all churchmanship is vain; all creeds, all ceremonies, all services, all edifices, all altars, all liturgies, all pictures, all processions, all solemnities, all devotions, all genuflections, all chantings are utterly vain.

I. Beware of a superficial religion. No mere surface work or sentimental excitement will avail with God, or stand the coming test of the great day of the Lord. The primitive religion was deep and real; it penetrated every recess of a man's heart, and pervaded every region of his being.

II. Beware of an ecclesiastical externalism. A goodly order of things in the church is right; but woe be to the man who trusts to this. Israel trusted to this, and cried, "The temple of the Lord are we"; but what availed all their outside completeness? Did it not deceive them, and make them lose sight of the awfully sifting words, "Ye must be born again."

III. Beware of seeking anything less than the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Our whole life is to be a reception of this Spirit. He is to be continually coming down on us, and filling us. Let us open our mouth wide that He may fill it. Let us beware of anything that would present itself as a substitute for the living Spirit. Many such things may we expect in these last days from Satan as an angel of light.

IV. Beware of grieving this Spirit. There is great danger of this. Israel was continually guilty of this crime (Acts 7:51), and so is the church: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." Let us not, by unbelief, or error, or inconsistency, or backsliding, or apostacy, grieve or quench this Spirit, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption.

XXVIII.

Angelic Ministry And The Prison Light.

"A light shined in the prison."—

Acts 12:7.

It was night; night in a prison; a Jerusalem prison; probably as gloomy and damp as any prison might be; perhaps like that of Jeremiah.

Two chains bound the prisoner fast; yet he slept. Two soldiers watched in his cell; keepers at the gate kept the prison; yet he slept.

James had just been slain by Herod; Peter was seized and imprisoned that he might suffer in like manner, perhaps on the morrow; yet he slept; like our own Argyll on the eve of his execution. He had fallen asleep with the thought that tomorrow he should fall asleep in Jesus. There seemed no hope for him. The Church had no influence with man; no power but prayer; no access to any but God; no hammer with which to force open the gates, but prayer and faith.

Despair was at its height; yet perhaps, too, faith was at its height. The hour predicted by our Lord (John 21:18) seemed to have come. Yet the Church hoped against hope, and prevailed.'

Prayer had gone up, and an angel comes down. How quickly prayer is answered! How swift the passage of the angel from

heaven to earth! How easily he finds his way to Jerusalem, to its prison, to the cell where Peter lay chained!

Suddenly a light shone in the prison; the first intimation that the angel had arrived. The dungeon is lighted up; and that with no earthly lamp. It is heaven that is shining here.

We call all this miraculous. So to us it seems. It is beyond us; beyond our experience and power; beyond what we call the processes of nature. But to heavenly eyes all would appear natural and simple; just what might be expected from the visit of an angel. An angel knows not prison gates, nor dungeon walls, nor midnight darkness. What are these to him? He "excels in strength"; he is a being of light; what more natural than that he should find his way in at gates of brass, and light up the deepest darkness. Yes; "a light shined in the prison."

It was angelic, yet it came from God, from heaven, from some celestial lamp which this glorious messenger carried with him, or from his own heavenly brightness, or from some sparkle of the shekinah glory accompanying him into the prison, as to the fields of Bethlehem.

I. Angels have to do with earth. They are heavenly; their home is heaven; they minister before God (1 Kings 22:19; Psalm 68:17; Matthew 18:10). Yet they visit earth; they are sent down to do God's will; sometimes on errands of mercy and sometimes to execute judgment (2 Samuel 24:16; Isaiah 37:36). What the distance between heaven and earth may be we know not; but angels come and go with speed which we cannot understand. He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. We find them in the likeness of men, and speaking with man's voice (if indeed that be not, after all their natural and proper form and figure Genesis 18:2; Daniel

9:22; Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:2). Yes, angels have always had much to do with earth, and shall yet have more, when in the great millennial day we shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon (i. e. in attendance upon) the Son of man. The family in heaven take a profound interest in the family on earth, and in that earth where they dwell. They destroy cities (Genesis 19:3); they preserve the godly; they deliver the righteous; they attend on little children (Matthew 18:10); they wait on time Son of man, strengthening Him in the garden and rolling back the stone from His sepulchre, and forming His retinue as He ascends to heaven. They are witnesses of the sufferings of the saints, "we are a spectacle to angels" (1 Corinthians 4:9); and they are present in our assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:10). They have far more to do with us, and are far nearer us than we imagine. Should not the thought of the presence of these pure spirits influence us in our outward demeanor, if not in our inward thoughts and feelings?

II. Angels are ministers of power. They excel in strength, and when they visit earth, they shew this. Two angels destroy Sodom; one angel smites one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians; and another angel slays twenty thousand in Jerusalem. They are God's messengers of power, both for succor and for destruction. They smite Herod, and they burst open Peter's prison. They bear not the sword in vain. Nor have they lost aught of their power in these last days, though they appear not visibly. They are still ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation (Hebrew 1:14).

III. Angels are ministers of light. It was as such that the angel visited Peter's prison. His prison filled it with light. They dwell in light; they have garments of light; they are sons of light;

they move in light; they carry light with them wherever they go.

IV. They are watchful ministers. They are ever on the alert to run their heavenly errands; and their interpositions are far more frequent in our behalf than we know of. They protect us unseen; they guide us unknown; they strengthen us as they did our Master; they keep us in all our ways, lest at any time we dash our feet against a stone. Minute and watchful and loving and condescending service is theirs. We may not pray to them, we may not worship them, but we may ask God to send them to encamp around us and compass us about (Psalm 34:7), and to keep us in our daily ways and dangers. They have much to do with us; let us feel that we have much to do with them. They are not indeed partakers of our flesh and blood; they never knew sin or sorrow or pain; yet they have had long experience, in their watching over and intercourse with men, which serves them instead of sympathy, and their love to us (which we seldom think of) goes far to make them feel for us and to comprehend our wants and trials.

XXIX.

Forgiveness Through The One Name.

"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."—

Acts 13:38, 39.

The apostle had been relating a piece of history,—simple in itself, but of vast importance as to results,—certain facts in the history of David and of David's Son. On these facts he grounds his proclamation of good news; good news to Israel; good news to the sons of men; the tidings of pardoning love.

I. There is a message. It is a special one; a true one; a divine one; sent by God himself. "Be it known unto you." Take this as a matter absolutely certain, and which you ought to know, and which, therefore, I now tell you. It is like "Behold" and "Hear." God has a message for us! Glad tidings of great joy.

II. This message is concerning forgiveness. This is the first thing which a sinner needs; and it is the first which God presents him with. God knows that we are under condemnation, under wrath, under the curse; and that till these are removed, nothing can be done. So He begins His dealings with the sinner by presenting him with a pardon. He comes proposing to reverse the condemnation to cancel the curse, to lift off the wrath. It is this that the apostle brings out so fully in connection with the blood and the covenant, when he says, "Now where remission of sin is, there is no more

offering for sin." To a condemned world this message comes. Be it known to you, O condemned man, that there is forgiveness for thee! Forgiveness to every one who needs it, this is our message. To us as condemned, as accursed, as lost, as worthless, as helpless, the tidings come; tidings of God's forgiving love, and of the forgiveness which that love presents to us.

III. This forgiveness is through the man Christ Jesus. Only in connection with "this man" can forgiveness reach us. In any other way it is one of the impossibilities of the universe. It is impossible with God, with angels, with men. Apart from "this man" there is only condemnation and doom to the sinner.

(1.) "This man" was sent to provide it. It was a possible thing; but only in one way, and through one channel. It must come in righteousness; it must not only be gracious, but righteous and lawful; safe for us, and honourable for God. This man came to make it so, to reconcile the righteousness with the grace, to present us with a holy pardon.

(2.) "This man" has provided it. It is now done. That which was possible before has become righteous now. Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, has done the work, by bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. The wrath and curse have been born pardon and righteousness are now one.

(3.) "This man" has it for us. It is in his hands. He is the vessel of pardon. Its fullness is in Him. He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give it. "Come unto me," he says to the condemned and the weary. We now know (1) where, and (2) how, and (3) when pardon is to be had by the sinner.

(4.) In preaching "this man," we preach forgiveness. We have much to say concerning "this man"; much to make known respecting His person and work; and all that we have to tell, brings out the fullness deposited in Him, and the completeness of the forgiveness which God presents to the sinner, to the ungodliest, through Him, and through Him alone; for "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." In all that we say of Christ, we make known God's free pardon; for there is not one single particle of the divine testimony concerning Him, that does not, more or less directly, reveal the forgiveness that there is with God. Forgiveness! Forgiveness through Jesus Christ, the Son of David, who died, and was buried, and rose again. This is God's message to man. Heaven cries aloud to earth, Forgiveness! The cross cries aloud, Forgiveness! Forgiveness to the guiltiest, to the most hardened rebel, to the oldest criminal, to the most stout-hearted sinner— forgiveness complete, immediate, free, and everlasting!

IV. This forgiveness comes to us in believing. Concerning "this man," God has given a testimony, and to that testimony he has annexed a promise, to the effect that every one, whoever he be, that believes the testimony shall get the pardon. It is not a mere testimony, without a promise—that would simply relieve the burdened sinner to the extent of shewing him that pardon was possible or likely. It is a testimony followed up by a promise of salvation to the man who credits the testimony; and this is the true "appropriation,"—the accepting of the promise along with the crediting of the testimony. Thus testimony and promise must go together. He that takes the one without the other, is not only shutting himself out from blessing, but he is separating what God has linked together. He that says, I believe the testimony concerning Jesus, but I am not sure of being a pardoned man, is taking the testimony

but rejecting the promise, or at least saying, that it is not true to him until he is conscious of having undergone certain spiritual changes, and experienced certain religious feelings.

Thus we are pardoned; and thus we know that we are pardoned; not by reflecting on, or being satisfied with, the quality of our faith, but with the certainty of the promise.

The promise goes beyond "pardon," and proclaims "justification" as the portion of every man who believes. For while pardon delivers a criminal from his sentence, it does not necessarily restore him to favor, or present him with a complete standing before his sovereign and his fellow men. But when "justified" as well as "pardoned," we are taken up to the level of the unfallen and sinless; nay, we are treated according to the character and deservings of Him through whom the justification comes. We are made to stand where He stands, and to receive the righteous favor which He receives. Yes; we are justified from all things. Our whole man is justified, our whole person is accepted; and everything, great or small, that was against us is taken out of the way.

All this simply in believing! Our justification begins and is carried on entirely through this. Not working, nor feeling, nor striving, nor wrestling, but simple believing. It is our believing that introduces us into the condition of justified men; it is this believing that God acknowledges; it is this believing that the conscience responds to; for that which we believe is the one justifying thing, the one thing which is well-pleasing to God, and which pacifies the conscience.

We have to do with a propitiation completed on the cross. In crediting God's testimony to that propitiation, we have

pardon; and in accepting the promise annexed to the testimony, we know that we have it; because God is true.

XXX.

God's Dealings With Israel.

"Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold; ye despisers, and wonder, and parish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and fudge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."—

Acts 13:40, 41, 46.

"The Lord spoke also unto me again, saying, Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Resin and Remaliah's son; now therefore, behold; the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory; and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks. And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over; he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land; O Immanuel."—

Isaiah 8:5-8.

Taking the second of these passages as it was spoken, with reference to Israel, we see in it (1) God's love to Israel; (2) Israel's refusal of this love; (3) Israel's preference for other lords; (4) Israel's judgment. Let us look at these.

1. God's love to Israel. "Yea, He loved the people" (Deuteronomy 33:3); "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3); "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals" (Jeremiah 2:2). It is shewn here in the provision made for them, of which the waters of Siloam are the type. The pleasant waters which Shiloah so abundantly gave to Jerusalem are here taken as the representation of the full provision made for them. These waters of Shiloah were (1.) Abundant. (2.) They were clear and fresh. (3.) They flowed softly, not laying waste the land with their rush. (4.) They meant "sent" (John 9:7), implying that they had come from God. See how He loved Jerusalem and Israel!

2. Israel's refusal of the love. As in the wilderness they despised the pleasant land, so now in that land they slighted its waters. Like Esau, they despised the birthright. They treated God's love and its tokens as things of nought. "Israel would have none of me." They "forsook the Lord."

3. Israel's preference for other lords. They preferred the kings of Samaria and Syria, thus casting off the seed of David, and rejecting Him who is the root and offspring of David, David's Son and David's Lord. "We will come no more unto thee" (Jeremiah 2:31). "They chose other gods; they rejoiced in Rezin and Remaliah's son."

4. Israel's guilt. It was their casting off Jehovah's yoke and choosing others that marked their history. It was this that made them so pre•eminently guilty. "Hath a nation changed their gods—but my people have forsaken me times without number." This was their crowning sin, first seen at Sinai in the

golden calf, and afterwards continually, till they cried, "We have no king but Caesar."

5. Israel's judgment. God cannot always spare. He bears long, but smites at length. He punished them in kind, according to the nature of their sin. They had refused the soft-flowing waters of Shiloah, whose one mission was refreshment, God sends on them the waters of the Euphrates' flood, strong and many, to overflow and sweep all before them, not to refresh or beautify. They despised the presence of David's line and his mild rule; God sends to them the Assyrian king and his iron yoke. Thus God avenges Himself on their unbelief, and rejection of Himself and His Christ.

Let us now look at both these passages together, passing over Israel, and Jerusalem, and Shiloah, and David, and the Assyrian with his swelling stream.

1. The fountain of living water. God Himself—His out-flowing love—the gushing stream. With Him is the fountain of life. Out of Him joy is not; in Him is its fullness. O taste and see that the Lord is good. His love, and joy, and consolation are infinite and inexhaustible; a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

2 Man's refusal of that fountain. It is not that he does not know of it; but he will not have it. He hears of it, and then deliberately turns his back on it. He prefers to remain thirsty.

3. The hewing out of broken cisterns. Water of earth and cisterns of earth, these are what he seeks. All his time, and strength, and faculties are devoted to the hewing out of these. One after another they break in his hand. But he still goes on.

4. The disappointment. The cisterns break, and the water is spilt upon the ground. There is a daily disappointment. Nothing fills or satisfies. The thirst is unquenched. Oh, who will shew me any good, is still his cry. He has an empty aching heart. Vanity of vanities! But the disappointment hereafter is the great one,—when he finds himself condemned to "sit in thirst" for ever, and bear the eternal sorrow, to suffer the eternal heartache.

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. Quit your broken cisterns. Betake yourselves to the fountain of living waters. Drink there, and thirst no more.

XXXI.**Jewish And Gentile Ears.**

"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad; and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." —

Acts 13:48.

It was Pisidian Antioch that heard Paul's wondrous sermon recorded here, and saw the strange scenes, so briefly narrated. To the Jew the message came first, but being rejected, it passed on to the Gentile: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life,[3] lo we turn to the Gentiles" (verse 46). It was on Gentiles and Gentile lands that the true light was now rising. Their light was come, and the people long sitting in darkness were now to see this glorious light. Two things was Messiah prophesied to be: (1.) A light of the Gentiles; (2.) Salvation to the ends of the earth—the farthest off among the Gentiles: "Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth."

This prophetic gospel at once awoke the Gentiles of Antioch. It was strange news, but good news to them; and they found it all true,— confirmed by surest evidence "infallible proofs."

I. They listened. They did not close their ears as Israel was doing. They had ears, and they used them. Hear, was God's frequent message to Israel; but they heard not. "Hear, and your souls shall live," but they regarded not. But at the first

sound of this divine "Hear," the Gentile roused himself. To him, faith came by "hearing, and hearing by the word of God." So we speak in these last days, "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Listen! is God's message still. Man perishes because he will not listen to God.

III. They were glad. The words contained that which was fitted to make them glad; and it was out of what they heard (not from their way of hearing) that they drew their joy. The news were good; and they were as true as they were, good. Each thing spoken concerning this Messiah suited them. They had never heard such things before; but now when they did hear, they found "glad tidings of great joy" in all that the apostles spake concerning Israel's Messiah. What He was, what He had said, what He had done—these gave them joy; a new joy, unknown and unimagined before.

III. They glorified the word of the Lord. They praised and extolled it as the most glorious word they had ever heard. It was the word of the Lord in two senses, (1.) It came from the Lord—the Lord Jesus; (2.) It was all about the Lord. That word contained the waters of gladness which had now begun to gush into their thirsty souls. What a word! they said. How rich, how full, how precious. What word is like it! Thus they glorified it, not because of its eloquence, or poetry, or learning, or philosophy, but because it contained heavenly gladness. And is it not for gladness that man's wide soul is made? And when he finds that gladness, can he refrain from magnifying that word which has brought it?

IV. They believed. The music itself was gladness; but when they came to know and believe the words to which it was set, their joy overflowed. Each note was joy, still more each word.

They believed! This was their terminus, their resting-place. It is all true! It is divinely true. "Now we believe, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (John 4:42). Thus faith came by hearing. They listened and believed. How simple, and how blessed. How am I to believe, does any one say? Listen to God! How am I to get a stronger faith? Listen more simply and undividedly to God. How am I to get quit of unbelief? Listen to God! This is the divine cure for man's darkness and distrust. What God says is true. What God says about His Son is joyful. Listen and live! Listen and be glad! In listening to the happy words, joy pours itself in upon us—from the voice, nay, from the very heart of God. For God is love; and the gospel which He speaks to man contains good news about this great love of His to man: "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

But they did not all believe. Some believed, and some believed not. It is added, "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." [4] They might all have believed unto eternal life. There was no hindrance without. The message was one of truth and gladness equally to all who heard it. God's ambassadors pressed it upon them honestly and truly in the name of that God from whom they came. Yet only some believed. They who were ordained. The non-ordination was not the barrier to the others; but still the ordination was that which led to faith in them who believed.

These few words concerning divine ordination are very striking. In them we see, as it were, the Good Shepherd laying hold of those whom the Father had given Him, and lifting them to His shoulders in order to carry them to the fold. We find the sheep hearing his voice, and following Him,

as He goes before. And this ordination is no hard or cruel thing. It is man's only hope—unless he is able to save himself. It is love, not hatred; it is kindness, not cruelty; it is the expression of God's determination, that some at least, in spite of all their desperate resistance and unbelief, shall be saved. It is God saying, "All shall not be lost, though all, if let alone, would destroy themselves, and refuse to be saved."

If there be a God, there must be a divine purpose, a divine pre-arrangement of things and persons, of events and issues. The existence of such a purpose is not so much a part of revelation as a thing resulting from the very being of a God. Election and predestination are just some of the ways in which God, as the creator of the world, and the ruler of the world and the beings created, comes forth into visibility and action. Let us be glad and rejoice that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth; and that salvation is in such hands as His. Otherwise we could have no assurance of being carried through to the end. It is the Father's eternal purpose, unfolding itself in connection with man as a sinner, that is our security and stronghold for eternity.

XXXII.

The Word Of His Grace.

"Long time therefore abode they speaking, boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands."—

Acts 14:3.

The first five verses of this chapter give us a brief sketch of the apostles' life and ministry at Iconium. Paul and Barnabas, fleeing from Antioch, came to Iconium. They go into the Jewish synagogue. A great number believe, both Jews and Greeks, as they listen to the apostolic gospel. The unbelieving Jews stir up the city against the apostles, but they continue there in spite of opposition, and speak boldly in the Lord, or more exactly, "grow bold over the Lord," the Lord being the theme or subject over which they took their stand, and in reference to which they shewed their boldness.[5]

In the latter part of the verse we have these three things: (1.) the grace; (2.) the word concerning it; (3.) the divine testimony given to this word. It is on the first two points that we would meditate. The third, or the testimony, may be briefly noticed at the outset. That testimony was given by "miracles," by "signs and wonders."

The Lord went along with His apostles, He stood by their side in preaching, and He set His seal to the truth of their message by some notable work of heavenly power, so that the hearers were made to feel that the word spoken was a true word, and that it was a word from heaven, directly from the lips of God.

The miracle was to establish their faith (and ours also in these last days) in the divine origin of the message, so that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God.

I. The grace. This word is often used by us as synonymous with the Spirit's work in man, or that which time Spirit produces in us when He renews and transforms. This is not the primary nor the usual meaning of the word. It simply means favor or free love to sinners as such; such free love as the Lord manifested when He was here on earth, in dealing with sinners such as the woman of Sychar, or Zaccheus, or the thief on the cross. They are representatives of sinners to whom this free love came, whom it welcomed, and whom it rescued.

This free love is essential to God, as essential as His power or holiness. I might as well deny, or limit, or qualify His power and holiness, as deny, or limit, or qualify His love. It belongs to Him as God; for God is love. He cannot but be righteous and powerful; so He cannot but be love.

Nay, we might as well deny His being as His love. We might as well say there is no God, as say, God is not love.

This free love was not produced or purchased by Christ's death. That love existed before in all its largeness and freeness. Christ's death did not increase that love. It was wide as the heart of God, and could not be increased. Christ's death did not make the sinner a more suitable object for that love. The sinner was loved before; and it was love to the sinner that made the Father send the Son: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." That love rested on the sinner before. His circumstances as a sinner, so far

from quenching God's love to him as a creature, increased it; for they added all the amount of misery, and gloom, and exposure to eternal ruin, which called up that profound and unutterable compassion which a father feels toward a prodigal child that has ruined himself. Nothing in us, nothing in the world, nothing in heaven or earth, nothing in man or angel produced the love of God. It was uncreated, unbought, undeserved, and unfathomable. God loved the sinner because He was God, and because the sinner was a sinner. That is the end of the matter. And what can we now say? Shall we not learn

"To lie embosomed in His grace
Till morning shadows flee?"

What folly, then; nay, what blasphemy, in any sinner to think to create, or to intensify, or to enlarge this love by qualifying himself for it, by making himself less unworthy to be loved. God cares for man, the sinner; let us be content to know this. The Lord's grace or free favor is not a thing to be added to or taken from. Man must take it as it is, and as he is, or go without it. Man's attempt to propitiate God, or to fit himself for being loved—whether by works, or convictions, or repentance, or feelings, or prayers, or ceremonies, or goodness—are mockery in the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. We are welcome to the whole free love of God. Let us take it at once, not trying to drive a bargain about it, or to buy it in any sense or way, but simply and at once to take it as the beggar takes the alms; as the prodigal took his father's love when he fell upon his neck and kissed him.

II. The word concerning it. For "the word of His grace" means not simply His gracious word, but the word concerning His grace, the message that announces His free love. We have,

then, a word concerning this; a word once spoken, now written; a word of truth and certainty, a word as to which there is no ambiguity and no mistake; a sure and simple word; a word such as the following—"Hereby perceive we the love of God, that He laid down His life for us."

It is this word which constitutes our gospel—God's sure word as to His own free love. That word and that love change not; He whose word and love they are, changes not. Nor is there any counter-word to neutralize its power and meaning. Sometimes our own dark experience overshadows it; sometimes God's sharp dealings with us seem to say, "God is not love." But over against all this we have ever to set the gift of the beloved Son, the great demonstration and pledge of divine love, to which we ought ever to recur when doubts arise. What are all the evils of this present evil world to compare with the unspeakable gift of God? That gift infinitely more than outweighs them all.

O sinner, hear the word of God's free love. It sounds from heaven; it is reechoed from earth, it reverberates through the ages. It comes out from the cross, it speaks from the tomb; it goes forth to every creature; and in it God is thoroughly and profoundly sincere. He means what He says, and He says just what He means. God is love! There is grace in Him for you exceeding riches of grace, grace written out at full length in His book of grace, and embodied gloriously in the cross of the beloved Son.

XXXIII.

God's Nearness To Man.

"Not far from every one of us."—

Acts 17:27.

It is to the men of Athens that Paul is preaching. His sermon is about the one living and true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. He proclaims to them the God whom they knew not. He fills up the inscription on the altar to the unknown God with the name Jehovah. Of this God he has much to say; something that they knew not; something that they knew; something of which their philosophers and prophets knew a little; something of which they knew nothing; something of which they had faint glimpses; something of which they were in total darkness. He preaches God to Athens. He tells them more in a few minutes than Plato had done in all his life. On Mars' hill he proclaims the sacred name Jehovah, and Jesus. But he brings the matter closely home to them, and makes them feel as if in contact with God; not with an idea, but with God. These idols, these altars, these statues, these temples—What are they all? It is Him who is a Spirit that Athens needs to know; Him who with all her fancied religion, she knows not.

Let us then look (1) at the fact; (2) at the lessons from it.

I. The Fact. Not far from every one of us. That means, very near. I call this a fact, or a state of things in actual existence; not a truth merely; not a proposition, nor a doctrine; but something more, something deeper. It is a truth that I am a

sinner; but it is more, it is a fact. It is a truth that God sees me; but it is more, it is a fact. For God is not an abstraction, but a personality. God is not far from every one of us. He is nigh. He is as near as I am to myself; nearer than the outward world; nearer than friends; nearer than the sky which covers me, or the ground I tread upon, or the raiment I wear. He is around me; above me, underneath me. Not in the materialistic, pantheistic sense of all things being God; but as a living, personal God. The two personalities are distinct; that of man, and that of God. In Him I live, and move, and have my being. We see Him not, hear Him not, feel Him not; but He is near for all that, just as if we saw Him, heard Him, felt Him. His works are near, but He is nearer. So near, as to hear me, see me, touch me, fill me, and compass me about. It is not merely said, He is our life, our motion, our existence—as if He were simply the fountainhead or mainspring of these; the apostle's words imply something far deeper and more intimate—"In Him we live, and move, and have our being." He is more necessary to our being than head or heart, or organs, or limbs. All this has been intensified by the incarnation of the eternal Word.

II. The lessons. These are very many. We take up but a few. They are all solemn—some of them blessed, some fearful.

(1.) How close the relationship between God and us. I speak of that natural relationship which results from His being what He is, and our being what we are; a relationship not affected by sin or rebellion on our part, nor by banishment and condemnation on His. Between the created and the uncreated, God and man, there subsists a necessary bond which cannot be broken; a bond to which the apostle calls the attention of these Athenians. All their idolatry and wickedness had not weakened this connection. They could not cease to

be His property. They were still His offspring. In Him, they still lived, and moved, and had their being. What ties can be compared to this for closeness and indissoluble firmness! All earthly relationships in comparison with it are a mere thread; this is a chain of iron; and though invisible and impalpable, it is immeasurably the strongest of all bands. God is not only nearest to us, but He is most closely related. Not that this relationship is saving. No. In the case of lost men and angels it will be awfully condemning.

(2.) How important that the relationship be one of friendship. One so nearly related to us as God is must be more to us, either for good or evil, than all the universe. He is the source of all blessing; He is infinitely able to bless us; He desires to bless us; how momentous, then, that there should be friendship between Him and us; yes, friendship between us and the great Father of spirits; friendship between us and Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Friendship with others is nothing; friendship with Him is everything; seeing He is so near to us, and possessed of such power over us and in us, how needful that God and we should be at one. How essential to our well being that this indissoluble tie should be one of happy friendship; we loving God, and God loving us. Yes; how important both for body and for soul; both for time and for eternity.

(3.) How sad if there be estrangement. If God, as it were, retires from us, leaves us alone, to our own resources, even without any positive infliction, how sad our case. What loneliness, what solitude, what utter, endless dreariness without God! We often hear the complaint of being lonely, and having no society; but how far short does anything of this sort experienced among ourselves, come of that dismal solitude of the soul, when God is away. Even granting that He

does not go from us, yet if He does not smile, how lonely! Even if He does not speak words of anger, if He merely keeps silence, how sad for us! The silence of God! The absence of God! The distance of God! What infinite and unutterable solitude would that make for the soul. At present we can drown the sense of solitude in pleasure, gaiety, business. Soon this will be impossible. And then the sadness! The profound and eternal melancholy! Will not that be hell?

(4.) How terrible if there be wrath. The anger of a far distant enemy is nothing; but that of one as near as He is mighty, is a fearful thing. The wrath of Him whose offspring we are, in whom we live and move! How terrible. The nearness and authority over us which He has in virtue of our connection, makes that connection infinitely terrible, if God be turned to be our enemy. Instead of eternal friendship, nothing but eternal enmity between us and the God who made us! No hiding from Him in whom we live and move! No screen, either of distance, or rocks, or mountains between us and Him! What an eternal terror will He be to us! So near, so awfully near, and our enemy! Our enemy for evermore!

(5.) How blessed to enter into friendship with Him now. He is ready to do this. He makes proposals to this effect. Acquaint thyself now with God. He has no pleasure in estrangement or anger. He seeks for reconciliation. He urges it—urges it now—on each of you. Father, Son, and Spirit join in this urgency. Be reconciled they say. Why refuse the friendship, and the love, and the blessedness?

That connection with God which you cannot shake off, would thus become the most blessed of all blessed relationships. The feeling that you are so near Him would be one of the most blessed of all feelings. And then, being one with the

incarnate Son would draw this union closer. You would be doubly near, and thus doubly blessed! Oh what an immeasurable source of gladness would this double relationship, this double nearness, become to you! Make sure of it now!

XXXIV.

Safety And Success In Our Work For God.

"Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city. And be continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them." —

Acts 18:9-11.

The work done in these apostolic days by the preaching of the gospel was very decided. The religion which it produced was of no diluted nor ambiguous kind. The Christians then made were men about whom there could be no mistake; uncompromising, unworldly, out-spoken men, who were not ashamed of their faith, or of their Lord, or of His badge, the cross. They came out and were separate, and touched not the unclean thing. It was in this way that "the masses" of Corinth, and Ephesus, and other Gentile cities were "evangelized" and "elevated"; not by concerts, and clubs, and amusements either for eye or ear. Morality, culture, refinement were not despised; but 'the regeneration of individual men by the power of the Holy Ghost came first as the root of all blessing to the community. "Temples of the Holy Ghost," not "whited sepulchres," were what the primitive preachers sought to erect. Lights of the world, not lamps without oil, were what they sought to produce every where in the dark cities and villages of heathendom. Nothing less than this is our work now; nothing below this must be the church's standard in every age. Out and out Christianity, unmistakable religion; not varnished worldliness or baptized paganism. "Ye must be born

again"; "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified": these are the keynotes of the church's testimony. Let us not lower this for a moment.

Let us see in these verses the position and work of an apostolic preacher; he with God, and God with him; he doing God's work, and God doing his work. The words are those of the Lord Jesus Himself to Paul in a dream or vision. In many ways, with or without a vision, does the Lord thus cheer and counsel his servants. His exhortations and encouragements are as follow:—

I. Bold speaking. "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace." "Fear not" are frequent words of God to His own; here they are uttered on a special occasion, as in Isaiah (51:12), "Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?" Fear not are Christ's words to His ministers in all ages. Whatever be the power, or the rage, or the number of enemies, fear not! Speak out, too, and be not dumb. Speak out fearlessly, nobly, confidently, the words of truth, the message of God, the gospel of His grace. Let not the fear of man bring a snare. Shrink not. Preach no diluted half and half gospel. Let not your trumpet give an uncertain sound. Speak so that no man shall mistake your meaning or your message. Do not blunt or muffle your words as if afraid of creating too great an alarm, or rousing men too rudely, or cutting too deeply. Speak aloud, and speak clearly; not mistily, or circuitously, or with the enticing words of man's wisdom. Speak with authority; and like "Wisdom" cry aloud, that the church, as well as the world, shall hear, whether they like the sound or not. Lift up your voice, utter your testimony, obey your Lord, and deliver your soul.

II. Complete security. His safeguard was the Lord Himself; "I am with thee," the Lord says, as if repeating the words spoken in the days of His flesh, "Lo, I am with thee always." Christ's presence is our true security. Not armed guards, nor bulwarks, nor forts, but Christ Himself. He is our rock, our strong tower, our shield and buckler. No weapon can reach the man thus sheltered; no foe can injure us who have been "found in Him"; the security is perfect and divine; greater than that of the everlasting hills; for as "the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about them that fear Him." Much there may be of seeming, nothing of real danger. All is safety. No weapon formed against us shall prosper. No enemy shall prevail. No man shall set upon us to hurt us, for greater is He that is with us than all that are against us. Come what will, we are safe. Let faith realize this heavenly presence in all difficulty or peril. A present Christ. That is our security. It is complete and divine. We are immortal till our work is done.

III. Certain success. The safety was one thing, the success another. Here is both. The success is thus promised and announced:—

(1.) The master's presence. "I am with thee." The same words that declare safety, announce success. If He goes with us to our work we cannot fail. His presence ensures success. Nothing else can. Nothing more is needed. Not eloquence, nor learning, nor intellect, nor breadth of thought, nor high position, nor sympathy with the progress of the age, but the presence of the Lord.

(2.) The divine purpose. "I have much people in this city." In the purpose of God there was a people there already His, though still in idolatry and sin. Here is the Son of God, with

His eye on those whom the Father has given Him, looking down on the ungodly multitudes, pointing with His finger to them, laying His hand on them. I have a treasure hid in this field, a flock scattered through this wilderness. Ah, here is election clearly and simply announced,—the eternal purpose and predestination of God. Those ungathered ones are already Christ's. He has them. He reckons them His own; as truly His, and as completely safe, as if they were already in the kingdom.

(3.) The human labour. Paul "sat down there," as the expression is, for eighteen months, teaching the word of God among them. The divine purpose operates through human agency. God purposes; Paul works; and elect souls are gathered in. Such is the process. God and man, heaven and earth, are all concerned in its completion. God works in us, with us, through us. As He works through His own word, so He works through His own creatures. His eternal purpose, and His present cooperation, secure the success. Thus He honours us by carrying on His work through means of us, and fulfilling His eternal purpose by human agency. It is that purpose that gives all the power and efficacy to the human workman. Without it man beats the air or ploughs the sea.

Therefore we work, and therefore we teach, because we know that we are backed by supernatural power, which is mightier than the evil, and ignorance, and unbelief that we are assailing. Let us work in faith, and teach in faith; for both the work and the power are God's.

XXXV.

Ministers Witnesses Of God's Free Love.

"To testify the gospel of the grace of God."—

Acts 20:24.

1. What is a minister? He is a witness, as Paul here declares himself to be. See also Acts 26:16, "A minister and a witness." Not a priest, offering sacrifice and communicating between the sinner and God. Not a ruler, issuing commands. Not a judge or lawgiver, publishing laws and exacting penalties. Not a schoolmaster, with the rod in his hand, and austerity in his face. But a witness, coming from God, to tell us of certain things which he knows to be assuredly true. He has good reason for knowing them to be true: the light of his eyes and the hearing of his ears; and he is sent of God to relate to us what he has seen and heard. It was this that the Lord meant when he said, "Ye are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:48). It is to this that the apostle John so strikingly refers, "That which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled...That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" (1 John 1:1-3). The first apostles were witnesses of what they themselves had seen and heard; and we are witnesses of what they saw and heard, and have left on record for us. It is this that lays the foundation for faith.

2. What is the nature of his testimony? It is gospel or good news. It is not law, nor command, nor threatening, nor terror; but simply good news. These other things come in as arguments or warnings in connection with the reception or

rejection of this gospel. But they are not the main thing; nor are they the proper and higher subjects of ministry. The minister of Christ is the bearer of glad tidings. This is his first office; his primary business. All the rest is subordinate to this. He is to be what the angel was to Mary and to the shepherds of Bethlehem: the teller of good news. He does not come from Sinai, he comes from Zion, he comes from Bethlehem.

3. What is this gospel of which he testifies? It is the gospel of the grace of God; the good news of God's free love to sinners. This is his message: "God is love"; "God so loved the world"; God is "rich in mercy"; "the grace of our God is exceeding abundant"; "the Lord our God is merciful and gracious, long-suffering, slow to wrath, abundant in goodness and truth." He comes from God to bear testimony to God. He comes to sinners to announce "grace"; the free love of Him whose wrath we had so terribly provoked. The gospel of grace sums itself up in these points:

(1.) What God is. God is love. Fury is not in Him. He is the God of all grace. His nature is love, and so is His name. This love is like Himself, infinite; so that where sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded.

(2.) What God has given. He has given His Son. This is the pledge and measure of His love. It is an unspeakable gift; the free gift of free love to sinners. It is not promised but given. It is not held out for sale at a price; but presented by God, to be received by us without condition, or price, or merit. Such is the grace of God.

(3.) What God has done. He has not only given His Son, but delivered Him up for us all. It pleased the Lord to bruise him. The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all. This is the

Lord's doing, and wondrous in our eyes. The Son of God, sent of the Father, has come, lived, died, been buried, risen. All is complete. Such is the grace of God.

(4.) What God has provided. Fullness of every needed blessing is in Christ for us. Forgiveness, life, righteousness, reconciliation, peace, joy, wisdom, holiness; all in Christ! Such is the provision for sinners made by free love.

And now we come to ask, How are we made sharers of this free love and its blessings?

(1.) Not by buying them. They are priceless; and they are free. They would not be gifts, and this grace would not be free love, if all were not absolutely and unconditionally free; if in any part of the great transaction there was anything approaching to buying or selling.

(2.) Not by deserving them. If it were so, grace were no more grace. Desert is as impossible and as incongruous as purchase.

(3.) Not by becoming fit for them. Our only fitness is our need; and that every sinner has already in the bare fact that he is a sinner. His fitness for pardon is that he is condemned; for life, that he is dead; for grace, that he is under wrath.

(4.) Not by waiting for them. To speak of waiting is to speak of putting them away from us at present, to say, that they are not at hand, and that God is not willing to give them this moment.

How then do we get them? By simply receiving them. And how do we receive them? By receiving the testimony

concerning the good news. That is all. Be receivers, not rejectors of our testimony; and all things are yours. But let it be now. No more excuses, or delays, or hesitations. Not tomorrow, but today. For your danger is great; and the Judge standeth before the door.

XXXVI.

The Blinding Glory.

"I could not see for the glory of that light."—

Acts 22:2.

There are many things which hinder our seeing an object. There is darkness; night hides all objects far and near. There is distance; distance may, if not too great, lend enchantment to the view, but too great a distance prevents vision. There is some intervening obstacle; as Hermon would be visible from Jerusalem, were it not for the intercepting table land of Benjamin. There is defective eyesight; dimness of vision, or scales growing over the eye.

But none of these causes exist here. It is brightness, the splendor of the glory, that prevents the eye from seeing. Saul is blinded with excess of light. It is here as on the transfiguration-hill. The greatness of the radiance overwhelms. The brightness is more blinding than the darkness. Let us note (1) the light; (2) its effects.

I. The light. It is not common light, nor does it operate in a common way. Let us see what it is, and learn its history as given in Scripture, for much is said of it throughout the Word.

(1.) It is light. A. light; the light. The word carries us back to Genesis, where first light is named; or rather to John (1:4), where we read, "the life was the light of men." It is that which God calls light.

(2.) It is a great light. It possesses no common splendor. It is brightness intensified tenfold beyond all human brightness. It is contrasted not with darkness, but with the light of noon. It was beyond the brightness of the sun. Noon was to it as midnight.

(3.) It was a sudden light. It did not slowly dawn, but burst at once into splendor, shewing its unlikeness to all common light, which comes slowly and goes slowly. Yet in its suddenness it was not as the lightning, for it did not depart in a moment. It blazed suddenly, but it remained till God's purpose was served.

(4.) It was a spacious light. Not like a star or sun, but a body or globe of light compassing them round about, as on the transfiguration-hill (Acts 9:3, 22:6, 26:13). They were all of a sudden enveloped in a sphere of glory which shut out the sun. They were shut in by a glory more effulgent than the sun; shut out from the radiance of the sun by a radiance more glorious and divine. It was a tent of light which descended upon them, and surrounded them.

(5.) It was a light from heaven. It was from above, not from beneath. It was divine, not human; like the New Jerusalem itself "coming down from God out of heaven." It was not the light of sun, or moon, or stars, but a light from the very heaven of heavens; God's own light; an off-shining from the very glory of God.

Such are the different expressions used to describe this light. Each of them is full of meaning, and recalls some scriptural scene or allusion.

The light was, no doubt, that which the Jews called the Shekinah, or glorious presence of Jehovah, dwelling in the tabernacle,—the divine indwelling majesty. It was the very light, the sacred light, which their fathers knew so well, and of which Saul, as a Jew, had so often heard. It appeared at sundry times, and in diverse forms, for various purposes; now of mercy, now of judgment.

It was this light that blazed out in the flaming sword; that appeared to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees; that was seen by Moses in the burning bush; that shone out in the pillar of fire, and compassed the top of Sinai; that dwelt in the tabernacle and in the temple; that shewed itself to Gideon's father; that kindled the fire on Solomon's altar; that was seen by Ezekiel departing, and by Daniel in his visions; that for four hundred years left the earth, but re-appeared at Bethlehem to the shepherds and to the wise men; at Christ's baptism; at the transfiguration; at Pentecost; at Stephen's martyrdom; and now at Saul's conversion: and afterwards at Patmos. Such is the history of this wondrous light,—the representation of Him who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all; of Him who is the light of the world; of Him who is the brightness of Jehovah's glory. The history of that light is the Christology of Scripture.

No doubt this visible, physical light is connected with a higher and more spiritual light. The light which patriarchs saw, and Paul saw, was but a symbol of something more glorious,—the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. In every sense these words are true, "God is light"; "He covereth Himself with light as with a garment." Here is the light of love, the light of life.

It was this light that descended from heaven, and met Saul by the way. It was this light that was used by God to produce such mighty results. Of all things, light is the most powerful. Here we see its power.

II. Its effects. The narrative presents several different results in the case of Saul.

(1.) It blinds. Paul is struck blind. Scales cover His eyes. The light has destroyed them. It is the excess, of light that has produced the blindness. Blinded by light! The light of heaven!

(2.) It illuminates. It does not blind in order to destroy the vision. It blinds in order to give clearer eyesight. The light which blinds also recalls the sight.

(3.) It prostrates. Saul is stricken to the ground. The vision is overwhelming. Man cannot stand before it. He breaks down like Daniel and like John. There remains no more strength. The law was in that light that appeared to Saul;—"the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

(4.) It bewilders. It was here in the case of Saul worse than darkness, in the bewilderment produced. He needs now a guide. He thought he knew the way; now he must trust to another hand.

(5.) It guides. We do not see this here, but in Saul's after-history. This is his lamp.

Such are the results of the surpassing glory! From this outward operation on men we learn the inward. For, doubtless, there were both these co-operating in the case of Paul. The first effect of the light of the gospel is often to blind

and to strike down. The second is to enlighten, and to lift up, and to heal.

It is with divine light that our dark souls must come into contact. Till this takes place we are still unrenewed; still Sauls, not Pauls. This light must enter; the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It must not be heard of merely, or play round us; it must enter in; it must "shine in our hearts." God is light, and God is love. We must know both of these. The cross is the great exhibition of these. It is the true interpreter of the mind of God, and the revealer of His character.

In the New Jerusalem this divine light, both material and spiritual, shines forth. The "Lamb" is the light thereof.

XXXVII.

The Confession In The Midst Of The Storm.

"God, whose I am, and whom I serve."—

Acts 27:23.[6]

This is Paul's acknowledgment of the true God in the midst of Gentile idolaters, and amid the uproar of a Mediterranean tempest. It is like Jonah's in the ship of Tarshish. Its meaning is, "I am God's property and God's servant; I belong to Him, and I serve Him; I am not my own, but His, in body and soul, in life, and strength, and faculties, I am God's."

Solemn words! But the words of the few, not of the many. Yet they ought to be the words of all. Less than this none of us ought to say. Till we come to this we are all wrong; our being is out of sorts, our existence is unreal, our souls are dark and wretched.

Paul here speaks—

1. Decidedly. He is no waverer, no halter between two opinions. He has made up his mind. He is thoroughly decided. He speaks as one who has made his choice.
2. Certainly. He interposes no "if" or "perhaps," but speaks as one who knows his relationship to God. Of doubting he knows nothing, but only of certainty.
3. Calmly. These are not the words of excitement or fanaticism. There is an unutterable calmness and simplicity

about them. I am God's, and I serve Him! What peace must have been filling his soul as he uttered them!

4. Joyfully. They are the words of one exulting in the consciousness of this divine relationship, this sure and blessed connection between the living God and himself. His is the joy unspeakable and full of glory.

5. Earnestly. His is religion in earnest. With him all connected with God is a profound reality. It is this that makes him so much in earnest, so that even in his simplest words the pent up fervor breaks forth.

Such is our model! Though we be not apostles, we are to take our stand here. Nothing less than this will do. Nothing short of this is religion. This is God's demand upon us. It is His right, His due. He expects this at our hands; this is our proper position. It is the manly and upright as well as the Christian one. Neither Christ nor conscience can be satisfied with any other. Nor does even the world expect less.

Indecision, oscillation, and half-heartedness will not do. Compromise will not do. Lukewarmness will not do. Formalism will not do. In everything relating to God there must be reality, sincerity, completeness.

The whole heart must be there. There must be no hollow religion. God will not have it, and our own hearts resent it as misery. Yes, it is misery. To be neither our own nor God's, neither Christ's nor the world's, neither religious nor irreligious, this is misery. The heart aches with its own hollowness. It will not do. Oh, let your religion be real, if you care to have religion at all!

To be real, it must begin with reconciliation. Peace with God must be its foundation. We preach the reconciliation through the cross and blood, that if it be all yet to begin, it may be begun now!

Christ is our peace! Oh, enter into peace through Him! Give yourselves to God. Give your affections to Him. Give your soul and body, your all to Him; know Him and speak of Him as the God whose you are and whom you serve!

When thus reconciled, we learn to exult like Paul in our heavenly relationship and happy service. What different beings we become! Not our own, but God's! How this isolates us from the crowd, individualizes, ennobles us! Not our own, but God's! Then all we are and do and speak becomes divine! We can do no common, no trifling thing. All we engage in is elevated, glorified, sanctified! Oh, let us learn this high nobility of being, this heavenly elevation of life, and of all that belongs to life. Repeating to ourselves, "the God whose I am, and whom I serve," we press forward in our course, nerved for duty and for trial. Repeating to others, "the God whose I am, and whom I serve," we give a sufficient answer to all the words or arts of temptation by which men seek to make us compromise our character, and become unfaithful to our calling and service.

XXXVIII.

Paul The Debtor.

"I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise."—

Romans 1:14.

Paul has many names for himself; none of them lofty, all of them lowly; the highest, simply "an apostle." Sometimes it is Paul "the servant of Jesus Christ"; sometimes, Paul "the aged"; sometimes, Paul "the prisoner"; sometimes it is "less than the least of all saints"; sometimes, the "chief of sinners." Here it is another, "a debtor." It is then of Paul the debtor we are to speak. It is himself that takes the name; he proclaims his debts; no man lays them to his charge; God does not accuse him. It is some profound, inexpressible feeling that leads him to cry out, "I am debtor."

I. To whom is he a debtor? Not to self; not to the flesh; not to the law. He owes nothing to these. We might say, he is debtor to God; to Christ; to the cross. But these are not now in his mind. It is to Greek and Jew, wise and unwise; men of all nations; the whole fallen world, that he feels himself a debtor. He seems to stand on some high eminence, and looking round on all kingdoms, and nations, and tongues, with all their uncounted millions, he says, "To all these I am debtor, and I must pay the debt." They have done nothing for him indeed; they have persecuted, stoned, condemned, reviled him; yet that does not alter his position or cancel his debt. Do to him what they hike,—hate him, imprison him, scourge him, bind him,—he is their debtor still. His debt to

them is founded on something which all this ill-usage, this malice cannot alter. He loves them still; pities them, pleads with them, beseeches them to be reconciled to God; confesses himself to be their debtor in spite of all. We speak of the world being a debtor to Paul; so, in one sense, it was; but in another, Paul is a debtor to the world. Yes, a Christian is debtor to the world,—not to his family only, or his nation,—but to the whole world. Let this thought dwell in us, and work in us; expanding and enlarging us; elevating our vision; throwing back our horizon, delivering us from all narrow heartedness on the one hand, and all false liberality on the other. We speak of the world being debtor to the church; let us never forget that according to Paul's way of thinking, and to the mind of the Holy Spirit, the church is debtor to the world.

II. When and how he became a debtor. Even as a Jew he was a debtor; for he possessed something which the world did not; and the moment I come into possession of something which my neighbor or my fellow man has not, I become debtor to that fellow man! This is God's way of reckoning, though it is not man's; for God's thoughts are not our thoughts; and it is love only that can teach us to feel and reason thus. Yet it is true reasoning, it is divine logic. It was when Paul became possessed of the unsearchable riches of Christ that he felt himself a debtor to the world. He had found a treasure, and he could not conceal it; he must speak out; he must tell abroad what he felt. He was surrounded by needy fellow men, in a poor empty world: Should he keep the treasure to himself? No. As the lepers of Samaria felt themselves debtors to the starving city, so did Paul to a famishing world. But there is much more than this,—a higher "when" and "how." Who had done all this for him, and made him to differ? It was God,—Christ Jesus. It is to God, then,

that in the first place he feels himself an infinite debtor in the fullest sense. To God Himself he cannot pay this debt directly, but he can indirectly, by pouring out the God-given treasure upon others. His debt directly is to God; but then, indirectly, it is to the world. Thus the Christian man feels his debt,—his obligation to the world because of his obligation to God. But then a man must know that he has the treasure himself before he can be quickened into a feeling of his responsibility to others. The love of Christ must constrain us; a sense of what we owe to him must impel and stimulate us. Do you know yourself to be the possessor of this infinite treasure? and under the expanding pressure of this, are you roused to feel your infinite debt to all?

III. How he pays the debt. By carrying to them that gospel which he had received. That gospel, or the gift which that gospel reveals, has enriched himself infinitely, he takes these riches to others; and so he endeavors to pay his debt to God by enriching the world. He goes to Corinth,—doing what? Paying there a part of his infinite debt. He goes to Athens, to Thessalonica, to Rome,—doing what? Paying in each place part of the infinite debt which he owes to God, for his love, his pardon, and the hope of the glory. He is a rich man, and can afford to give!

We pay our debt,

(1.) By making known the gospel to others. Speak out the glad tidings, wherever you go. You are debtors. Thus pay the debt.

(2.) By prayer for others. We can reach millions by prayer, otherwise inaccessible to us. Pray for others; not your own

circle only, but the world. Go round the world. Embrace all nations in your intercessions.

(3.) By our givings. In giving let us remember what we are doing, paying our debt to God. Shew your sense of his love, his gifts, by your generosity.

(4.) By our consistent life. This, at least, is expected of us. Do not misrepresent the gospel. Be a true and faithful witness for God.

Yes, you are debtors to all. Shew that you feel this. Be constrained by a loving sense of your infinite obligations and responsibilities to Him who loved you.

XXXIX.

Why Paul Was Not Ashamed Of The Gospel.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."—

Romans 1:16.

It is of great moment to know the proper value of a thing before we either praise or dispraise it. Let us beware of either overrating or underrating anything of which we are called to speak. Of the gospel the apostle speaks as one who knew its value. Do we so know its value as to say, What shall it profit me to gain the world and lose the gospel?

The apostle so knew it as to be able to say, I am not ashamed of it; just as elsewhere speaking of the cross he says, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ." He was not ashamed of it at Jerusalem, or Athens, or Rome. Many things were there to make him ashamed of it; Jewish prejudice and Gentile pride. But these prevailed not. In spite of contempt and hatred he held it fast.

We are apt to be ashamed of it. It looks weak, foolish, unintellectual, unphilosophical. It lags behind the age. It has become obsolete! It is beginning to be supplanted by learning and eloquence! Men are apt to shun the gospel as a feeble, childish thing, that has done its work in time past, but is giving place to something higher and more in accordance with the "deep instincts of humanity."

There were some places in which the apostle might have been specially tempted to be ashamed of the gospel, or afraid of preaching it. At Jerusalem, for there the whole strength of Jewish ritualism rose against it; at Athens, for there it was confronted by the power of Grecian wisdom; at Ephesus, for there the dazzling subtleties of heathen magic rose against it; at Corinth, for there the torrent of human lust and pleasure rushed against it; at Rome, for there was time concentrated energy of earthly idolatry. Yet none of these things moved him. He was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, though all that was intellectual, and eloquent, and sensual, and refined, and powerful in humanity protested against it, or mocked it as folly.

We are tempted in our day to be ashamed of the gospel. It is thought to be bare, unintellectual, almost childish by many. Hence they would overlay it with argument and eloquence, to make it more respectable and more attractive. Every such attempt to add to it is being ashamed of it. The old apostolic gospel seems so bald that before we can avow connection with it, we must introduce something like philosophy into it! This is not treating it as Paul did. Some mistake it, others reject it, others are indifferent to it. But there are others who are ashamed of it.

If any might have been ashamed of it, Paul much more. His education, his life, his teachers, his companions were all such as to make him turn aside from a thing so plain. But, rising above all, he protests that he is not ashamed of that which so many of his former friends and teachers scorn.

But why was the apostle not ashamed of it? Had it been the feeble, childish thing which men said it was, he would have

been ashamed of it. But it was not so. It was mighty; mightier than philosophy, or argument, or eloquence. It was "power."

Many "apologists" for the gospel have, in their defense of it, assumed somewhat different ground from that of the apostle here. They defend it because it is noble, philosophical, reasonable, benevolent. It is all this, and more. Yet such are not Paul's reasons for glorifying in it. He has fathomed man's infinite need and misery; he has, with divinely opened eyes, looked into man's present condition and his prospects. He sees in that gospel that which meets man's great necessity as a lost being; and it is this glorious suitableness that makes him prize it so much. He is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, because it is the power of God unto salvation. Had it been less than this, however intellectual and philosophical, he would have been ashamed of it. No other excellence, however great, however appreciated by the human intellect, could compensate for the want of this. To be the wisdom of man, the wisdom of the world, the wisdom of words, was nothing to him. In thus listening to Paul's reasons for not being ashamed of the gospel, let us learn what he thinks of that gospel, and what he understands it to be. (1.) It is the embodiment of God's power for the salvation of the sinner; (2.) it is the revelation of God's righteousness to the sinner. This is the sum of his reasons for glorying in the gospel of Christ.

I. It is God's power unto salvation. Men were lost. Nothing but a great salvation could deliver; a salvation which embodied omnipotence. We may say it is a gospel preceded by omnipotence, succeeded by omnipotence, accompanied by omnipotence, containing omnipotence. God's power was needed. Where has God placed it? In the gospel! Out of that gospel it goes forth to save the sinner. In that gospel

omnipotence is wrapped up. Out of that gospel omnipotence goes forth to save. The power that is needed for the salvation of a sinner is that which is contained in the gospel. The gospel alone contains this saving power, and as such the apostle is not ashamed of it. But every one is not saved, even by this mighty gospel. Who, then, are saved by it? Only they who believe. Into all who believe, this mighty gospel comes with saving power, working in them and for them the reversal of all that made them lost; the whole of that which God calls salvation. It is in believing this gospel that we are saved; saved at once, freely, completely, forever. This gospel is wide as the world. It embraces all kindreds, and nations, and tongues. It goes first to the Jew; it begins at Jerusalem; but it does not end there. It goes round the earth; it takes in all men, the Greek as well as the Jew,— barbarian, Scythian, bond and free. To every man this mighty gospel comes and says, "Believe and be saved." There is salvation for thee; not by working, or waiting, or praying, or reforming, but simply not by believing. He who believes is saved, whoever or whatever he may be.

II. It is the revelation of God's righteousness. This mighty gospel saves in a righteous way. Its power unto salvation consists in its being a revelation of the righteousness of God. This righteousness is not that which we call the attribute of God. Nor does it merely mean "God's method of justification"; though it is indeed such. It is that righteousness which was displayed in Him who is the righteous One, whose name is "Jehovah our righteousness." It is a righteousness planned by God, provided and prepared by God, exhibited and unfolded by God to the sinner.

(1.) It is a righteousness revealed. No longer concealed, or but darkly unfolded; but fully and brightly displayed by God in Christ.

(2.) It is a divine righteousness. Not merely human, yet still human; human, yet divine; the righteousness of Him who was both God and man.

(3.) It is a righteousness by faith. This is the meaning of the words. "Therein is that righteousness of God, which comes to us by believing, revealed to be believed." We get the whole of this glorious righteousness in accepting God's testimony to it and to Him who wrought it out.

(4.) It is righteousness presented to us to be believed. God holds it out to us. He says, Take this from my hand; and if you ask, How am I to take it? the answer is, Believe what God says to you concerning it, and straightway it is yours.

(5.) It is the same righteousness which was possessed by the Old Testament saints. "The just shall live by faith," or "the just by faith shall live," are the words of the ancient prophet, not merely predicting what shall be, but what has been and what is. It was Paul's favorite text. It was also Luther's. We become, or are constituted just, by or in believing; and we live by and in believing; for both these propositions are contained in the passage. One justification from the beginning, one faith, one life! The patriarchs "lived" by believing in Him who was to come; we "live" by believing in Him who has come. But it is one Saviour, one salvation, one cross.

God's testimony to this righteousness is very full and explicit. He tells us what kind of righteousness it is, whose it is, and

how we get it. It is divine, perfect, glorious, suitable; begun, carried out, completed by Christ during His life and death below: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." He who believes the divine testimony gets the righteousness. It becomes at once the property of him that believeth,— not of him that worketh. "He that believeth is justified from all things." All the evil that is in us passes over to Christ, our surety; all the excellence that is in Him passes over to us as soon as we accept time testimony. "He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

The power of the gospel is wholly saving; it is armed with power,—just in order to save. There is nothing else in our world that can save but this. This gospel contains in it all that is needful to save. It reaches and reverses the condition of the lost. Nothing else does this. It saves, heals, comforts, gladdens, brings out of darkness into light. Salvation! This is its object. Nothing less than this. Not merely to reform, or elevate, or refine; but to save. Whatever it does less than this is in vain. It is salvation that we preach in preaching the gospel,—present, immediate, sure, eternal salvation! What then has the gospel done for you? Has it saved you? If not, it has come to you in vain. If it has only made you moral, or kept you moral, it has fallen short of its end.

It is through believing that this salvation is realized. We are saved when we believe the gospel. A gospel not believed will do nothing for us, but condemn. A believed gospel saves; and saves as soon as believed.

That gospel is the Holy Spirit's testimony to God's free love, and to the finished propitiation of the cross. The

reception of that divine testimony is salvation. Has this salvation, O man, found its way into you? Or is it still resisted? Is the evil heart of unbelief still shutting it out? Is it still appealing to you in vain? Is it still telling to you the old story of the love of God, the love of Christ, but telling it in vain? Have you not yet discovered time good news which it brings to you! Are you still unsaved? Unsaved, because rejecting this gospel, and refusing the free gift it brings.

XL.

Man's Forgetfulness.

"They did not like to retain God in their knowledge."—Romans 1:26. "They soon forgot his works."—

Psalm 106:13.

God has well remembered man; remembers him every day. God might easily forget man; he is so insignificant, worthless, unloveable. But He does not. He has never done so. This world, evil as it is, has been truly, what one has called it, "His well-beloved world,"—His well-remembered creation. Each of us, however poor, however sinful, is a fragment of that world, that race which He has never forgotten: "Thou shalt not be forgotten of me." Each moment's mercies are tokens of the divine mindfulness. He ever retains us in His knowledge and memory.

God desires to be remembered by man. He has taken unspeakable pains to keep Himself before His creatures, so as to make forgetfulness on their part the greatest of all impossibilities. In everything that God has set before our eyes or ears, He says, Remember me. In every star, every flower, every mountain, every stream,—in every joy, every comfort, every blessing of daily life,—God says, Remember me. How affecting this desire of God to be remembered by man! Yet how has man responded to it? We shall see. The world's history, and Israel's history not less, have shewn how God's wish to be kept in affectionate remembrance by the creatures He has made has been met. "They gave me hatred for my love." They did not "like to retain Him in their knowledge."

It is not, however, merely a "deity," a divine being, that is to be remembered. It is the one living and true God. Every departure from this is idolatry and dishonour. This true God wishes to be remembered,

(1.) Reverently. He is great and glorious; to be had in reverence of all creature hood. Reverence and godly fear are His due.

(2.) Confidingly. His character is such that He deserves to be trusted. Trustful, childlike remembrance, is what He expects of us.

(3.) Joyfully. Not by constraint, or through terror, or hope of profit; but with the full and happy heart.

(4.) Lovingly. We love Him because He first loved us. Loving remembrance He would fain have. Nothing less will do.

(5.) Steadfastly. Not by fits and starts; at certain "devotional seasons," but always. "Perpetual remembrance" is what God asks,—"everlasting remembrance."

This God, whose name is Jehovah, is worthy to be remembered, He is so infinitely glorious, and good, and great, and loveable. The wonder is, how one so great should ever for a moment be forgotten. That He should forget us, so insignificant, would not be surprising; but that we should forget Him, so great and mighty, is inconceivably marvelous. We may suppose a creature, an atom of the dust, sitting alone and admiring this great Being, and saying, He may not think of me, or notice me, who am such a grain of sand, but I cannot help continually thinking of Him, looking up to Him,

praising Him, loving Him, whether He cares for me or not; whether I am overlooked or not,—if He will only allow me thus to praise and love. But can we suppose the opposite? the worm of the earth never thinking of this great God at all, and yet this God continually thinking of Him!

Yet man forgets God! He hears of Him, and then forgets Him. He sees His works, and then forgets Him. He acknowledges deliverances, and then forgets Him. Thus it is that man deals with God. For his fellow men man's memory serves him well, but towards God it is utterly treacherous.

Israel is frequently charged with such things as these:

(1.) They forgot His words. All that He had spoken, in grace or righteousness, as warning or as love, they forgot. His words were to them as idle tales. Thus we treat our God.

(2.) They forgot His works. Miracle on miracle of the most stupendous kind did He for Israel, in Egypt and in the desert, as if never wearied with blessing them, yet the work was no sooner done than it was out of mind. They sang His praise, and then forgot His works.

(3.) They forgot Himself. Yes, Himself! Their God, their Redeemer, their Rock, their Strength! They thrust Him out of their thoughts and memories. He and they were to live apart; to have no intercourse with each other. They were to live in His world, and forget Himself; to enjoy His gifts, but not Himself; to breathe His air, bask in His sunshine, drink His rivers, climb His mountains, sail over His wide sea in storm or calm, and forget Himself? "They did not like to retain God in their knowledge."

Forgetfulness of God is God's charge against His creatures. He does not exaggerate their guilt, or bring out into view the gross and hideous crimes of the race. He simply says, "You have forgotten me." That is enough. "My people have forgotten me." It is they who forget God that are turned into hell. This may seem to some a small sin, a negative evil, a sin of omission; but God places it in the foreground of iniquity. "Consider this ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces when none can deliver" (Psalm 50:22).

God lays great stress upon remembering Him and His works. Often did He use that word to Israel, "Remember." "Remember the way that the Lord led thee." "Remember the commandments of the Lord." "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." "Remember thy Creator."

In the New Testament the words of the Lord himself must occur to every one, "This do in remembrance of me"; amid the response of the church, "We will remember Thy love more than wine."

Forget not, O man, the God that made thee. He has given thee no cause to forget Him. He ever keeps thee in mind; keep Him in mind.

Amid all thy forgetfulness let not Him be forgotten. Amid all thy remembrances let Him be ever uppermost. His remembrance will be joy and peace, fragrance, and refreshment, and strength. Retain Him in thy knowledge; root Him in thy memory; fix Him in thy heart forever.

XLI.

The Fairness Of The Divine Administration.

"For there is no respect of persons with God."—

Romans 2:2.

This cannot mean that God makes no difference between man and man. He does make a difference; and not one, but many. Our world is a world of differences; nor would it be the fair, orderly, and goodly world it is, were it not for these. Heights, depths, colors,—mountain, valley, rock,—sea, forest, stream,—sun, moon, and stars,—"one star differing from another star in glory": these are some of the material or physical differences that make our world what it is. Then in man there is race, nation, color; gifts of body and mind; riches and poverty; fame and obscurity; ranks, degrees, circumstances, sorrows, joys, health, sickness: these in themselves constitute a vast variety, and then they subdivide themselves into minor varieties, which increase, ad infinitum, the differences between man. God has given to every man something of his own, in respect of mind, body, parentage, possessions, gifts, feelings, country, age, health, constitution, which belongs to no other. Thus in many respects He does make a difference between man and man.

Nor can this mean that He treats men at random, without reason or plan; irrespective of character, or doings, or believings, as if His dealings were all chance dealings, blind and arbitrary. No. His treatment of His creatures is sovereign, for He is God; but they are not unreasonable; nay, they are most just, wise, and reasonable,—infinitely so.

Nor does it mean that He has no fixed plan, but takes every man as he comes, allowing each to do as he pleases, and accepting every one because of sincerity, or earnestness, or amiableness, irrespective of error or unbelief.

These are the things which men have often assumed; on which they have acted; on which they presume that God acts. These are the things on which the unbelief of the present day lays great stress; resolving every difficulty as to truth, and righteousness, and judgment to come by the reiteration of the text, "God is love." Whether such men really believe in a God at all may be questioned; at all events, the God in whom they believe is not the God of the Bible; the "Jehovah" of the Old Testament, and the "Lord" of the New; the God of the deluge, the God of Sinai, the God of the great white throne, the God of the second death; but a God who plays fast and loose with law, and morality, and truth, and holiness; whose pardons are the result of mere indifference to sin,—if there be such things as pardon at all; whose coming assize of judgment will be a mere form or mockery, perhaps the proclamation of universal amnesty to men and devils, with the abolition of hell itself as the summing up of the whole.

But let us consider what the apostle means by saying that God is no respecter of persons. It means two things.

1. That God has no respect to the outward appearance or circumstances of a man in dealing with him. God takes him for what he is, not for what he seems. The word translated, "person," means mask or face covering; that which disguises a man, and makes him look different from what he is. God regardeth not the person or appearance of a man. To God the man is just what he is exactly, and neither more or less. False

pretences or disguises are vain. The crown of the king is no thing to him; the gems of the wealthy add nothing to the man's acceptance; the power of the statesman does not overawe the Judge of all; the Briton is not favored because he is such, nor the Chinese disfavored because he is such. In regard to all these externalisms, or shows, or masks, there is no respect of persons with God.

2. That in regard to justice and grace, God does not follow man's estimates at all, either outward or inward. God has His own standard, His own estimate, His own way of procedure in treating the sinner, whether for condemnation or acceptance. The usual elements which decide man's judgment have no place in God's.

(1.) God's estimate or rule in regard to justice, is that the doers of the law, the whole law, the unmodified law, shall live by it. So that if any man, whoever he be, Jew or Gentile, Briton or African, can come to God, and shew that he has kept the whole law, he shall be accepted without any abatement made in consideration of outward circumstances whether national or personal.

(2.) God's estimate or rule in regard to grace, is that any man, whoever he be, who will consent to be indebted to the Son of God and His work for acceptance, shall be accepted. This is the way in which grace shews itself to be no respecter of persons. He that has a personal claim, shall have that claim fairly considered and weighed; he that has none, but is willing to take instead the claim of another, even of Christ, shall be received according to that divine claim; whatever he may be, or may have been, in respect of sin, or demerit, or nation, or intellect, or circumstances.

The apostle's object is to declare these three things:—

1. God's purpose of dealing with the sons of men. He is not going to let them alone, nor to allow them to have their own way.
2. God's plan of dealing with them. He does so as God, sovereign and righteous, yet gracious. He will be fair and reasonable in all His dealings. He will not respect men's persons, whether high or low.
3. His willingness to receive any. He has provided a method of reception; and He invites them. He is willing, infinitely willing, to receive any one of Adam's sons and daughters, whoever or whatever he may be.

XLII.

The Righteousness Of God.

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets."—

Romans 3:21.

It is of sin and righteousness that the apostle speaks so fully and so minutely throughout this whole epistle. Up to the verse from which our text is taken, he has been settling this point, that man is a sinner, and needs a righteousness, else he cannot stand before God. Circumcision cannot give a righteousness; it merely tells us that a righteousness is needed, no more. The law cannot give a righteousness; it is merely a declaration of what righteousness is, and that the unrighteous shall not stand before God. It condemns, it cannot justify. By the law is the knowledge of sin, and thus every mouth is stopped, and the whole world brought in guilty before God. But, notwithstanding this, there is a righteousness; a righteousness which meets the case of the unrighteous in every part; a righteousness which can reverse even the verdict of the law against the unrighteous; a righteousness on the footing of which we can stand with boldness in the presence of the holy God without either shame or fear. It is of this righteousness that he proceeds to speak in the words of our text. Let us hear what he affirms regarding it.

I. First, it is the righteousness of God. It is a divine, not a human righteousness. That righteousness which we had lost in Adam was, after all, but a human thing, finite like him who

lost it; but that which we gain is a divine righteousness, and by being divine, forms an infinite compensation for that which Adam lost for us; and we, in receiving it, are made partakers of a most glorious exchange. It is called the righteousness of God, because it is a righteousness provided by Him; a righteousness which was conceived by Him, set on foot, and carried out in every part by Him, entirely and by Him alone; a righteousness, in the providing of which we had nothing to do, even in thought or in desire, far less in execution; a righteousness, the origin and accomplishment of which are wholly and purely God's, not man's at all. Again, it is called the righteousness of God, because it is a righteousness founded on the sufferings of the Son of God. It behoved Him, who is the only-begotten of the Father to take flesh and suffer, ere the very first step towards the providing of that righteousness could be taken. And He has suffered, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God; and thus the foundation of a divine righteousness has been laid.

Again, it is called the righteousness of God, because it is a righteousness made up of time doings of the Son of God. It is not merely with His sufferings that this righteousness has to do, but it is with His doings as well. These two things enter into its composition, so that, without both of them, it would be imperfect. What He did on earth in magnifying the law and making it honourable; what He did on earth in obeying the Father's will in every jot and tittle, makes up this righteousness. These doings of His were infinitely pleasing to the Father, infinitely glorifying to the Father's holiness, and infinitely honouring to that law which our unrighteousness had violated and dishonoured.

Further, it is called the righteousness of God, because it provides such a compensation for human unrighteousness,

that it not only takes it all away, but brings in a new and far higher and surer footing for the sinner to rest on. It introduces a new standing of acceptance, so that the man who becomes a partaker of this provided righteousness becomes divinely accepted, divinely righteous, divinely blessed. It is not a mere simple righteousness that God sets forth; it is a super abounding one, an infinite one, one which can leave no room for doubt on our part at all, one that is most amply sufficient to meet our case were we the very guiltiest on whom the sun has ever shone.

II. Secondly, it is a righteousness without the law. He does not mean that it is in any sense an unlawful righteousness,—a righteousness not based on law,—a righteousness, in providing which, law has been set aside in any sense; but it means a righteousness which, in so far as we are concerned, has nothing to do with law at all. It is not a righteousness which asks any doing, or working, or obeying, on our part, in order to complete it, in order to make it what it is—"the righteousness of God"; for did it require anything of this kind on our part, it would cease to be what it is here represented to be, "the righteousness of God," and would become, to a large extent at least, "the righteousness of man." This righteousness does not send us to the law in order to be justified; it does not throw us upon our own works, either in whole or in part; it proceeds from first to last upon such principles as these, announced elsewhere in this epistle, and in the Epistle to the Galatians: "By time deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." And again, as it is written "To him that worketh not, but believeth in Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." In no sense, and at no time, does it say to us, "Do this, and thou shalt live; do this, and thou shalt be saved." In no sense does it give us the idea of a thing far off, but of a thing nigh, at our very side;

not of a thing to be toiled for, a thing to be waited for on our part. In no such sense has this righteousness anything to do with law, or with our doing of the law. For what is the whole of the Epistle to the Galatians but a protest against the idea that this righteousness of God has anything to do with the law, in so far as the sinner is concerned? In so far as God is concerned, in so far as the Son of God is concerned, it had everything to do with law; but in so far as we are concerned, it has nothing to do with it; it is a righteousness without the law. Let us, brethren, hold fast then this truth of the gospel, this foundation truth; righteousness without law, righteousness founded in no sense upon our keeping of the law; but wholly and absolutely upon this fact, that another has kept the law for us, and that other no less than the Son of God Himself.

III. Thirdly, This righteousness has been "manifested" acceptance. "Now," he says, "the righteousness of God is manifested;" it has been clearly brought to light, so that there can be no mistake concerning it, and no mystery in it. It is not a thing hidden, wrapped up, reserved, held back, veiled from our view. It is a thing clearly brought out today, and shone upon by God's own light, so that the difficulty seems to be, not how to see it, but how to miss seeing it, how to keep ourselves from apprehending it. It has been clearly manifested. God has been at infinite pains to bring it forward to view, both on our own account, and on account of Him whose righteousness it is. In every way He has sought to guard it against the possibility of being mistaken by man. In every way has He taken precautions against this being hidden from view, or darkened by the words of man's wisdom. He has set this righteousness as a star in the firmament above us, that every eye may see it, that no mountains of earth may come between us and the heavenly vision; He has made it

peculiarly bright, that every eye may be attracted to it. He has removed other stars from around it, that it may not be mistaken, but stand alone in its brilliance. It is to this star we point the eye of each sinner here; the Star of Bethlehem, the brightest in God's firmament, the bright and morning star, the star which God has set there as His light to the world. He presents it to each one of you, that on recognizing it you may not walk in darkness, but have the light of life, and that, knowing it as it has been manifested, you may no longer stand in doubt as to your relationship with God, as to your personal acceptance. He so puts this righteousness at your disposal that you may come to Him in confidence, using it as if it were entirely your own.

IV. Fourthly, This righteousness is a righteousness "to which the law and the prophets bear witness." By this expression, we understand the whole of the Old Testament. It is not something (he means to tell us) now come to light for the first time, not understood in the ages gone by; it is something which has been proclaimed from the beginning hitherto. To these oracles the eye of every saint, from Abel downward, has been directed; on this righteousness the feet of every saint from the beginning have stood; of this righteousness every prophet has spoken; to this righteousness every type has borne witness; and this righteousness every sacrifice has set forth. It is this Star which shone down upon the pilgrimage of Old Testament worthies, and in the light of which they walked. It is this Star which sheds light on every page of their history; it was to this Star that they, with one consent, age after age, pointed the eye of all around. They knew none but this; they cared for none but this; to them, as to those who believe now, Christ was "all and in all" On this righteousness they rested, in it they rejoiced. It is no new righteousness which we preach. It is no new foundation of

which we tell. It is the old one, the well-proved one. It has been abundantly sufficient in past ages, and it has lost none of its efficiency now in these last days. It was enough for the saints in former ages, it is enough for us now. They who found salvation, ages and generations ago, found it here; and he who finds salvation now finds it also here.

V. Fifthly, This righteousness is a righteousness which is by the faith of Jesus Christ: "Even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference." He means to say by this expression, that it is a righteousness which comes to us by believing in Jesus Christ. It is not our faith that is our righteousness; it is not our act of believing that justifies. If your faith were your righteousness, then faith would be just reduced to the level of all other works, and would be itself a work. If it were our faith, our act of faith, that justified, then should we be justified by our own acts, by our own deeds. The expression, then "the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ," means simply that it is a righteousness which passes over to us, and becomes available for us, by believing in Him whose righteousness it is; that is, by believing the Father's testimony concerning Jesus Christ. It is by believing that we are identified with Him, so that His doing becomes our doing in the eye of God, and in the eye of the law; His suffering becomes our suffering; His fulfilling of the law becomes our fulfilling of the law; His obedience to the Father's will is our obedience to the Father's will. Such is the position into which we are brought by being made, in believing, one with Him. Thus "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ," is presented to us, that in believing on Him, He may become ours. Righteousness is here laid down at our feet. It is there, whether we receive it or not. It is there, whether we believe it or not; whether we reject it

or receive it. Your receiving it does not create it; your receiving it does not complete it; it is all created, it is all completed, it is all free, it is all at our feet, whether we take it or thrust it away; and our condemnation hereafter, if we be lost, will be not that there was no righteousness, not that we refused to complete a righteousness which had been begun, but that we rejected the righteousness which was completed, and which was so presented to us by God himself. It is in believing, or, as the apostle expresses it, by faith in Jesus Christ, that this righteousness, with all its privileges, and with all its results, passes over to us. For in believing, what are we saying but just this: "I have no works to bring to God; I am a sinner, but I take this work of the Son of God, and I ask to be dealt with by God according to its value, and just as if I had done the work, and not He." Or, it is just as if we were saying, "I have no righteousness, seeing I am wholly a sinner; but I take this righteousness of the Son of God, and I draw near, expecting to be treated by God, just as if I and not He were the righteous person. I cannot present any suffering to Him in payment of penalty; but I take this suffering of the Son of God, and I claim to have it reckoned to me as payment of my penalty." Thus it is, "Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness to every one that believeth."

VI. Sixthly, This righteousness is a righteousness for the unrighteous. It "is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." It is righteousness for the unrighteous. It is not righteousness for the good, but for the evil. It is not righteousness for the worthy, but for the unworthy. It is our unrighteousness that fits us for this righteousness. It is the evil that is in us that fits us for the excellency that is found in it. How foolish, then, to say as men, when convinced of sin, or when going back into

former iniquity, are sometimes found saying, "I am too great a sinner to be forgiven." Why, if you were not such a sinner, you would not need such a righteousness. It is the extent of your unrighteousness that fits you for a righteousness so infinite, so divine. If the righteousness were not the righteousness of God, if it were a human and not a divine righteousness, if finite and not infinite, your fear would be natural; but seeing it is divine not human, infinite, not finite, can anything be more foolish, more presumptuous, more profane, than to say, "My unrighteousness is too great for the righteousness of the Son of God"? This righteousness for the unrighteous is said by the apostle to be "unto all." It is a righteousness which is like the sun in the heavens. It is one sun; yet it is enough for every one, it is free to every one. God works out a righteousness, and then sets it down on this fallen earth, that every one may avail himself of it. We are, therefore, not to say, Is this righteousness provided for this one or for that one, for many or for few? but there it is, there is the righteousness, go and take it. That is the gospel. Looking at the natural sun, do you ever think of asking, Is it for me, for this man or for that, the many or the few? You open your eye and enjoy its beams without asking any questions. Your making such inquiries would indicate a very unhealthy state of body; and so your asking such questions regarding God's intention as proposed in this righteousness, indicates an unhealthy state of mind. To every sinner here, we preach the good news of this righteousness; a righteousness not only suitable and sufficient, but glorious and free; righteousness for the unrighteous; righteousness for the most unrighteous of the children of men.

Again, it is a righteousness which is "upon all them that believe": It is "unto all"; but it is only "upon" them that believe. The moment that we believe through grace, we are

accepted in the Beloved, redeemed from condemnation and from wrath. Till then the wrath of God abideth upon us. It is in believing that this righteousness is put upon us; and in believing what? In believing what God has testified concerning this righteousness, and concerning Him whose righteousness it is.

Again, the apostle affirms regarding this righteousness for the unrighteous, that "there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." There is no difference as to its fitness for the sinner, whatever his sin may be; and there is no difference as to the fitness of the sinner for the righteousness. There is this twofold fitness: the fitness of the righteousness for the sinner, and the fitness of the sinner for the righteousness. "There is no difference"; there is no man more fit than another; all are equally fit or equally unfit, equally qualified or equally unqualified, for "all have sinned"; and it is this that brings down all to the same level, and down to this level it is that the righteousness comes. For it is not a righteousness which has only come down to a certain level,—which has lighted upon earth, but only upon some of its highest peaks; it is a righteousness which has come down to the very lowest valleys, a righteousness which may be found out without climbing, and even beside our very dwellings. No one, then, can say, "I deserve it, therefore it is for me"; and no one, on the other hand, can say, "I do not deserve it, therefore it is not for me." There is no difference, for "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Thus it suits the case of all; so that no one can put it away, and say, "It does not suit my case, but it may suit others." Nay, friend, if you are not an unrighteous man it will not suit you, I grant; but if you are an unrighteous man it must suit you. There is no question as to the kind of your unrighteousness, the length of time, the amount or degree; there is no question about that,

the simple question is, Are you an unrighteous man? Then it suits your case. And it is a righteousness near to each one of you; it is not afar off: it is not in heaven above, so that you have to climb to the seat of God to obtain it; and it is not down so low that you must dig to earth's center to find it: it is near, it is at your very side; and if you reject it, it cannot be because of its distance. God has brought it near. He tells you it is near. "I bring near my righteousness." God says that; and who are you that you should say, It is far off? Nay, more, it is free,—"Without money and without price." There is no payment asked; no payment can be taken. The very idea of payment is insulting to the righteousness, and insulting to Him whose righteousness it is. Yet many seek to buy it,—not perhaps by their gold and silver, but by other things equally worthless. Some would buy it by their penances and fastings, some by their confessions; some would buy it by their repentance, some by their prayers, some by their self-mortification and privations, some by their fair lives and excellent deeds.

It is righteousness for the unrighteous that we proclaim, the righteousness of God, a righteousness which has come down from heaven to earth on very purpose that it may be presented to you. It is God's wish that you should take it. Do you refuse it? He hinders not. Where then lies the hindrance? In you, not in Him. The refusal will not be on His part; it must be on yours; and if you perish, you perish, not because He would not be reconciled to you, but because you would not be reconciled to Him; not because there was not a provided righteousness, but because you rejected it; not because there was not sufficient love in God to give you that righteousness, but because you willfully put away from you both the righteousness and the love.

XLIII.

How Did Abraham Get His Righteousness?

"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." —

Romans 4:3-5.

Justification by faith is a very old doctrine,—one of the oldest dogmas on record. It is as old as Abraham; as old as Abel. The patriarchs knew it well, and lived thereby. It was as believing men that they were justified. The old pagans had not so much as a glimpse of this. It required a divine revelation to communicate even the idea or possibility of it, much more the actual thing.

The apostle goes back to Abraham for his illustration of this free justification, and reminds us that his faith was counted for righteousness, that is, his believing was reckoned instead of his working, in the great question of acceptance. He took God at His word, and in thus honouring Him, "pleased God." Hence the apostle thus strongly puts the matter,—"To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

I. Who justifies? "It is God that justifieth." The Judge, the Lawgiver, is the Justifier. Self-justification is as useless as it is impossible. To acquit myself is of no avail, unless the law and the lawgiver do the same. I must have my sentence of

acquittal or justification from God Himself. It is only His verdict that can satisfy me now, or can avail me in the day of the great reckoning. "Not guilty" from my own lips or from man's lips, will profit nothing; "not guilty" from His lips is altogether sufficient; I need no more to set my soul at rest, and to give me peace of conscience, tranquility of soul.

II. What sort of justification does He give? Man's ideas of justification are vague and low; we must recognize God's thoughts upon the question. His justification is,—

(1.) Righteous. The adjustment of the question between us and God is a righteous adjustment. Its basis is righteousness. Nothing but this would satisfy God or ourselves, or make us feel safe in accepting it in our dealings with a holy God. This righteousness is secured by the full payment of the penalty by a surety or substitute. He does what we should have done; He suffers what we should have suffered; He lives our life, He dies our death, He descends to our grave. Thus He exhausts the penalty, and so makes justification a righteous thing; and our justification is that of men who have suffered the law's full penalty for our sins; our pardon is that of men who, in the person of their substitute, have undergone all that they deserved eternally to undergo. The Just One suffering for the unjust makes the justification of the unjust a just and righteous thing.

(2.) Complete. It extends to our whole persons; to our whole lives; to every sin committed by us. The whole man is justified. It is no half-pardon, no semi-acceptance, that we receive, but something complete and divine; perfect as God can make it; so perfect as to satisfy conscience here, and to stand the test of the judgment seat hereafter. Nothing in us

or about us that goes to make up our character as sinners, is left unjustified.

(3.) Irreversible. No second verdict can alter our legal position. God is not a man that He should lie. Pardoned once, then pardoned forever. "Who is he that condemneth?" "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

(4.) Divine. It is a justification worthy of God; a justification which shall place the justified on a far higher level than the first Adam stood upon; a justification which can only be likened to that of the Son of God Himself when He rose from the dead, being "justified in the Spirit" (1 Timothy 3:16).

III. For whom is it? For the ungodly. Yes; for such alone. Righteousness for the unrighteous is that which the Righteous One came to bring. In this matter of pardon and acceptance, the principle is not, "To him that hath shall more be given, but to him that hath nothing shall all be given. It is not partial or incipient godliness that attracts this justification to an individual. The only fitness or qualification is our need, our ungodliness, our unrighteousness, total and complete, without one particle of goodness or deservingness. It was for the ungodly that Christ died. It was for the ungodly that this righteousness was provided; and he who thinks to have it on any other footing save that of simple need or in any other character save that of unrighteousness or ungodliness, cannot possibly obtain it. The "good news" which we bring concerning this righteousness is that it is for the ungodly,—for the ungodliest; and he who would qualify or explain away that word ungodly, subverts and denies the whole gospel of the grace of God.

IV. How we get it. By believing. In accepting God's testimony to the righteousness,—in crediting His word concerning this justification,—we are justified at once. The righteousness becomes ours; and God treats us henceforth as men who are righteous, as men who, on account of the righteousness which has thus become theirs, are entitled to be dealt with as righteous, out and out. Of Abraham it is said, "His faith was counted for righteousness"; that is, God counted this believing man as one who had done all righteousness, just because he was a believing man. Not that his act or acts of faith were substituted as equivalent to work, but his believing brought him into the possession of all that working could have done. Thus, in believing, we get the righteousness. Our believing accomplishes for us all that our working could have done. The apostle's words are very bold, and the comparison between the working and believing which they embody, brings out the great distinction between man's thoughts and God's, man's ways and God's, "To him that worketh not, but believeth." We are so apt to mix up the two together, the believing and the working, the believing and the feeling, that it is needful to have a strong statement like this thoroughly to clear up our thoughts, and to prevent confusion. The expression here, "believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly," is another way of expressing the truth, "believing in the Lord Jesus Christ"; for it points us to God, who laid our sins upon His Son, that by this bearing of them, in the person of a divine surety, God might be just, and the Justifier of him who believes.

Come and be justified, is His message to the sinner. Credit my testimony, and be freely pardoned! For our gospel is not, "Do this" or "that," but, Come, reap the fruits of what another has done. Come, and, without working, or waiting, or praying, or feeling, enter into the complete justification of him who believeth!

XLIV.

How Did David Get His Blessedness?

"Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."—

Romans 4:6-8.

The apostle asks, How was Abraham justified? He answers, "By believing." Then he asks, How was David justified? And he answers, "By believing." In both cases by the "righteousness of God"; a righteousness "without works"; a righteousness "without law;" and yet a righteousness witnessed by the law and the prophets; a righteousness in accordance with all true law and government; a righteousness for the unrighteous.

Again, the apostle raises the question, What makes a blessed man? And he refers to David's announcement respecting blessedness, and its cause or root. The blessed man is the man to whom "God imputeth righteousness without works." To a sinner this is absolutely essential; it is a sine qua non, indispensable. There can be no blessedness in any other way. After the imputation has taken place, there are innumerable sources of blessedness, all pouring in their joy and peace; but this is the beginning. No blessedness without this divine reckoning of righteousness; but with this a man's blessedness commences. Heaven is begun within him, the heaven that

David tasted, and which he so often speaks of: "in His favor is life." (Psalm 3:5.)

There is, then, blessedness on earth, even to a sinner,—true blessedness,—that which God calls by that name. In spite of weariness, sorrow, conflict, cares, fears, burdens, there is such a thing as blessedness. And this blessedness God freely presents to each unblessed, sorrowful, burdened son of Adam, without money and without price.

The apostle, in quoting the words of David, thus prefaces and interprets them: "David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." Righteousness without works was that which David enjoyed. He obtained righteousness without working for it at all; righteousness by simply taking it from another, and using it as if it were his own.

We must have a righteousness, else we cannot stand before God; we cannot have a religion. God must deal with us, and we must deal with God, on the footing of righteousness; not simply of grace; for He is the righteous as well as the gracious God. When we go to Him we must do so with a righteousness in our hand, either our own or another's. Our transactions with God must all be of this nature. They must be righteous transactions; dealings between a righteous God and men who are, at the same moment, in His eye, both righteous and unrighteous, and therefore needing both grace and righteousness. A personal righteousness on our part is an impossibility. We cannot work for it; and we cannot get it by working. In going to God we must begin, not encl with righteousness; so that we must have it before we can please God or do any good thing; in other words, it must be free, and it must come to us at once, and it must satisfy both God

and our own conscience. Only the righteousness of another can do this; "righteousness without works"; righteousness which does not depend on our doing, or feeling, or praying, or repenting, but which comes to us at once from God, as the root and fountainhead of all working, and goodness, and holiness on our part. The prodigal did not work for the "best robe," but got it all ready-made from his father's hands; Joseph did not work for his coat of many colors, but received it as the gift of his father's love; Adam did not work for the skins with which the Lord God clothed him: so is it with the sinner in his approaches to God, and in God's approaches to him. "Righteousness without works" is given him; nay, put upon him as a raiment, a divine raiment, to fit him for drawing near to God.

There are three things noted here as making up this blessedness, and indispensable to its existence:

I. Iniquities are forgiven. It is "transgression" in the original Psalm. This is one kind of sin, and generally denotes the worst. There is then "transgression" or "iniquity"; but it is forgiven (or "borne," as the word means); for there is forgiveness with God, that He may be feared; a complete, free, divine forgiveness; such as God delights to give, and the sinner to receive. "He forgiveth all our iniquities"; He forgives without reserve, or stint, or uncertainty. He removes our iniquities from us as far as east is from the west. He retains not one; He blots out all.

II. Sins are covered. There is, and there has been, sin; but it is no longer visible; it is buried; it is covered; it is put out of sight, as if God himself no longer saw it. It is God who covers, not man; He covers by means of the blood of atonement; He covers by burying it in the grave of Christ. Thus our sins are

completely covered, hidden, forgiven. They are first "borne," and then "buried." Could any words more completely express forgiveness?

III. Sin is not imputed. There are three words in this passage expressive of sin, as in God's first full announcement of Himself as the great forgiver (Exodus 34:6.); transgression, iniquity, sin; meaning every kind and form of sin. And there are three words used in reference to the putting away of sin,—forgiving (bearing), covering, not imputing. This last,—the non-imputation,—is said specially to be Jehovah's doing. This non-imputation is without works; it is free; it is divine; it is perfect; it is sure; it comes as the consequence of believing.

Thus there are three foundation stones laid for the sinner's blessedness; each of them ample; all of them together fully sufficient. On these he must rest. Without these he can have no joy. His belief of God's testimony to these is that which connects him with this threefold foundation, and with the blessedness. He believes, and becomes a blessed man. The grace or free love of God, contained in these three things, is that which pours blessedness into his soul.

The Psalmist adds, and "in whose spirit there is no guile." Forgiveness makes him a guileless man; it takes away all temptation to speak or act untruly and deceitfully with God, or with man, or with himself. He becomes an Israelite indeed. Pardon has made him such. Being fully forgiven, he has no longer any motive to conceal the very worst of himself. God's forgiveness frank and ample has superseded the necessity of any palliation or excuse; has delivered him from the temptation to make the best of his case and of himself. He thinks, feels, acts, speaks honestly. He confesses sin, and he finds God faithful and just to forgive his sins.

XLV.

The Grace, The Joy, And The Glory.

"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."—

Romans 5:2.

Let us note here—(1) The grace; (2) The introduction into it; (3) The abiding, or standing; (4) The rejoicing.

I. The grace.—It is here called "this grace,"—a well known, most suitable, and sufficient grace, or free love; the free love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This is "the true grace of God"; free love in the heart of God to the ungodly, to the unloving and unloveable. This grace, or free love, is absolute and unconditional; considering not our deservings or qualifications, but simply our need. It looks at us not as good, but as evil; not as sensible, but insensible; not as penitent, but impenitent; not as good in any sense or degree, but as wholly evil. It is not created or awakened by our amendments, or good feelings, or love, or prayers, or regeneration. It regards us simply as sinners, ungodly, needing God's favor and help. It is this free love that begins, carries on, and consummates a sinner's deliverance. The knowledge of this divine free love is life eternal. Out of this fountain, ever full and flowing, there comes to us pardon, and joy, and health, and consolation, and light. He that knows that free love, knows that which saves him, and draws him into happy fellowship with God. He that knows it not, is still afar off; the child of darkness, and the worshipper of an unknown God. We can neither be happy nor holy till we know

it. It is the good news of God's free love that we preach. This is "the ministry of the reconciliation"; this is our mission and commission, "to testify the gospel of the grace of God," and to tell that it is "by his mercy that he saves us"; to speak of "the exceeding riches of the grace of God."

II. The access, or introduction.—We do not create or awaken this free love by any goodness or qualification of our own. It exists independent of these. Nor did Christ, by His coming and death, create that love. This love existed before; it was this that sent Christ. "God so loved the world, that He gave his Son." Yet, without Christ, this love could never have reached us. It would have been a distant and inaccessible well, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. It is through Him that this free love has found its way to us. He brings it to us, and us to it. He gives access, and entrance, and introduction; for the word implies all these, and is used elsewhere to signify the bringing or introducing one person to another (Luke 9:41; Acts 16:20); and is employed not simply in reference to the grace of God, but to God himself (1 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 2:18, 3:12).

Our outward or objective Introducer and introduction is Christ himself; our inward or subjective introduction and introducer is faith. Jesus brings us to time Father and the Father's grace, but He does so by producing faith in us. Without, or apart from Christ, the grace cannot come to us; and without faith, Christ and we are kept at a distance from each other. God has given us His true testimony, both as to His grace and as to His Son; and we, in believing that testimony, become connected with both. The grace is deposited in Christ for us; and we, in coming to Him, get the grace that is in Him. The grace that is in Him, He has received for men, even for the rebellious; and this was the grace which He manifested when

here on earth, both in his words and deeds. He was the gracious One, and, as such, the representative of the Father. We go to Him to get His own and the Father's grace, the free love of Godhead.

III. The standing, or abiding.—In this grace, or free love, we have stood since we were introduced into it; and in it we are standing, and shall stand. "We stand in it!" This is a believing man's true position. He takes his stand on the free love of God. This raises him up and holds him up; keeps him from fainting, or falling, or sliding. This free love is to him—(1) abiding peace, (2) abiding strength, (3) abiding security. This free love is to him—(1) sunshine, (2) rain, (3) food, (4) water, (5) medicine,

(6) wine. At this well he stands and drinks, in this sun he basks, to this storehouse he comes for everything. Have we used this free love as we ought? Are we using it constantly? Do we use it for strengthening our faith, for quickening our daily life, for increasing our holiness, for dispelling our doubts, for ministering consolation? In the constant recognition of this love, there is provision for a close walk with God, and for a useful, zealous life. Are we thus employing it? Are we using it pure and undiluted; love—true, free, unmingled, unmerited love? Or are we diluting it,—polluting it, by mingling something of our own with it; making it less pure, and heavenly, and generous ; less absolutely, and unconditionally, and entirely free? Let us remember how much our steadfastness and progress depend on our constant recognizing of, and living on, this free love. Apart from it, all is weakness, bondage, darkness, and instability. O free love of God, what a fountain of life and strength thou art to the weary, helpless sinner!

IV. The rejoicing.—This grace is not merely stability for us, but joy, and hope, and glory. Standing in this grace, we are filled with joy. This joy comes not merely from the past and present, but from the future; not merely from the knowledge that we are beloved of God, but from the knowledge of what that love is to do for us hereafter. We rejoice because our future is filled with hope,—the hope of the glory of God. Joy comes, then, from hope; hope from the God of love; hope sure and steadfast; hope that maketh not ashamed; everlasting hope. Glory is ours in prospect,—the glory of God; and so great is it, that we reckon that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed,—the "exceeding and eternal weight of glory." It is the glory of the new heavens and earth, the glory of resurrection, the glory of the kingdom, the very glory of Christ. And it is all ours, simply as those who have known and believed this free love of God. Hence the apostle's prayer, "The God of (the) hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." Take these lessons:

1. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.—It is on this we plant our feet; it is this that makes us strong. This love is our strength.

2. Rejoice in the Lord.—Ours should be a full and constant gladness; for, both before and behind, we are compassed about with that which gladdens.

3. Abound in hope.—It is bright, blessed, and glorious. It is the hope of reigning with Christ. It will sustain and sanctify. It will animate and cheer. Thus do we glorify the God of hope.

4. Realize the glory. Keep the eye steadfastly fixed upon it, till its brightness fills our whole being.

XLVI.

The Life Of A Justified Man.

"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope at the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience, and experience hope."—

Romans 5:2-4.

How simply does the apostle put the "good news" in the conclusion of the previous chapter! "It was not written for his (Abraham's) sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered because we had sinned, and was raised because we were justified." Then in the fifth chapter he thus continues,— "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom we have access (introduction) by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we even glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience (*δοξιμή*, approval after trial,—approval by God; perhaps here "a sense of approval"), and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed (will not disappoint), because the love of God is shed abroad (poured out of one vessel into another) in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." [7]

Thus, then, all true religion begins with our being justified; this justification is immediate,—by believing; then follows

inseparably, peace with God; and this peace is through Jesus Christ, who is our peace, and who has made peace by the blood of His cross. This Jesus who has effected the peace has brought us at the same time into a state of favor, and placed us on a new footing, namely, of grace or free love, so that all our intercourse and transactions with God henceforth proceed on this new footing; God deals with us in free love, and we count on being dealt with at all times in free love; we expect nothing save from free love, and from it we expect everything. This fountain of God's free love, thus opened for us, and to which, we are brought by Jesus Christ, is all we need for the fullest supply of our innumerable wants. Let us give all credit to the divine testimony concerning it; and act upon it continually; so shall we be kept in peace, and strength, and liberty.

But let us look at the second verse a little more closely.

The two things which the apostle brings before us in connection with our justified condition, are the grace and the glory. Let us take up these two subjects.

I. The grace. This means, of course, the state of favor with God; as when we read, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." It is that state in which we are dealt with by God in free love, and in free love alone; that state in which not law but free love regulates everything, gives everything; so that keeping this in mind, we may live, and act, and pray as those who are entitled to feel themselves absolutely sure of everything that free love can bestow. The apostle refers to two things in our connection with this state, our introduction or access into it, and our abiding in it.

(1.) Access or introduction. It is Christ that introduces us into it, places us in it,—Christ himself; for "through Him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Christ is the revealer of the Father, the embodiment of the Father's free love. Christ takes us by the hand, and leads us in to the Father's presence; and thus led in by Him, we find there nothing but grace, favor, love. There is no other Introducer but He; there is no other introduction or recommendation but His blood. He leads us in, saying, Father, here is one who is willing to be indebted to me for everything, to my blood for cleansing, to my righteousness for covering, to my merit for acceptance, receive him graciously, love him freely. Thus by Christ we are introduced into the favor of God.

(2.) Abiding in it. It is a state of permanence, unchanging permanence. It is not free love today and law tomorrow, but free love perpetually henceforth; we are not under the law but under grace; where sin abounded, grace has much more abounded. We are not in favor one hour, and out of favor the next, according to our frames; but always in favor, through Him who has introduced us into a state, out of which we can never be cast. There may be much inconsistency, much conscious evil, much that is in itself fitted to separate us from God, or draw His frown upon us; but we are now in a state of favor,—and God deals with us now only in free love. This free love faith realizes; keeping us ever under a sense of it, "rooted and grounded in love." Out of the happy consciousness of this, nothing but unbelief can drive us or keep us. Let us, then, know our privilege as believing men, and stand in this free love; let "us be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." It is often hard so to abide; to realize God's free love in the midst of much conscious evil; but that is the condition of every one who has believed in Jesus; and on this free love he ever falls back when Satan would prompt him to

despond, or lead him to self-righteousness. The remembrance of this free love will alone keep him in perfect peace. Nothing else will avail.

II. The glory. It is "the glory of God"; not the essential glory of the divine character, but the glory conferred on us by God; the glory of His kingdom; the glory of His glorious heaven; the glory of resurrection, when that which is sown in dishonour shall be raised in glory; the glory of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Connected with this glory there is first joy, and then hope.

(1.) Joy. The word is more properly to triumph, or boast, or exult. It is the expression of the soul's exuberant fullness at the tidings of such a glory. It is joy more than sufficient to counterbalance all earthly sorrows, as well as to eclipse all earthly joys. We glory in the glory. We triumph every time we think of what God has promised to us, and will ere long bring to pass.

(2.) Hope. This glory is expressly given us as a hope, as something for hope to feed upon; an object large enough and bright enough to gladden the hoping eye, and fill the hoping soul. It is preeminently the thing hoped for, the "blessed hope." We are men of hope. We are saved by hope. We love by hope. We are comforted by hope. We are sustained and sanctified by hope. It is a hope that maketh not ashamed. It will not fail nor disappoint. It will, when realized, prove itself to be worthy of the joy which it gave us here; worthy of that God who prepared it for us, of that Christ who bought it for us.

The root of all this is faith,—faith beginning at the cross and stretching forward to the throne; faith which brings us into the possession of the divine favor, and keeps us in perfect peace, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.

Let us live the lives of believing men; at peace with God; rooted and grounded in love; free, happy, earnest, self-denied; never losing hold of the free love of God, and never losing sight of the glory to be revealed; walking not only in the love of God, but in the law of God, which is holy, and just, and good, keeping our eye continually on the "statutes," and "judgments," and "testimonies," and "commandments" of the Lord our God, knowing that "great peace have they that love this law," and that it is to this that we are called,—"that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

XLVII.

The Dead And Living Christ.

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." —

Romans 5:10.

There are four distinct facts or events given us here, on which the argument of the passage builds itself. Two of these have reference to the history of the sinner, and two of them to the history of the sinner's deliverer. The first two are, man's enmity and man's reconciliation; the last two are, the Saviour's death and the Saviour's life. Out of these four facts the apostle's argument is constructed—an argument as profound as it is simple, as convincing as it is natural. It is apparently but one argument, and yet it divides itself very easily into three quite separate parts, rising out of these two classes of facts. The first argument is—"If God did so much for us when enemies, what will He do for us when friends?" The second is—"If Christ's death has done so much for us, what will His life do?" The third argument is—"If Christ's death did so much for us when enemies, what will his life do for us when friends?"

Such is the argument of our text,—threefold in its construction, and yet each part not merely linked to the other, but most naturally and simply rising out of the other, so that a person in possession of the facts could not help following the steps of his reasoning, and acquiescing in his triumphant conclusions. But before proceeding to consider these, there is

a truth which may be brought out here, and kept in mind as we pass along, being implied in and illustrative of time argument. It is this— "If God's thoughts were gracious before sending His Son, they cannot be supposed to be less 'so after He has been sent." Now, we know that His thoughts were thoughts of peace and grace from all eternity. Had they not been so, He never would have sent His Son. And we know that it is written: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son;" "God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while ye were yet sinners, Christ died for us;" "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." There having been in His infinite bosom this exceeding love before He gave His Son, it is wholly incredible that He should be less gracious now, less compassionate, less loving, less willing to bestow all needed gifts. For (1) that gift did not exhaust His love. It did not empty the heart of God, nor dry up the fountain of His grace. God's love is not like man's love, ebbing and flowing, bursting forth and then subsiding.' No. The gift, though unspeakable, was not the exhaustion but the manifestation of the love, demonstrating it to be an infinite love, and shewing the infinite lengths to which it is willing to go. So far from having made God unwilling to do more for us, it has proved that there are no limits to His willingness to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. (2.) That gift has not thrown any hindrance in the way of God's love. It is not now a more difficult thing for God to love us; nay, if we can say so, it is easier than ever. All hindrances have now melted away. That gift which displayed the love, contained in it provision for the removal of all barriers that stood in its way. There are now no breaks nor barriers to stay its course. It is at liberty to roll on unhindered in its amplest fullness. It is now a righteous thing in God to love, to pardon, and to bless. And will He love less now that there exist no longer any

obstacles to check the course of love? Will He love less when His love is no longer pent up, but has free course; when He is free to love; nay, to give vent to it, even to the uttermost;—nay, when in doing so, He magnifies His law, glorifies Himself, and puts honour on His Son? Instead, then, of God's loving us less, we should be led to conclude, that, if that were possible, He must love us immeasurably more!

Having thus briefly noticed this important truth, we now pass on to consider time three special heads of argument.

1. If God did so much for us when enemies, what will he do, or rather, what will He not do, for us now that we are friends? He is speaking, of course, in the name of those who have entered into reconciliation over time blood of the great sacrifice—who, in believing, have found peace with God, and have exchanged enmity for friendship, hatred for love. Speaking 'in their name, he reasons "If, when we were enemies, He reconciled us to Himself, much more now, when reconciled, will He bless us. Our enmity did not hinder His blessing us, much less surely will our reconciliation. Our enmity, great as it was, did not hinder His bestowing such an unspeakable gift; what is there, then, within the whole circle of the universe, which we may not count upon, now that that enmity has been removed, and we have entered into eternal friendship with Him? Nothing was too costly for us when we were enemies; can anything be too costly now that we are friends. The great difficulty of our enmity being surmounted, what is there that remains to hinder the fullest outflow of His love? Nay, what is there that will not tend to draw out that love in larger and larger measures?"

He loved and blessed us when enemies; will He not much more love us when friends? He loved us when we hated Him;

will He not love us more when we return His love? He loved us when aliens, strangers, prodigals; will He not love us more when we have become sons, and, as sons, have returned to the parental home, and have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry "Abba, Father"? He loved us when unrighteous,—when we had not even so much as a creature's righteousness,—will He not love us unspeakably more when we stand before Him in righteousness, and that the righteousness of His only-begotten Son? He loved us when unholy; will He not love us now when His Spirit has taken old timings away, and made all things new? He loved us when there dwelt in us only the spirit of the world, nay, the very god of this world himself; will He not love us when His own Spirit dwells in us, making us temples of the living God? He loved us when we were heirs of wrath; will He not love and bless us more when we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ?

There may be said to be three stages in this love, at each of which it rises and increases:—First, He loved us when enemies. Secondly, He loves us more when friends, even in this imperfect state of still-remaining sin. Thirdly, He will love us yet more when imperfection has been shaken off, and we are presented without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. The first stage of this love is, when we were heirs of perdition; the second is, when we become heirs of the kingdom; the third is, when we actually get possession of the kingdom, and are seated with Christ upon His throne.

Here, then, is love in which we may assuredly triumph. It was love which expressed itself by an infinite gift. It did so when we were afar off when we were enemies; what expression, then, will it give, or rather, what expression will it not give to itself now when we have been brought nigh to God, and have

entered into covenant with Him? Nay, more, what a portion must be ours hereafter, what a sum of blessedness, what an exceeding and eternal weight of glory! Especially when, in giving vent to His love to us, He is getting vent to His love towards His Son; when, in honouring and glorifying us, He is honouring and glorifying His Son! Being, then, justified by faith, not only have we peace with God, not only have we access into this grace wherein we stand, but we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We reason thus: If God has lavished on us such a love when we knew Him not, what will He not do for us now that we know Him? If He is loving us and blessing us here, oh! will He not love us and bless us in the day when we take possession of the provided inheritance?

II. If Christ's death did so much for us, what will not His life do? If a dying Saviour did so much for us, what will not a living Saviour be able to do?

The expression "saved" used here, denotes the whole blessing which God has in store for us—complete deliverance in every sense of that word—a complete undoing of our lost estate—the full possession of every blessing. Salvation, in God's sense of it, takes in the very widest compass of blessing, from the forgiveness of the first sin to the possession of the eternal glory. Of this salvation, reconciliation was the commencement. In being brought nigh to God through the blood of the cross, our salvation began. Its consummation is, when Jesus comes the second time without sin unto salvation.

The apostle's argument rests on the fact of the existence of these two opposite states of being—the two opposite extremities of being, death and life. Death is the lowest pitch of helplessness, lower even than the feebleness of infancy. It

is the extremity of weakness. It is the utter cessation of all strength. Life is the opposite of this. It is the full possession of being, with all its faculties and powers. It is the guarantee for the forth putting of all the vigor and strength which belongs to the individual in whom it dwells. And it is thus that the apostle reasons: If Christ in His lowest state of weakness accomplished such marvels for us, what will He not be able to do for us now that He is in the full exercise of His almighty strength? If when reduced to the very extremity of helplessness, He did so much for us, what will He not do for us now when He can say, All power is given to me in heaven and in earth? If, when going down into the tomb, He yet wrought such achievements for us, what will He not do when rising from the tomb, nay, ascending on high? If when under the power of His enemies, and nailed in helpless agony on the tree, He yet prevailed in our behalf how will He not prevail now that He has triumphed over all? If when made a little lower than the angels, He did so much for us, what will He not do when raised far above principalities and powers, and every name that is named? If, when subjected to the dominion of him who had the power of death, He yet conquered for us, and won such glorious spoils, what will He not do now when He has led captivity captive, and completed His mighty victory? If the cross and the tomb have done so much for us, what will not the throne secure?

How perfect the reasoning! How blessed the conclusion! Resting on such an argument, we may stand unshaken and unruffled. Using this as our shield, what fiery darts of the wicked one may we not repel? And shall we not ply it to the utmost in dispelling our darkness, in banishing our doubts, in making us thoroughly ashamed of our fears? Using it as time apostle does, and reasoning with ourselves—"If a dying Saviour did so much for us, what will not a living Saviour do?"

let us say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? still trust in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

III. If Christ's death did so much for us when enemies, what will not His life do for us when friends? In other words, If a dying Saviour did so much for us when enemies, what will not a living Saviour do for us when friends? This is the conjunction of the two previous conclusions. It completes the whole argument by thus putting the two into one. It is a double argument; double in its structure, and double in its strength. It is an argument of resistless power, making us feel the perfect and absolute security which we have for everything included in that word salvation. If enemies have tasted such love, and received such blessings, at the hands of a dying Saviour, what may not friends receive at the hands of Him who is not only alive, but liveth for evermore? If, in the extremity of His weakness, and in the extremity of our alienation, such wonders were wrought for us—in spite of that weakness on His part, and that alienation on ours—what may we not expect now that He is invested with the perfection of all power, and when we have not simply been reconciled, but have been made friends and sons, nay, taken to His bosom as His chosen bride? If a father, in the midst of poverty and weakness, will do much for a prodigal child, what will he not, in the day of his riches, and power, and honour, do for a reconciled son?

Here, then, are two truths which, in assuring us of pardon, assure us of everything. "Jesus died, and Jesus liveth,"—these are the truths which contain everything for us. "Jesus died!"—that contains everything that we need for reconciliation and peace: "Jesus liveth!"—that contains everything pertaining to

the promised inheritance. In knowing the former, I enter into friendship with God; in knowing the latter, I get hold of a security for all heavenly blessing, which takes away the possibility of a suspicion arising in my soul, even in my most troubled hours, as to my joy and glory for eternity. "Jesus died—Jesus liveth!" The simple knowledge of these simple truths is salvation, forgiveness, peace, eternal life. All that the death and life of Christ combined can accomplish is ours! All that can come forth from His grave, or down from His throne,— all that a dying and a living Saviour can do, is ours! All that is embraced in the wide compass between the lowest depths of the tomb of Jesus and the infinite heights of His eternal crown, all is ours! Many were the wonders which His death achieved for enemies; many more will be the wonders yet to be accomplished for His friends!

Hear how Scripture speaks of His life. "When He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory." His appearing as our life shall bring with it all that blessedness and glory which pertain to Him as the living One—as our life. "Because I live ye shall live also." He cannot die; He liveth forever. He is the resurrection and the life; therefore life, and all that life comprises, shall be ours. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." He lives as if just on purpose to intercede for us; and oh, what will not the intercession of this ever living One secure for us! "Fear not," He says, "I am He that liveth and was dead; and am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell and death." What more can we need, not simply to dissipate all fear, but to call up in us the most assured hope—nay, to fill us with the joy unspeakable and full of glory?

Of what, then, is it that this life of Christ gives us the assurance? Of salvation says the apostle: "We shall be saved

by His life." Reconciliation is the result of His death; salvation, of His life!

But what does this salvation include? It is, as we have already seen, the entire reversal of our lost estate. And this includes much. It is, in the very largest sense, a "manifold salvation." It is deliverance from the wrath to come, from the horrors of an eternal hell. Of this, His death gives us the assurance; His life, much more; for hell itself, with all its powers and potentates, cannot prevail against Him who has subdued its prince. It is deliverance from guilt. However infinite that guilt may be, there is entire salvation from it all, salvation sure and irreversible. It is deliverance from sin. It assails sin in its very citadel, the inmost soul, and casts it out. No amount of corruption can withstand it. Self gives way, the flesh is crucified; the old man dies; the inward man is renewed day by day. It is deliverance from death,—the death both of body and soul, the first and second death. The Saviour has shaken the grave, and flung open its gates. Life,—life beyond the tomb, life in resurrection,—is what He has secured for us. "I am the resurrection and the life"; "Because I live ye shall live also"; "I have the keys of hell and death." Thus he speaks to us assuring us of redemption from the power of the grave. It is deliverance from want. His fullness takes away the possibility of any want, from the moment that our connection with Him began. Want from that time became impossible; for all His riches became ours. His fullness was always at command. It is deliverance from enemies and perils. Many and mighty as these might be, they could not affect us. We were beyond their reach. They might aim at us, but they could not harm. Our victory over them was sure.

And as we are thus assured not only of reconciliation but of salvation from all evil in every form, so are we put in

possession of every good. "All things" become ours: for He who saves us makes full provision for His saved ones. All that a dying Saviour could secure for us is freely given; nay more, all that a living Saviour possesses for Himself becomes also ours. Joy, glory, dominion, royalty, priesthood, and a boundless inheritance,—all these are ours, and all of them made irreversibly sure to us from the fact that "Jesus liveth." He was dead and is alive; yea, and He liveth for evermore. This is our pledge for the perpetuity of our possession. He lives; and all that a living Saviour can do for us shall be done. He ever liveth to make intercession for us: what more do we need to assure us that "things present, things to come, life and death," all are ours; for we are Christ's, and Christ is God's? If His death made such a glorious commencement for us when we were enemies, what will not His life carry out and consummate for us now that we are friends?

Here, then, let us rest, for surely the resting place is a sufficient one. With arguments such as those of the apostle, let us confront Satan, breaking all his snares, overthrowing all his might; and disentangling ourselves from his subtlest sophistries. On grounds such as these, let us cast aside the various processes of doubting through which so many seem to think it necessary to pass; not listening to the whispers of unbelief, but meeting them all with the resistless argument of our text.

Here, too, let us greatly rejoice, turning this argument into a song of triumph; for surely it is both. It is as much the latter as it is the former. And more especially let us do so in these last days, when we are looking for the return of this same living Saviour. The prospect of His speedy arrival seems to impart to it double edge and force. Carrying out the argument we can say, If an absent Saviour has done so much for us,

what will not a present Saviour do? If, when afar off, He has done such things for us, what will He not do when He is nigh? If the Man of Sorrows did so much for us, what will not the mighty Conqueror do? If, when put to shame, He did such great things for us, what will He not do when He is glorified? If, upon the cross, He so blessed and befriended us, what may we not expect when He sits upon His throne? If when He appeared on earth without form or comeliness, He wrought such wonders for us, what may we not look for when He comes in His beauty as the Church's Bridegroom? If, when He came as the son of the carpenter,—the despised son of Mary,—He achieved such victories and won such honours for us, what may we not anticipate when He comes in glory as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

XLVIII.

The History Of Sonship.

"The manifestation of the sons of God."—

Romans 8:19.

The name, sons of God, is not exclusively applicable to the church. Angels are called sons (Job 38:7); so is Adam (Luke 3:38); so is Israel (Hosea 1:10). Yet the redeemed get that name in a deeper, fuller sense, by reason of their higher standing and their closer connection with the Son of God (1 John 3:1; Romans 8:17, 29; Revelation 21:7). There are thus outer and inner, higher and lower, circles of sonship; Christ the one center; and His redeemed occupying the innermost circle or region nearest to Himself, and nearest to the Father.

The history of these "sons,"—these heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, the redeemed from among men,—divides itself into the following parts or epochs:

I. Their past eternity. They had a history ere they were born; not conscious to themselves, but truly in the eye and purpose of God. (Roman 8:29; Ephesians 1:3, 5; 2 Timothy 1:9; Revelation 17:8.) In these passages the history of each saint and of the church of God is traced to that eternity in which God only existed. Even then they were sons of God by anticipation; sons of God in the Father's purpose, and in the everlasting covenant. How marvelous, how glorious their history!

II. Their unregenerate life on earth. They were born no better than others; shapen in iniquity; children of wrath; able to claim kindred only with the first Adam, only with the flesh and with earth; not a vestige of the second Adam about them; no trace of heavenly sonship; no lineament of their Father in heaven; walking according to the course of this world; hateful and hating one another; their hearts "enmity against God."

III. Their adoption. In God's purpose this adoption stood from eternity; but it was seen when they actually passed out of the family of the evil one into that of God. When they were begotten again they became sons, receiving the name, privileges, legal rights of Sons. Let us note the different statements of Scripture as to these things:

(1.) They are begotten again. (1 Peter 1:3.) They are born of time Spirit (John 3:3), born from above. (2.) They believe. (Galatians 3:26.) They pass out of the region of unbelief into that of faith. In believing they become sons. (3.) They receive Christ. (John 1:12.) They accept the Father's testimony to Him as the Son of God, and the Christ of God.

(4.) They get the name of sons. (1 John 3:1) They are now "called" sons of God. This is their new name, given by God himself.

(5.) They receive the spirit of adoption. (Galatians 4:5,6.) A new spirit fills them; the spirit of sonship; and, "Abba, Father," is their cry.

(6.) They are led by the Spirit. (Roman 8:14.) They are not their own guides; nor do they trust in human guidance; but are led by Him.

(7.) They are chastened. (Hebrew 12:7.) Discipline is their lot; and chastisement is the badge of sonship.

(8.) They are brought to glory. (Hebrew 2:10.) To this are they redeemed and called. "Whom He justified, them He also glorified."

(9.) They are made like Christ himself. (Romans 8:29; 1 John 3:2.) Conformity to the Son of God is their destiny and their privilege: "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

IV. Their time of obscurity. For a season they are hidden; men's eyes are holden so that they do not recognize them; they are in disguise; the world does not believe that they are what they claim to be, or that their prospects are so very glorious. Their life is hid with Christ in God. It doth not yet appear what they shall be. They do not wear the raiment either of kings or of sons. They are strangers and pilgrims. This is the day of their obscurity and non-acknowledgment by men. As it was with their Lord, so with them. He was unknown and unrecognized; nay, despised and rejected. This is the discipline through which they are passing; this the manner in which they glorify the Father upon earth; this the trial of their faith, and this the touchstone of the world's willingness to own their Lord. Are we content with obscurity?

V. The manifestation. The obscurity does not last always; nay, not long. The day is coming when the disguise shall drop off, and their royal robes display themselves; when He who is their life shall appear, they shall appear with Him. Then shall they be like Him to whom they adhered in the day of sorrow and gloom. But let us see,

(1.) What this manifestation is. (The word is the same as in 1 Corinthians 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:7, 13; 4:13.) It is revelation, or outshining, or transfiguration. They are in this conformed to their Lord. They were like Him in their obscurity; they shall be like Him in their manifestation. It shall be transfiguration glory; resurrection glory; royal glory; bridal glory; priestly glory. What a contrast between the obscurity and the manifestation will be presented in that day of unveiling, when they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. What a future is ours! how unlike our present!

(2.) When shall the manifestation be? In the day of Christ's appearing; not in the day of death. The soul of the saint is blessed when he dies; he is with Christ in Paradise; but still the glory is not full, and the body is still in the grave; the grave is part of our obscurity. But when time Lord descends from heaven, then the dead in Christ shall rise; then this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and death be swallowed up in victory.

(3.) How long shall the manifestation be? Forever. A whole eternity of glory. Our obscurity was but a day; our glory is everlasting. We are to shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars forever and ever. What a blaze of splendor will break forth from the glorified church, in the day of manifestation! What, in comparison with this, is the brightness of the sun or stars?

Let us walk worthy of our prospects; content with present obscurity and shame; "passing the time of our sojourning here in fear."

XLIX.

Creation's Groans And Hopes.

"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now; and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."—

Romans 8:19-23.

When the night is darkest, and the stars are hidden, and the clouds are black, then we think most of the clear fair day, and long for its dawn. When the storm is roughest, with the waves and wind roaring round the labouring vessel, then we are troubled, and look eagerly out for the glad and sunny calm. When winter binds earth in its chain of frost, and wraps it in snow and ice, then we begin to ask for spring, with its flowers, and songs, and verdure. So with the saint, as represented by the apostle here. This is night, and storm, and winter to him; he is ever thinking of the day, and the calm, and the spring. Like one sitting amid the ruins of the earthly Jerusalem, lie sighs for the glory of the heavenly city.

"From banishment she more and more,
Desires to see her country dear;

She sits and sends her sighs before,
Her joys and treasures all be there.—(Old Hymn.)

The weariness, and conflict, and sufferings of this present life, call up in the apostle the wonderful thoughts contained in these verses relating to creation and to the Church of God, to the wretchedness of this evil world and groaning earth, and the perfection of that world that is to come,—that new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. We thus interpret the whole passage, beginning, as it ought, at the middle of the seventeenth verse:—"If indeed we suffer together, it is that we may be also glorified together; for I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory about to be revealed in us, (which reaches towards us, ἐτις). For the earnest expectation of creation waiteth for the revelation of the sons of God; for creation was subjected to vanity, not willingly, but on account of the subjecter (God), who (for His own purposes), hath subjected it in hope, because creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of the corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans together and travails together until now. And not creation only, but we ourselves also, (although) possessing the first fruit of the Spirit, (the Spirit as a first fruit), even we groan in ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body; for (moreover) by this hope we are saved; (the things of this hope are no doubt unseen, otherwise it would not be hope) but a hope that is seen is not a hope. But if we do not see, and yet hope, then we wait in patience."

Such is the meaning of the passage; let us now learn in detail what the apostle reveals as to creation, and as to the church.

I. Creation. Here (as in Matthew 10:6, "from the beginning of the creation,") (the word signifies "the earth and the fullness thereof" (1 Corinthians 10: 26), or that which the Holy Spirit describes in the first chapter of Genesis, and pronounced "good" and "very good." For matter (no less than spirit) is God's handiwork, and therefore precious in His sight. Let us read and understand Genesis 1; Psalms 8:19, 148; Proverbs 8.

(1.) Its subjection to vanity. Vanity means that which is vanishing, liable to change and decay, "vanity of vanities." It means evil in opposition to good, emptiness in contrast with fullness. This material creation was made "good" and stable; but man's sin let in evil upon it, brought on it the curse, made it crumble down and wither, till it not only decays and waxes old, but is ready to vanish away. To this vanity the Creator has subjected it, in consequence of its connection with man: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake" (Genesis 3:17). This passage in Genesis contains the act or sentence of subjection, as putting it under the power of "vanity,"—decay, corruption, disease, death. Not its own sin but man's was the cause: "for thy sake." [8]

(2.) Its earnest expectation. The word signifies the eagerness expressed by the head bent forward and the neck outstretched—intense and anxious longing. Such is the feeling figuratively ascribed to creation, as in Psalm 96:2, when it is called on to be glad, and rejoice, and clap hands, in expectation of its coming Deliverer and King. This, then, is creation's attitude as seen and interpreted by God. He looks down on creation, and regards it as expecting, waiting, watching, longing, just as He is said to hear the cry of the young lions for food.

(3.) Its groans and travail-pangs. It is like a sick man racked with pain, and crying out for relief; it is as a woman in labour, suffering the pains of childbirth, and longing for the moment when she shall be delivered. All nature sighs as if conscious of imperfection, as if bowed down under the curse. Blight, decay, death, storms, earthquakes, lightnings, are all the groans of creation, and perhaps still more, the sufferings of the beasts of the field, and fowls of the air; for their case seems unspeakably sad, suffering at the hands of man in a thousand ways not by any fault of their own. Perhaps also the labour pangs of earth may not simply be to shake of the corruption with its bondage; but especially to be delivered of the millions and millions of bodies which it contains. Does it not travail in pain to be delivered of the dust of the saints which it has carried in its womb for ages? and of earth also shall it not be said, "in the beauties of holiness from (more than) the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth (Psalm 110:3)?"

(4.) Its deliverance. This is the day of creation's bondage, in which corruption (the corruption or old curse) holds it; the day of its liberty,— "the liberty of the glory,"—is coming, the "times of the restitution of all things;" the revocation of the curse; the bestowal of the long deferred blessing; the renewal of "the heavens and earth which are now." Creation is represented as knowing this its glorious destiny, and looking forward to it, as simultaneous with the manifestation of the sons of God, the day when these sons shall shine forth in the kingdom of their Father; for, "when He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory."

Thus all creation looks forward to its perfection, groaning under imperfection; anticipating the "new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Bright hope! Sweet

consolation to us when moving about each day amid the vanity of a sin-laden earth, and listening to its groans and pangs! Rest for a weary world, tarry not! Earth's days of weariness are now drawing to a close. These long ages of suffering and vanity have surely been enough to demonstrate the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

II. The church. It is described as "we who have the first fruits of the Spirit,"—as "the sons of God." It is composed of the redeemed from among men from him by whom the curse and the vanity were brought in, to the last of His redeemed sons; a glorious church,—whose members are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,"—"the general assembly and church of the firstborn,"—God's kings and priests, prepared for His everlasting kingdom.

What, then, says the apostle here of this church—of its present and its future.

Mark,—

(1.) Its sufferings. He calls them the sufferings of this present time; sufferings with Christ, as well as sufferings for Christ. There are fightings without, and fears within; enemies all around; tribulation on every hand,—in body, and soul, and spirit; weary limbs, weeping eyes, drooping hands, feeble knees, fainting spirits, aching heads, broken hearts: even when outward persecution assails not. "Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God." "I fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ."

(2.) Its groans. "We ourselves groan within ourselves," sometimes articulately, and sometimes with the groanings that cannot be uttered. As Jeremiah says, "Our sighs are

many, and our heart is faint." The church's groans are in unison and sympathy with a groaning creation. An absent King, a present usurper, a cursed soil, overflowing evil, disease, sorrow, death: these make it groan even in the midst of its "joy unspeakable."

(3.) Its waiting. "Waiting,"—"patient waiting,"—"hoping,"—this is the church's attitude, in harmony with creation. The feeling and attitude of the church intimates that the inheritance is yet to come. "Not now, not yet; but soon and surely; therefore we wait," may be said to be its language. It waits now, in accordance with the saints of all ages past, for deliverance from the bondage of the corruption, and for the liberty of the glory, for the reversal of all the evil which the first Adam introduced, and for the in bringing of all the good and the glory which the second Adam has purchased.

(4.) Its adoption. "Even now are we the sons of God;" we have already received the Spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father. But as it was resurrection that manifested (Romans 1:4) Christ's own Sonship (though He was the eternal Son), so by resurrection is our sonship or adoption to be manifested. The day of adoption is here called the day of the redemption of the body. For this fullness of divine, and visible, and proclaimed adoption, we wait in hope and patience.

(5.) Its manifestation. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." As Christ is hidden, so are we just now. We are sons, and kings, and heirs, in disguise. But the day of revelation comes; "when He who is our life shall appear, we shall appear with Him in glory." If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him. The day of His recognition and crowning shall be ours also.

(6.) Its liberty. In one sense we are free, Christ bath made us free. In another, we are sharers of the bondage of the corruption; we groan within ourselves; we cry, O, wretched men, who shall deliver us; we are carnal, sold under sin. The day of full freedom is at hand, eternal and glorious.

(7.) Its glory. This is "the glory to be revealed;" it is the day of the glory for heaven and earth, of which it is said, "The wise shall inherit glory,"— Christ's glory, the church's glory, creation's glory,—glory such as that described in the two last chapters of Revelation, an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

See then,—

1. The power and poison of sin. It was one sin that ruined man, and marred creation, and introduced death. The effects of that one sin are still felt; they have lasted nearly six thousand years, and are as terrible as ever. What must sin be!

2. The completeness of the deliverance. Not man only, but man's earth, shares this; not man's soul alone, but man's body too; it will be the undoing of the wrongs, and sorrows, and groans, of ages. The second Adam's triumph will be complete. His blood will not only give white raiment to His saints, but will wash creation white.

3.

The unbelieving man's loss. He loses his soul; he loses heaven, and God, and glory, and the resurrection unto life; the incorruptible inheritance; the blessedness of the eternal

rest, and the liberty of the glory, the joy and brightness of the manifestations of the sons of God.

L.**Unutterable Groans.**

"Groanings that cannot be uttered."—

Romans 8:26.

It is with the Holy Spirit that we are here brought face to face; or set side by side. As Christ does the whole work for us, so the Holy Spirit does the whole work in us. He is not visible, nor audible, nor palpable; but not on that account the less real and personal. He is infinitely real and personal; and His work is like Himself. Though He is specially "a Spirit," yet all that He is, and says, and does, is thoroughly real. His presence is real; His indwelling is real; His words are real; His voice is real; His touch is real; His mode of operation, though not sensibly felt apart from the truth which He presents to us, is yet real and true; nay, perfect and divine; the very work of Him who created the heavens and the earth.

Here, it is His way of dealing with us and our infirmities that is particularly referred to. We are described as feeble men, bearing on our shoulders a burden too heavy to be borne; He comes up to us; not exactly to take away the burden; nor to strengthen us under it; but to put His own Almighty shoulder under it, in the room of (ἀντι), and along with (συν) ours; thus lightening the load, though not changing it; and bearing the heavier part of it with His own Almightyness. Thus it is that He "helpeth" (συναντιλαμβάνεται) our infirmities; making us to feel both the burden and the infirmity all the while that He helps; nay, giving us such a kind and mode of help, as will keep us constantly sensible of both.

This is especially true in regard to our prayers. Here it is that His "help" comes in so effectually and so opportunely; so that we are made to "pray in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20); to "pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:18). We neither know the things we ought to pray for; nor, when we know these, do we know how to pray for them. The apostle here seems specially referring to the latter of these; the right way of praying. For this we need the Holy Ghost. Ah, what a thing is prayer! The simplest' form of speech,—such as even a child could utter,—yet the highest and divinest of all utterances; such as the Holy Spirit alone can enable us to give forth.

So entirely does the Spirit identify Himself with us, that our desires are reckoned His, and His desires ours. He not only helps our infirmities, but He comes into us, unites Himself, as it were, to us, makes Himself one with us; fills us, joins His desires to ours, His voice to ours, His cries to ours, so that they come both up as one before God. Thus He is "intercessor," one who falls in with us," "takes up our case," "intercedes for us," over and above (ὑπερ) the intercession of Christ. Our heart is cold; He infuses His warmth. Our desires are poor, He infuses His own full, rich longings. Our voice is feeble, He joins His voice to ours, and gives strength, and tone, and vigor, and loudness, so that thus filled with His, transfused with His, it goes up with power, and reaches the very heaven of heavens.

But that which He is said specially to call up, or produce, or create in us, is "groanings that cannot be uttered." Not simply words; nay, not words at all. Not simply desires, but groans—desires of the deepest and most earnest kind; groans so full, and deep, and fervent, that they cannot get vent in

human words. They are divine longings, though coming out of the heart and lips of a man, and as such, cannot get themselves clothed or embodied in earthly words. Let us, then, learn,

1. True prayer is from the indwelling Spirit. It is He that wakes up prayer in us, both as to its matter and its manner. We knew not what or how to pray. He alone can teach us both; and He does this by coming in to us, and filling our whole being with Himself; so that while our longings are really ours, they are as really His. God receives them as both.

2. True prayer takes the form of a divine intercession. We have Christ in heaven on the throne, and the Spirit on earth in our hearts, interceding; Christ pleading for us as if we were one with Him, the Spirit pleading in us as if we were one with Him, and He with us. Intercession in the case of the Spirit, means His taking us up, undertaking for us; infusing Himself into each petition, so that He becomes the petitioner, the pleader. Thus He pleads both for us and in us. He throws Himself into our case; He seizes hold of us in our weakness; He bears us up as one who has come to our help; He drowns our cries in His, so that God hears not us but Him.

3. True prayer often takes the form of groans. The longings produced in us by the indwelling Spirit are such as cannot get vent to themselves in words. Our hearts are too full; our voice is choked; articulation is stifled; we can only groan. The groan is the truest part of true prayer. It seems to us sometimes the most imperfect part. We try to pray; our hearts are too full; we cannot; we break down; it may be with sorrow, or ignorance, or the intensity of our feelings, or the soreness of our trials, or the multitude of our longings. Yes, we break down before God; we become dumb; we can only groan. But

the groan is true prayer. Man could not interpret it; we ourselves do not fully understand it. But God does. "He knows the meaning of the Spirit's 'groans'" (Baxter). He accepts it; yes, accepts it as prayer; as the best of prayer; the fine gold of prayer; the sweetest of the sweet incense that goes up from earth to heaven. These broken, stifled cries, thus dictated by the Spirit, and sent up on the wings of His own voice; or, as we may say, these cries of the Spirit, expressive of our longings, and sent up on the wings of our voice,—these groanings which cannot be uttered,—are well-pleasing to God. For thus we groan with the rest of a groaning creation; and all these groans are at length to be heard and fully answered.

(1.) Put yourself into the hands of the Spirit, for prayer and everything else.

(2.) Grieve not the Spirit. He is willing to come to you, and take up your case; but beware of grieving Him.

(3.) Pray much. Pray in the Spirit. Delight in prayer. Cherish the Spirit's groans.

LI.

Inspired Logic.

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"—

Romans 8:32.

This is inspired logic; yet it is most simple and natural reasoning. It goes straight down to understanding, heart, and conscience. It is irresistible. It contains, moreover, the whole gospel of the grace of God. It announces to us that perfect love which casteth out fear; and shews us the gracious character of God, as interpreted and illustrated by the gift of his Son. It says, "herein is love, and what will that love not do for you? here is the measure of that love, and does not that measure take in all you need?"

Let us put the statement in this way—the one gift, and the many gifts,—or the one great gift, and the many lesser gifts flowing out of it, and pledged to us by the love which gave it.

I. The one gift. It is "the unspeakable gift," of which it is said, "God so loved the world that he gave his Son." Our text thus expresses it, "he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." It is then of his Son, his own Son, his only begotten Son, his beloved Son, that the passage speaks. And regarding him it says, that "he spared him not." He might have spared him; he did not need to do otherwise; it was an infinite sacrifice; yet he spared him not, that he might spare us. It was not want of love to him, but it was love to us that led him not to spare him. "How shall I give thee up?" he said

to rebellious Israel, how much more to his obedient holy Son, "How shall I deliver thee up?" "How shall I nail thee to the cross, and lay thee in the grave?" "My heart is turned within me, my repentance is kindled together." This one great gift He freely gave. He spared not his Son, but delivered Him up for us all. To lowliness, to shame, to weariness, to banishment, to sorrow, to hunger and thirst, to agony and death, He delivered Him up. He spared not Him, that He might spare us; he delivered Him up, that He might not deliver up us. The gift is one, but it is infinite. There is none like it; none; nor can be. It is the great gift, the gift of gifts.

But the "delivering up," is that which so greatly enhances the giving and the gift. He was delivered up (1) not to honour, but to dishonour; (2) not to joy, but to sorrow; (3) not to the blessing, but to the curse,—nay, was made a curse for us, was made sin for us; (4) not to angels to worship, but to devils to tempt; (5) not to a throne, but to a cross; (6) not to life, but to death. How immense then the gift! Though but one, it transcends myriads; nay, all other gifts gathered together. It was a test of love such as nothing else could have been. How real, how true, how vast must that love have been. Here is its sincerity demonstrated. Here are its dimensions measured. What is its height? The answer is, "He spared not His Son." What is its depth? "He spared not His Son." What is its length? "He spared not His Son." What is its breadth? "He spared not His Son." Nay, He delivered Him up. Nay, He laid our sins upon Him; He made Him a curse for us. The more that we meditate on this one gift, the more does its greatness display itself. It passeth all measurement and all understanding. Such a gift for such creatures! Such a gift for sinners; for those whose portion was wrath and condemnation!

II. The many gifts. These are the "all things" of which the apostle speaks. His argument is, "He who has given you His Son, will He deny you anything?" We cannot possibly need or ask anything half so precious as that which He has already given, and therefore we need not fear obtaining anything. He who has given a whole ocean, will He refuse a drop? He who has given all earth and heaven, will He refuse an inch of land? His willingness to give, and to give to any extent whatever, has been so manifested in the gift of His Son, that we cannot doubt. That one great gift was given freely, will He not give all other things as freely? That one gift was given unasked, will He not give all others for the asking? That one gift cost Him much, these others cost Him nothing but the delight of giving. That one gift was sent to us when we were turning away from Him, will He not bestow these lesser gifts on those who are turning towards Him? That one gift came when there was "no intercessor," what, then, may we not expect when there is such an Intercessor as He who is Himself both gift and intercessor? When the great gift was sent there was no blood, no righteousness, no sacrifice; what may we not count upon as to the lesser gifts, now that blood, and sacrifice, and righteousness have come?

We are thus thrown upon God's character as interpreted by His great gift, and we are taught how to reason from that gift, how to draw our confidence towards God from that gift, respecting "all things." Among these "all things," let us note the following:—

(1.) Forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness,—complete, and free, and unchangeable,—for the chief of sinners; regarding which we reason, as did the apostle, He that spared not His own Son, will He not forgive my sins? will He not give me peace of

conscience, and a sense of acceptance, and deliverance from condemnation?

(2.) Light and love. These are what He delights to give; and they have been purchased for the sinner. There is now no hindrance to His giving these. For the darkest mind there is light; for the coldest heart there is love. He that spared not His own Son, will He refuse us these?

(3.) Renewal in the whole man. He who spared not His own Son, will He not renew us in the spirit of our mind? Will He not take out of us the stony heart, and give the heart of flesh?

(4.) The Holy Ghost. He that gave His Son, will He refuse His Spirit? It cost Him much to give His Son; but it costs Him nothing to give His Spirit. Will He not give Him when we ask?

He that spared not His Son, will He not give us all things? Will He not quicken, and comfort, and heal, and bless, and cheer, and save?

LII.

No Condemnation.

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"—

Romans 8:33.

One of the church's names is "elect of God"; and each of its living members is one whose name is written in the book of life from the foundation of the world (Revelation 17:8). Of these chosen ones the history is thus summed up: "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Romans 7:30).

The state in which each one of these is born into the world is that of "condemnation"; the state into which each one is brought, in believing, is that of "no condemnation" (Romans 8:1). Forgiveness of sins—present, conscious, complete forgiveness—is that into which faith introduces us, and out of which unbelief alone can keep us. Justification from all things—certain, immediate, and unchanging justification—is our portion here. It is respecting us, as men forgiven and justified, that the apostle asks, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" On believing the gospel of forgiveness, they were placed beyond the reach and risk of any charge or impeachment whatsoever; they are brought by God into such a state as to render condemnation an impossibility; for the forgiveness is irreversible, and the righteousness in which they stand is divine.

Not that they cease to be sinners. But they cease to be treated as guilty. Iniquities prevail; but there is continual forgiveness to cancel these, and a perfect righteousness to cover these, and the ever-flowing blood of the everlasting covenant to wash all guilt away as it comes up, and to prevent their peace with God from being broken. They do sin; but they have an Advocate with the Father; and who can demand the execution of the penalty in their case? Who shall condemn? Who can do it? Who dare do it? Who has the right to do it? Not angels. They are too glad to welcome back the sinner, and to take the side of those whose sight God has taken. Devils would, if they could. But they cannot. The prey is taken from the mighty, and placed beyond their grasp. The law might have done it; but it has been satisfied; nay, magnified. It has therefore no claim, and could gain no object by accusing us; for our acquittal is a righteous one—an acquittal in which law itself rejoices.

Mark, then, how complete and how satisfactory the challenge is; for the words of our text are not so much a question as a challenge—a challenge thrown down before the universe!

I. It is a righteous challenge. It is not the challenge of one who, through might, had baffled right, and triumphed over law. It is that of one who sees all righteousness fulfilled, and all good confirmed, by that very sentence which acquits himself; who, unable to contribute aught toward his own acquittal, has recognized God's righteous way of justifying the unrighteous, and in doing so, has found deliverance from condemnation. It is a challenge so righteous, that every righteous being responds to it; so righteous, that his own conscience, even when most fully awakened and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, rests satisfied and unalarmed; so righteous, that none can undertake to answer it, save those who are

prepared to reject God's way of saving the lost, and forgiving the condemned.

II. It is a holy challenge. It is not that of one who was seeking to sin that grace may abound, but of one who saw that this is God's way of delivering him from sin, and making him hate sin. God's way of forgiveness brings out all the loathsomeness of sin, shews it to be the enemy both of God and of the sinner. Thus the man who says, "Who shall lay anything to my charge? who is he that condemneth?" is the man who is also saying, "Now I have some hope of being holy; now I shall be delivered from sin; now sin has received its death-blow; and now love and a free pardon will do what terror and uncertainty, and an unsatisfied law, could never have done. Being delivered from the first and great matter of seeking a forgiveness, by having got that question for ever laid to rest, I am free to attend undistractedly to the one question, How shall I be holy, and by a holy life serve and glorify God?"

III. It is a joyful challenge. The question, and the way of putting it, shew the exulting gladness of the soul. It is the joy of a soul delivered from an infinite fear; from overwhelming foreboding of wrath; from the uncertainties of the future, and the dreaded vengeance of an angry God. What gladness is this! To be forgiven all sin, and clothed with an infinite righteousness! To be as thoroughly assured of the favor of God, as formerly of His displeasure! To see the dark cloud of wrath which had wrapped the soul round rise upwards, and pass away, leaving the wide azure clear and bright, with not a mist to intercept the light of reconciliation and love, pouring down from the heaven of heavens! What joy unspeakable and full of glory is this!

IV. It is an unanswerable challenge. It is boldly put, and with no muffled voice. It is spoken aloud, that all may hear, and answer if they can. But no one can take it up. There is silence in heaven, and earth, and hell. It is Paul's challenge to the universe. Nay rather, it is the Holy Spirit's challenge. Who shall answer Paul? Who shall answer the Holy Ghost? Who shall condemn us? Who shall lay anything to our charge? Who shall trouble our conscience or break our peace? We ask aloud; we repeat the challenge to the devil and all his legions. But no answer is given. We hear only the echo of our own voice. It is unanswerable even now; for from the first moment that we believed, we were entitled to take it up. It shall be no less unanswerable when we go down to the tomb; and we may make the caverns of the dead re-echo with it. It shall be unanswerable in the day of the Lord; so that, even when standing before the judgment seat, surrounded with angels, or surrounded with devils, we may lift up our voice and say, Who shall lay anything to my charge?

Nor is there anything presumptuous in this challenge. It is one of simple faith. It is meant for every believing man; and there is something lacking in that faith which falters here. A believed gospel ought to lead him who believes it to adopt this bold and blessed attitude. For a believed gospel is meant to assure the believing soul of forgiveness and eternal life.

It is a challenge which God himself will own. He does not reckon it too bold or too decided. He puts it into our lips, and He will acknowledge it. In our believing, we set our Amen to His testimony; and in His giving us this challenge, He is setting His Amen to our faith. Nay, not only will He own it, but He will take it up out of our lips, and Himself proclaim it through the universe, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of my elect?"

Our right to take up this challenge is simply our having believed the gospel. It is not our graces or evidences that embolden us thus to speak. It is not as holy men, or old Christians, or deeply humbled souls, that we have a warrant to do so. Our warrant is simply our having believed the gospel. How much we lose from not seeing the sure and high standing into which a believed gospel brings us, long before we have time to consider our own selves, or number up our graces! It would indeed be presumption to rest an assurance like this, or a challenge like this, upon our own graces; but it is no presumption to rest this on the gospel of the grace of God.

LIII.

The Abundant Victory, And How It Is Won.

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us."—

Romans 8:37.

Within the six verses preceding this, we have no less than six most striking questions; some apparently abrupt, but all of them very expressive: (1.) What shall we say to these things? (2.) Who can be against us? (3.) How shall He not give us all things? (4.) Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? (5.) Who is he that condemneth? (6.) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

At the close of these questions mention is made of seven evils, all which were more or less the portion of the saints: (1) tribulation; (2) distress; (3) persecution; (4) famine; (5) nakedness; (6) peril; (7) sword. And to shew that such was the lot of the saints even under the New Testament, Paul quotes a psalm referring to Old Testament saints, thus assuming the oneness of the church in all ages, even in suffering and in consolation; the oneness of the church in battle and in victory. One faith, one covenant, one blood, one church, from the beginning!

Here are two things: (1) the victory; (2) How to win it.

I. The victory. Our life is a warfare.

(1.) The good fight. It is to battle that the church is called; not to a mere parade, or review, or display of arms; each saint is to war a good warfare; for the moment we take our stand on Christ's side, our enemies gather to the assault.

(2.) The victory. Conquerors! Yes; not merely warriors but conquerors. This verse links itself with the seven promises to the seven conquerors in the churches of Asia. To him that overcometh, is the message sent.

(3.) The abundant victory. For this is the meaning of the word (ὑπερνιχώμεν). It corresponds to Peter's expression as to the "abundant entrance into the kingdom" (2 Peter 1:2). It is not a mere victory, no more—a bare overthrow of the enemies, but a complete and glorious victory. It is not being "saved so as by fire,"—mere salvation and nothing beyond, but a marvelous and perfect salvation. Yes, that which we win is an "abundant victory."

(4.) The victory over all the sevenfold evils. We are made to triumph over them,—every one of them. They assail us, we meet them face to face. Each is in itself an evil, a sorrow, a pang; or rather a series,—a long series it may be of such,—but over each of them in succession we triumph: "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder, the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under foot" (Psalm 91:13). Thus evil becomes good, and time bitter sweet.

(5.) The victory through means of these sevenfold evils. For this I suppose to be the real point of the passage;—"Nay, it is in all these things (or rather by means of as, •• very often signifies), that we win an abundant victory." We not only conquer these, but we take them up and make use of them as our weapons for overthrowing our other enemies. These

seeming evils are the very instruments of victory. They seem drags—we make them ladders for ascending, wings for raising us above things seen and temporal. Thus we glory in tribulations (Romans 5:3). This is the last and noblest use of trial; which we are apt to lose sight of. It is not always easy thus to use tribulation, and to convert it into a means of triumph; yet certainly it is to this that we are called. Say not, I will submit, I will not murmur, I will try to fight. All this is right; but thou art called to much more than this. So use thy sorrows as to make them the very means of conquer; so use them, as that thou shalt say at last, Had it not been for these tribulations my victory had been a poor one,—but half a victory; thus "out of the eater there shall come forth meat, and out of the strong shall come forth sweetness." We must learn how to use affliction; not passively, but actively; nay, aggressively.

II. The way in which it is won. "Through Him that loved us,"—yes, Him that "loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

(1.) He provides the strength. Weakness is ours; and we begin time fight with the acknowledgment of this. But "all power is given" to Christ for us; and out of that fullness of power "we receive." "The power of Christ rests (pitches its tent over us), on us" (2 Corinthians 12:9): "My strength is made perfect in weakness"; so that "when we are weak then we are strong." Another's strength, as well as another's righteousness, is placed at our disposal.

(2.) He provides the weapons. Our weapons are from a divine arsenal,—the tower of David "buildded for an armory." Spear, sword, buckler, girdle, and helmet, are all of His making and bestowing. (Ephesians 6:11-15.)

(3.) He provides the battlefield. The skillful general chooses his battlefield. So does our Captain. It is not the choice of the enemy; or of self; still less is it taken up at random, or by chance. It is carefully selected by Him that loved us. The time of battle, the nature of the battle, the duration of the battle, the intensity or peculiarity of the assault, all these are chosen by Him. Each sorrow, each tribulation, each peril, is of His appointment in every item and detail.

(4.) He provides the battle cry. As at Trafalgar, the word that Nelson sent through each vessel and every heart, was, "England expects every man to do his duty"; so our Captain gives His battle words. They are such as these: "The love of Christ constraineth us"; "Who is he that condemneth"? "fight the good fight of faith"; "behold I come quickly."

(5.) He provides the rewards. Of these, seven are named in the epistles to the Asian churches. These are representative rewards, as the churches are representative churches. Each reward is glorious; and each corresponding with the battle and the victory.

O Christian! fight bravely. Face every enemy, small or great. Turn the guns of the enemy against himself. Seize the hostile batteries, and man them. It is an evil day; a day of yielding and compromise. Stand fast in the faith, and in the Lord.

LIV.

Righteousness By Believing, And Believing By Hearing.

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!" —

Romans 10:13.

Paul's gospel was the good news of a righteousness for Gentile as well as Jew,—the righteousness of God,—good news of "the righteousness of Him who is our God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1),—good news of the righteousness of Him who is Jehovah-Zidkenu, "the Lord our righteousness."

There is a remarkable statement in the previous chapter (verse 30): "That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith,"—that is, the Gentiles, who were seeking no righteousness at all, have got the very best; just as the prodigal son received the "best robe" in the house. This righteousness was offered to Israel first, but rejected by them; and it is of this rejection that the tenth chapter speaks. In speaking of it, Paul first proclaims "Christ as the end of the law (the great fulfillment or fulfiller of the law) for righteousness to every one that believeth." Then he contrasts the two kinds of righteousness, namely, that which comes by working, and that which comes by believing. The former assumes that all is yet to be done; the latter, that all has been done, and that no doing (for obtaining pardon) is needed,—nothing more of any kind whatsoever than is done by a man when he listens and lets in the word by his ear into his

heart[9] (verse 8). This "word of faith," or word spoken in order to be believed, is the burden of his preaching. It is that which Isaiah calls "our report." He thus describes it "If thou shalt confess Christ (as He has enjoined, Matthew 10:32), believing in Him, and in God who raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the inner man we believe so as to be justified, and with the mouth we make that confession which issues in salvation, and because of which Christ will confess us in the great day."

Then in the thirteenth verse come the words of our text, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." We may take "calling on the name of," as meaning (1) the recognition of Jehovah as the true God; (2) as the acting on that recognition, and going to Him for salvation. It resembles Hebrew 11:6: "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Hear then, O man, the gospel which Paul here preaches to thee, whether Jew or Gentile! It is the gospel or good news of "salvation." Believe his "report" and live. Faith cometh by hearing.

I. The nearness. The "word" is nigh; the "gospel" is nigh; the "salvation" is nigh,—as near as the sounds are which enter into the ear of a man. The whole provision made on the cross for sinners is brought nigh to us. We have not to stir,—not to move a hairbreadth in order to get at it. It is already at the side of every sinner to whom the gospel has come. It is like the manna which fell around Israel's tents; it is like the water of "that rock which followed them." As near as it is possible for one thing to be to another, is all this fullness of divine grace. We need not climb to heaven, that would be to deny its nearness, and to act as if Christ had never come down. We need not descend into the earth, that would be to deny its

nearness, and to say that Christ had not come up, and needed to be brought up by us. No. All things are ready; all things are near.

II. The freeness. A free gospel—absolutely without condition or price; a free salvation, to the obtaining of which man contributes nothing, by his money, or his works, or his sufferings, or his prayers and tears. All is absolutely free; as free as the sunlight or the common air. No merit, no money, no purchase, no previous qualification. The gift of God is that which we see in every part. Freely, freely, are the blessed words in which God promulgates the "terms" on which man is to be permitted to obtain the blessings of the cross. Freely, freely, is the burden of our message. Price, whether direct or indirect, small or great, is refused. We must take it freely or not at all.

III. The speed. The gospel comes at once, the blessing tarries not. Like the touching of the electric wire, so the acceptance of the gospel brings instantaneous acceptance of our persons. No waiting, no interval, no distance, no hesitation. What God does, He does quickly. Swift as lightning the blessing comes to us. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." It is not, "shall get some deliverance, or hope of deliverance," but, "shall be saved." We go at once, and at once we are saved.

IV. The simplicity. Yes, all is simple here; no mystery, no labyrinth, no toil.

"Oh how unlike the complex works of man,
Heaven's easy, artless, unencumbered plan."

All is profoundly great, yet unutterably simple; "majestic in its own simplicity." "Call on the Lord's name and be saved," that is all. As our Lord said to the woman of Sychar, "Thou wouldest have asked, and He would have given." The simpler the liker God; the simpler the more suitable for helpless man. The gospel is simple; and the great salvation is the exhibition of the simplest plan for saving and for blessing that can be conceived. Too simple to have been devised by man. It is the simplicity of God. It is this simplicity which makes it intelligible to a little child. To ask and to get,—that is the whole.

V. The certainty. There are no ambiguities nor peradventures in it. All is the most absolute assurance: "Shall be saved"! God always deals in certainties in His treatment of the sinner,—the certainties of eternal life or death: "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." Christ and His cross are certainties; and he who credits God's testimony to these, becomes identified with certainties; is at once and certainly blessed, forgiven, saved. And if we know that the acceptance of this testimony brings certain salvation; how foolish, how sinful to say, "Oh I accept the testimony, but I don't know whether I am saved." If thou givest credit to the divine word concerning the Son of God thou art saved. Of this there can be no doubt; for "God is not a man that He should lie."

VI. The universality. All are not saved, nor washed, nor pardoned, nor redeemed; but to all the good news come. "Whosoever" is God's wide word of invitation. Who shall say, "The tidings are not for name unless I can prove my election"? The gospel is to the "sons of men" (Proverbs 8:4). God in it is coming up to each sinner and saying, Here is life,—believe and live; here is the cup of salvation, drink and be saved; here is the writ of pardon, take it and be forgiven.

Round and round the world this "word of reconciliation" goes; and to each sinner, as it passes on, is the reconciliation presented. "Be thou reconciled to God," is the special and personal message to each. "Call on the name of the Lord," is God's urgent proclamation; call, and thou shalt be saved! Go straight to God for salvation, a present and immediate salvation. Don't say, as some do, I'll go to Him first for faith, and repentance, and feeling; and then when I've got these, I'll go boldly and ask salvation. Go at once, and go boldly for salvation,—for nothing less than this,—and thou shalt get it; for God is true.

LV.

The Rejected Report.

"Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?"—

Romans 10:16.

Let us observe four things here:

I. The report. The "gospel" mentioned in the first clause of this verse is the same as the "report" in the second. It is short and simple. It is thoroughly true. It is divine and perfect. It is well authenticated, so that doubt seems an impossibility. It is altogether glad. It is for the sons of men. It is the very report, concerning the very things which sinners need. It is truly suitable. It is the story of Jesus of Nazareth.

II. Man's rejection of it. "Who bath believed"? Who? As if there were none who had accepted it! Not one! God has spoken; but men have 'neither believed nor listened. God has loved; but men have refused His love. Men are not asked to do, but to take; yet they will not. They are not asked to save themselves, but to accept salvation; yet they turn away. God's words are as the idle wind. His love is the last love they will ever turn to. His truthfulness is time thing which they question most; as if to make Him a liar, and His words of little worth, were no sin at all. This is man's treatment of God and of His Son! God is not to be believed on any account, and least of all when He speaks in love! Christ is preached only to be slighted; and His gospel flung aside as not true; or, if true, still as a gospel which brings no certain pardon, no assurance of salvation; nay, which may be believed without making a

man happy, or making him a child of God; which may be believed for years without giving peace, or light, or liberty.

III. The prophet's disappointment. "Lord, who hath believed our report." He expected something very different. He thought men would all receive it at once; that he would be surrounded with believing crowds! But "no man receiveth his testimony"! He is sorely perplexed, disappointed, confounded. Ah, it is in the very bitterness of disappointment that these words are spoken. He is grieved in spirit; troubled because of the dishonour done to God, and to His truthfulness; sad because of the ruin which men were bringing on themselves. He is like Jeremiah: "Oh that my head were waters"! He is like Paul, "Having sorrow in his heart." He is like Christ weeping over Jerusalem. Such is a minister's disappointment. He expects to be believed; and he is not! He expects God to be believed; and He is not! And were it not that he knows that God's purpose concerning the many called and few chosen is now fulfilling, he would be a thoroughly disappointed man.

IV. The prophet's appeal to Jehovah. Like Micah (7:7) in the midst of abounding iniquity, he says, "I will look unto the Lord." Like the Lord, he says, "Even so, Father." He turns from man to God. He does not upbraid man with unbelief; but turns to God. This is his refuge. Here he stays his soul. Into the bosom of his God he pours out all his griefs. It is a heavy burden; but he casts it on the Lord.

LVI.

Divine Yearnings Over The Sons Of Men.

"All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."—

Romans 10:21.

Let us mark here, first, God's treatment of man; secondly, man's treatment of God.

I. God's treatment of man. It is of Israel specially that the apostle is speaking; but what is true of them in this case, is true of all. God in His dealings with man shews us that His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways our ways. As the heavens are to a grain of sand, or as 'the ocean to a drop, so are His thoughts to ours; wider, fuller, larger, higher, deeper; like Himself and He is love. In all God's words to Israel in the Old Testament, the good news of His wide and free love come out very simply. The New Testament formula, "Believe and be saved," is not there; but the gracious character of Jehovah is fully unfolded, and so presented to sinners, as if it had been said, "Whoever owns the true God is saved; whoever is willing to come to Him is welcome; and whoever calls on Him shall not be put to shame." Herein is love.

(1.) Long suffering. He stretches out His hands; He does so all the day long. We may take this as simply meaning the whole of each natural day of our lives; or the whole of "the day of salvation." In either case we see the same longsuffering; God not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Here we see Him waiting to be gracious; pitying

the sinner; not cutting him off in his sins; not easily provoked; merciful and gracious; forbearing anger and judgment; not putting forth His power, but waiting long and patiently; not visiting transgression, nor dealing sharply with the transgressor.

(2.) Earnest desire to bless. There is much more in the words than mere longsuffering or forbearance. There is the exhibition of the most intense yearning over the sons of men. There are no words spoken; it is the attitude that marks the earnestness and the longing. Jesus wept over Jerusalem; God stretches out His hands to sinners, like one pleading with them, like one trying to save them, like one beckoning to them, like one expressing by signs feelings too strong for utterance. How shall I give thee up! I have no pleasure in your death! Why will ye die! Come, now, and let us reason together! How often would I have gathered you! Ye will not come to me! O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! Turn ye, turn ye! Come unto me! These are the feelings expressed by the posture in which God is here represented as standing,—looking down from heaven upon men, yearning over them, beseeching them to be reconciled. Earnest He is in this thing,—honestly, sincerely earnest, for He knows the worth of the soul which He has made, He knows the greatness of the joy or sorrow which must be its portion, He knows what the loss of heaven will be, and what the everlasting darkness will be,— and what the unchangeable eternity will be to which they are passing. Yes, God's desire to bless the sons of men,—the chief of sinners amongst them,—is sincere and true, earnest and deep and warm; however difficult it may be to reconcile this with the fact of there being an endless hell; however impossible for us fully to answer the question so often put by unbelief within

and without, Why then does He let any one perish since He has the power to save?

II. Man's treatment of God. Man's thoughts and ways toward God, are the reverse of God's thoughts and ways toward man. He walks "after his own thoughts" is Isaiah's expression (65:2). Man's actions and thoughts and feelings toward God may be set out as follows:—

(1.) Indifference. Occupied with himself and his own world of pleasure and business, man treats God and His claims, whether of law or love, with disregard. God is not in all his thoughts. He tries not to think about God at all; to preoccupy his mind with other objects, so as to induce forgetfulness and indifference. The absence of God, and the want of His favor, are not things which concern him, or make him unhappy for a moment He can do without God!

(2.) Unbelief. Man in so far as his fellows are concerned is no unbeliever. He is quite ready to receive the testimony of men; nay, he is often credulous, and believes without evidence or against evidence. But in the things of God he is thoroughly an unbeliever; both as to God Himself, and as to the truth and testimony of God. He disbelieves and he distrusts. He has no confidence in God, or in His word. Faith in God is wholly alien to him.

(3.) Disobedience. In Isaiah (65:1) it is called "rebellion"; "walking in a way not good." God's will is a hateful thing to man; so is God's law, which is the declaration of that will. To obey God save through terror is what he never thinks of; and even then it is mere outward compliance. Man's heart never obeys God till renewed. His whole life is consistent and

deliberate disobedience, sometimes more open and daring, and sometimes less.

(4.) Gainsaying. Man speaks against God; he acts against God. In both senses he is a gainsayer. He has no good word to say of God or of his Christ; he sets himself against both. Here we have such things as the following:

(a.) Captiousness. He is perpetually finding fault with God; with His word, and ways, and dispensations; with His actions toward individuals and the world at large. "Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted His will," is one form of human fault finding with God. "If we pine away in our iniquities, how shall we then live?" (Ezekiel 33:10) is another form. There are many forms of captious gainsaying or murmuring; this discontent and repining, and charging God either with injustice or unkindness.

(b.) Obstinacy. Stout-heartedness and stiff-neckedness are God's frequent charges against Israel; no less against us. We are stubborn and self-willed; preferring our own way and wisdom to His. We are like the horse or mule; like the bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. We will neither be led nor driven. We resist; we kick against the pricks.

(c.) Refusal of blessing. Yes; man refuses to be blest. This is the most unaccountable part of man's gainsaying. He thrusts away the love of God, and the blessing which that love holds out. He does not like (1) the blessing itself; (2) the terms on which it is given; (3) the giver; (4) the effects which would follow receiving it,—a holy life.

Thus man deals with God, setting himself against Him in all ways and things. Yet thus does God continue to deal with

man in unwearied love and patience. He still bends over him to the last, as Jesus did over Jerusalem, yearning, pitying, longing to bless!

LVII.

Pray On, And Pray Fervently.

"Continuing instant in prayer."—

Romans 12:12.

Prayer takes for granted that God is full, and we are empty; that He is infinitely full, and we unspeakably empty. I do not say infinitely empty, because God only is infinite. The creature is finite, alike in evil and in good. Time emptiness or evil of any creature, or a whole universe of creatures, can never be infinite. Else what would become of us? Infinitude belongs to Godhead; finitude to creature hood. And here is the first ray of hope to us. Our poverty and want must ever be a mere nothing in comparison with the fullness of Him who filleth all in all. We are sometimes alarmed at the thought of His greatness. Foolish alarm! Were He not so great, so full, so infinite, what would become of us?

Prayer takes for granted that there is a connection between this fullness and our emptiness. The fullness is not inaccessible. It is not too high for us to reach, or for it to stoop. It is not too great for us, nor too distant, so as to be incommunicable. There is a connection, and it has been established by God himself; it is a divine medium of communication: "Ask, and ye shall receive." It is as righteous as it is divine.

Prayer takes for granted that we are entitled to use this channel, this medium; and that, in using it, there will be a sure inflow of the fullness into us. "Every one that asketh

receiveth." It is men, not angels, who are invited to use this medium. It is to sinners that the gate is thrown open; for them is the access provided. Free, yet righteous access for unrighteous men. God's love has made it free; the blood of His Son hath made it righteous.

It takes for granted God's willingness to receive every applicant. His willingness is like His fullness, infinite. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," applies to prayer; but still more does John 4:10, "If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldest have asked, and He would have given." He makes no exceptions, He does not bid the sinner qualify himself, or ascertain his election, or get up some preliminary preparation, or make sure of the quantity or quality of his faith; He throws open wide His gate and His throne to any applicant, the unworthiest of the human race. His willingness to receive each coming one is infinite. Prayer is not meant to create or produce willingness; to move the heart of an unwilling God. It assumes this willingness, and acts upon it. It is not "tentative"; it does not go in order to make an experiment on God's willingness. To "experiment" upon it is in reality to deny it; and to act upon such an experimenting principle is to deal with an unknown God.

Prayer takes for granted expectation on our part. This is in a measure implied in the willingness of God; but it needs special notice; for it is that to which Paul referred when he wrote "without faith it is impossible to please Him, for He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Length will not do; nor repetition; nor regularity; no, not even earnestness; nay, earnestness is often the mere expression of unbelief, and the indication of a secret feeling on our part that God is not wholly willing, but requires our earnestness to make Him so.

If, then, we examine our prayers, and strip them of all that is not prayer, how little remains? Take away the vain words,—the mere meditative parts; the mere expression of solemn feeling; the mere sentimentalism; the mere utterance of petitions, because urged by conscience and a sense of duty; the requests not accompanied with expectation,—and how little remains in the best of our prayers! What multitudes of prayers are ascending on this day. How much of these will God recognize as prayer? What a small residuum would remain if divested of all prayerless accessories. I cannot compare it to the amount of grain when the chaff is winnowed away, nor of gold when the dross is purged off; but to the tiny gem or little crystal which you pick out of some great rock, after breaking it in pieces, and sifting its endless fragments.

Let us mark such things as the following in reference to this kind of prayer:

1. The irksomeness of non-expecting prayer. Sometimes there may be such an amount of natural feeling as may make what is called "devotion" pleasant. But in the long run it becomes irksome, if not accompanied with expectation, sure expectation. It is expectation only that can produce and keep up truly devotional feeling; expectation founded on God's infinite willingness to give, and on His promises to the applicant.

2. Time uselessness of non-expecting prayer. It bears no fruit; it brings no answer; it draws down no blessing. It is expectation that honours God, and that God will honour. The answer always runs 'in this form, "According to thy faith be it

unto thee." It is non-expectation that, more than anything else, ruins and nullifies prayer.

3. The sinfulness of non-expecting prayer. The utterance of petitions is nothing to God; it does not recommend the petitioner. Many seem to think so; and to suppose there is some secret virtue or influence, if not merit, in all prayer, however unbelieving. It is not so; nay, there is guilt, deep guilt, in every unbelieving petition; for thus God is dishonoured, His willingness is denied, His Son is set aside, His Spirit is grieved, and He is addressed both as an hard master and an unknown God. Oh the guilt involved in the religion of religious men; men whose prayers are as regular as the rising or setting sun!

LVIII.

The Life-Long Putting On Of Christ.

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof."—

Romans 8:54.

Often throughout Scripture is the figure of clothing or putting on, used, both in reference to good and evil. It is man who first tries the thing with his fig leaves; but he fails. Then God steps in and clothes man with skins. After this the figurative use of clothing is very frequent. Judges 6:34, "The Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon" (so it is in the Hebrew); 2 Chronicles 6:4, "Let thy priests be clothed with salvation"; Job 7:5, "My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of the dust"; Job 29:14, "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me"; Psalm 35:26, "Let them be clothed with shame"; Psalm 93:1, "The Lord is clothed with majesty, the Lord is clothed with strength"; Psalm 132:9, "Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness"; Isaiah 61:10, "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation"; Isaiah 59:17, "He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak"; Isaiah 52:1, "Put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem"; Luke 15:22, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him"; Romans 13:12, "Let us put on the armor of light"; 1 Corinthians 15:53, "This corruptible must put on incorruption"; Ephesians 4:24, "That ye put on the new man"; Ephesians 6:2, "Put on the whole armor of God"; Colossians 3:52, "Put on bowels of mercies"; Colossians 3:14, "Put on charity." These passages shew us the use of the figure in Scripture. Something in addition to what we had

before, or to what we possess in ourselves, is supposed to be taken on as a garment; something which makes us to appear and to act differently from what we did before; something suited to a peculiar office, or service, or action. The king puts on his royal robe, the priest the priestly robe, the captain his military robe; the robe thus, as it were, altering for a season the individual, and investing him with another character, or office. Clothing is not merely to cover or conceal uncomeliness and shame, but to beautify; to give weight and dignity to our person and our actings; to represent an office.

I. What this is that is put on. It is Christ himself that we put on; not one thing merely, such as righteousness, but everything which makes us comely and acceptable to God. Christ himself is here described as a robe. The figure is not of His giving us a robe, but of His being that robe. It is Himself as our robe, that we are to put on. "As many of you as are baptized unto Christ, have put on Christ." "We are complete in Him." He covers us so that no part of our former selves is seen. In looking at us, God sees not us, but Christ himself; and He treats us according to what He sees in Him; He blesses us according to the completeness which we possess in Him; He will recompense us hereafter according to the worthiness and perfection which belong to Him. Christ's person represents ours before God as the high priest represented Israel. His work is the substitute for us, and for all work of ours in the matter of acceptance, so that we get according to what He did on earth, and not according to what we do. His righteousness comes in room of ours, so that it is on His righteousness, and not on ours, that the great questions turn in regard to which we deal with God; for He is the end of the law for righteousness. His whole life comes in place of ours, His sufferings in place of ours, His death in place of ours; and in regard to every one of our transactions

with God, we may plead what He is, not what we are; what He did and suffered, not what we do or suffer. It is not an infusion or transfusion into us of His goodness or perfection. It is the legal reckoning of these to us by God in all His dealings with us, so that in every transaction between us and God, the question is not, what we deserve, but what Christ deserves. Thus we put on Christ, and are "found in Him"; treated as if He and we were identical or interchangeable. It is a whole Christ whom we put on; it is with a whole Christ that God deals in dealing with us.

II. How this putting on is done. The link by which we become personally connected with Christ is our own believing. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." We put on Christ simply in believing. Our reception of the Father's testimony to the work and person of Christ is the "putting on." There is no other. Full and large is that testimony. It is the declaration of what the Father sees Christ to be; and whoever comes to be of one mind with Him in regard to this Son of whom He testifies, is regarded by Him as clothed with Christ. There is nothing mystical about this putting on, nothing unintelligible, nothing laborious. Men may dislike or reject the idea that a man is saved by believing the divine testimony,—that a man puts on Christ by believing what God says about Him,—but Scripture leaves us in no doubt at all. "Believe," and straightway thou art clothed with Christ. He covers thee from head to foot. Not according to thy works, or prayers, or feelings, or convictions, but according to the simplicity of thy faith,—thy acceptance of the Father's testimony to the person and work, the death, and burial, and resurrection of His only begotten Son,—thou art, from head to foot, clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ; and in the great day of the Lord thou shalt be "found in Him."

III. What is the effect? There are two aspects or sides which are to be regarded in this: (1.) God's side; (2.) the beIiever's.

(1.) God's side. God looks at us and sees us as if we were His own Son. He sees not our deformity and imperfection, but His beauty and perfection; not our sin, but His righteousness; not our unworthiness, but His worthiness. "Thou art all fair," He says; "there is no spot in thee." He loves us accordingly, and deals with us accordingly.

(2.) Our side. (1.) Our consciences are completely satisfied. Not only have we the blood to purge the guilt, but we have the perfection to cover all imperfection, so that we feel that God "sees no iniquity in Jacob, and no transgression in Israel." (2.) Our bands are completely loosed. The certainty of possessing God's favor in such surpassing measure gives the fullest liberty. (3.) Our joy overflows. Such love! Such favor! Such nearness! Such dignity! Such glory! Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us! "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me maybe in them." (4.) Our motives to a holy life are increased. What manner of persons ought we to be who are so regarded by God, so beloved of Him! (5.) Our zeal is quickened. Loved with such a love, and treated in so divine a way, what is there that we are not willing to do for Him?

Our whole life is to be a daily putting on of Christ. Put on, put on! And regarding the sinner He says, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him."

LIX.

Joy And Peace In Believing.

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope; through the power of the Holy Ghost." —

Romans 15:13.

It will be good to take this apostolic prayer to pieces, and mark each separate part and truth.

I. The hope. It is of the things hoped for that the apostle is speaking. It is not to "hope," or to "a hope," but to "the hope," that he is pointing. It is not that thing called "hope," as springing up in our breasts, that he would have us dwell upon; it is the glory to be revealed, the hope which is laid up for us in heaven. This is the bright star on which he fixes our eye. The inheritance, the kingdom, the glory, the new heavens and earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; these make up what the apostle announces as the church's hope, her one resplendent hope, which is to be realized when her Lord appears. This is the hope that fills up her future, and sheds brightness on her present, even amid all her "heaviness through manifold temptations."

II. The God of the hope. Of that hope He is the beginning, the middle, and the end; the center and the circumference; its root, and stem, and branches; its seed, its blossom, and its fruit. There is not one of these "things hoped for" but is to be traced to Him as its sole fountain head. Hence its peculiar blessedness and glory; hence also the security which we have

for its realization when the fullness of the time is come. That hope cannot fail us, because the God of the hope is faithful and true. He will most surely introduce us into its glory; or rather, He will make that glory rise on us like the glory of the rising sun.

III. Fill you with all joy and peace. There is joy; 'joy unspeakable and full of glory'; but it is not of earth. It comes down from heaven. There is peace; the peace which passeth all understanding; but its fountain is above. It is God who gives these; and He does so as "the God of the hope." The author of the hope is the provider of the joy and the peace; so that we may be sure these will be like Himself, and like the hope. They will be like the hope, and the hope will be like them; they the earnest of the hope; and the hope their consummation and fullness. This God of the hope not only gives the joy and peace, but He fills us with them; nay, He fills us with all joy and peace, leaving out no part of the joy and the peace, and leaving no part of us unfilled! Blessed and glorious petition, "the God of the hope fill you with all joy and peace"!

IV. In believing. This joy and peace, though heavenly in their origin and nature, were not miraculous. They did not gush up into the soul like water springing from the sand by some supernatural touch. They found their way into the soul by a very natural, very simple, but very effectual channel,—the belief of God's good news about His only begotten Son. They were not the reward of believing; they were not purchased by believing nor did they come in after believing: they were obtained in believing. Faith did nothing but hand in its report to the soul. That report was both glad and true. As soon then as the report thus found its way in, all was changed. The joy and the peace which that report contained filled the soul. And

as it was thus that the joy and peace came in, so it is thus that they continue in. They began in believing, and they are maintained in precisely the same way; so that if at any time they are interrupted, we must have recourse to the same report which gladdened us at first, and which is still as sufficient to gladden us again. The thing that gladden us was the thing which we believed. Not our way of believing it; not the quality nor the quantity of our faith; but simply the thing believed the glad tidings of great joy concerning Him who died, and was buried, and rose again. If the thing believed proves ineffectual to gladden, no considerations as to the satisfactory nature or composition of our own faith will prove sufficient. The attempt to believe in our own faith instead of believing in Christ must be abortive both in itself and in its results; and the incessant efforts of some to get up a faith worthy of being believed in, and capable of recommending them to God, are the dictate and the development of as hateful a self-righteousness as was ever exhibited by ancient Pharisee or modern Romanist. No. When the God of the hope fills us with all joy and peace, He does so by presenting us with objects full of joy and peace, so that, in believing, we are filled with the blessedness which they contain.

V. That ye may abound in the hope. The hope not only fills, but overflows, as the word "abound" might be rendered. It comes in and lights up the soul with its heavenly brightness; but it does more. It is so glorious and so boundless that the soul cannot contain it. We fix our eye on it; and as we gaze it expands, and enlarges, and intensifies. It grows brighter, and more real, and more excellent as we continue to dwell upon it. Our faith becomes more and more the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

VI. Through the power of the Holy Ghost. He comes in and dwells in us; thus working in us from within, not from without. He comes in as the Spirit of power, and love, and of a sound mind. He comes in as the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of faith, the Spirit of joy and peace, the Spirit of Christ. He comes in as "the seal " by which we are sealed unto the day of redemption; God's own seal which stamps us as God's property. He comes in as the witness, witnessing with our spirits that we are the sons of God. He comes in as the earnest of the inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. He comes in, not in feebleness, but in power; in almighty power, to work a work in us and for us, which but for Him must remain unaccomplished forever.

LX.

The Saint's Victory Over Satan.

"The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

Romans 16:20.

Let us note here,

I. Satan's overthrow. The whole history of the world is interwoven with the doings of him whom Scripture calls "the serpent" (2 Corinthians 11:3); "the old serpent" (Revelation 12:9); the God of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4); "the great dragon" (Revelation 12:9); "the wicked one" (Matthew 13:19, 1 John 5:18) ; "the devil" (Matthew 4:8); "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2); "the accuser of the brethren" (Revelation 12:10); "the adversary" (1 Peter 5:8). He is a living person,— originally connected with heaven, now with earth, once associated with angels, now with men, full of malice, a murderer and a liar, a deceiver. His dealings first with Eve, and then with Christ, are the two great specimens of his nature, his tactics, and his aims. The first promise announced a battle between him and the seed of the woman. This battle has been going on without intermission, between him and Christ, and between him and the members of Christ's body. With them it is warfare, with the rest of mankind it is friendship. The warfare has been fierce as well as long, open as well as secret, outward as well as inward. In all his assaults and stratagems he has to a certain extents succeeded, but always in the end been baffled. It is to this ultimate baffling or bruising that the apostle here alludes. In four ways has this final bruising been manifested, or is to be manifested:

(1.) In Christ Himself. He seemed for a while to conquer; he succeeded in stirring up men against Him; Judas to betray Him, and His disciples to forsake Him. He specially seemed to triumph over Him on the cross. There He bruised his heel. But that was the means and commencement of his defeat. His bruising began at the cross. There he received his deadly wound, his death stroke, which is to be completed at His second coming. Christ's personal victory over Satan by Himself and for Himself is yet to be manifested.

(2.) In the Church. Satan has bruised the church's heel, but the church is yet to bruise his head. Each age of the church has shewn this double process more or less; but the last age is to shew it fully; when Christ comes to deliver her from her oppressor forever.

(3.) In each saint. We wrestle with principalities and powers. Each of us has a daily battle with Satan. In this we are often worsted, yet in the end we overcome. We resist, and he flees from us. We pursue, and the God of peace enables us to overtake him and to bruise him under our feet.

(4.) In the world. He is prince of this world, and he has long exercised dominion therein. But the day is coming when he will be bound with the great chain and cast into the bottomless pit,—and after that into the lake of fire. That shall be his final bruising and binding; that shall be earth's deliverance from his power,—the end of the reign of evil, and the beginning of the reign of good and righteousness.

II. The saint's deliverance. We have briefly alluded to this already; but let us notice still further the peculiar expression used in reference to this. It is evidently of individual Christians

that He is speaking when He says, the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. (1.) He shall bruise, that is crush, grind to powder, overwhelm. (2.) Satan, as the adversary, as the tempter, as the inflicter of pain, and him who has the power of death,—not merely his head, but himself. (3.) Under your feet. He shall place your feet upon his head and neck, as in the case of a conquered foe,—as if you had won the whole battle yourself, and triumphed over the enemy. (4.) Shortly. It will not be a long warfare in any sense. A short work will God make of this. Thus shall the saint be delivered; thus shall he conquer; thus shall he triumph; thus shall all his enemies be put under his feet. It will not be long! Hold fast, O saint; hold out! Resist, contend, use the whole armor, smite with the sword of the Spirit; for no other weapon will avail in the conflict with such a foe. Fight! For God is on your side.

III. The victory of the God of peace. It is as the God of peace that He wins the victory for us, and bruises Satan under our feet. It is as the bruised one that He bruises. He whom Satan smote, is He who smites Satan. The God of peace has made peace; and having made peace by the blood of His cross, He proceeds to destroy all that had once marred the peace,—all His enemies and ours,—giving us complete victory and triumph. It is on the basis of the reconciling blood, the peace-giving work on the cross, that the operations against Satan are carried on. It is under the banner of the God of peace that we fight. He is our captain, and the peace which He has made is that which secures the victory to us. We overcome by the blood of the Lamb,—the blood that has made our peace. It is the righteous peace made on the cross that makes it a righteous thing in God to bruise Satan under our feet; for, to bruise (or punish) him is one thing, and to do so under our feet is another. It is one thing to triumph over him, and

another to make us triumph over him,—to make us conquerors,—more than conquerors,—to make us sharers of the honour and the spoils of victory; for with us He divides the spoil. In fighting for us and with us, God has respect to this blood made and blood bought peace. We in maintaining the fight have our eye constantly on it. We fight and conquer as men who know the God of peace, having believed His testimony to the work which has produced the peace. We fight and conquer as men who have obtained the peace, and by that peace are nerved and animated for the conflict, as men who know that God is with us. The peace within, and the consciousness of friendship with God, emboldens us and rouses us—makes us brave and invincible.

What consolation, too, in that word "shortly." It will not be long. Take the word as referring to the saints simply, or to the church, the victory is near. Behold I come quickly. Fight on. Resist the devil. Wrestle with the principalities and powers.

LXI.

Apostolic Praise.

"Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ (according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets according to the commandment of the everlasting God made known to all nations for the obedience of faith); to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen."

Romans 16:25-27.

What a doxology! What a burst of praise! Full of divine melody; full of grace and truth! Glory to God in the highest is here, yet also peace on earth, and goodwill to man. The great Jehovah, the wise, the mighty, the good, the loving God, is the theme.

Let us look at the contents of this glorious hymn of praise, this rapturous hallelujah of a redeemed man, this utterance of marvelous song.

I. The Stabliher. He is the Creator; it was He who spake and it was done, who commanded and it stood fast; who laid the foundation of earth and heaven.

(1.) He is the mighty God. He is "of power" (literally, "able") to stablish you. He is the Lord God Almighty, infinite in might, whose is the "strength," and the "power," and the "dominion," and the "greatness," and the "majesty" (1 Chronicles 29:2;

Revelation 4:2). Let us notice the different connections in which this power is introduced in Scripture: (1.) "God is able of these stones to raise up children" (Matthew 3:9); (2.) "Thou canst (art able to) make me clean" (Matthew 8:2); (3.) "Unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above," &c. (Ephesians 3:20); (4.) "He is able to subdue all things to Himself" (Philippians 3:21); (5.) "He is able to succor them that are tempted" (Hebrew 2:18); (6.) "He is able to save to the uttermost" (Hebrew 7:25); (7.) "To Him that is able keep you from falling" (Jude 24); (8.) "To Him that is of power to stablish you" (Roman 16:25). What comfort to the feeble, and weary, and Satan•tempted, in this truth! He who strengthens and stablishes us is the mighty God.

(2.) The fountainhead of the mystery of hidden wisdom. The mystery (or secret) now revealed in Christ and His cross (that "God so loved the world," &c., John 3:16), which had been kept secret (hidden) in "the eternal ages," was God's everlasting purpose concerning His own, His saints, His chosen ones, His church of all ages. It is out of this purpose and this Purposer that our establishment flows. This eternal Purposer, the birthplace and well head of all being, and truth, and blessedness, is He who worketh in us according to the good pleasure of His will. He had sketched His great secret, His purpose of grace, in the prophets, giving us in them the outline and shadow of the good things to come; but not till the Word was made flesh, and the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, had declared Him, was the glorious revelation made.

(3.) He is the everlasting God. "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God" (Psalm 90:1). He is "the King eternal, immortal, and invisible" (1 Timothy 1:17); "with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning" (James

1:17). It is not with mortality, and finitude, and change, and corruption that we have to do, but with the immortal, the infinite, the unchangeable, the incorruptible. He who stablishes us is "the everlasting God."

(4.) He is the God only wise. Wisdom is His in its widest, highest sense; wisdom without weakness, or one sidedness, or imperfection. The perfection of wisdom is His. The God only wise is His name.

Such is our Stablisier! Can we fear or be discouraged? Shall our weakness, or frailty, or the number of our foes appal us? Greater is He that is for us than all that are against us, without or within! Let us stand fast, and not be moved, or shaken, or terrified.

II. The stablishing. The word expresses steadfastness, fixture, and strength (see Luke 9:51; Romans 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 3:2,13; 2 Thessalonians 2:17, 3:3; James 5:8; 1 Peter 5:10). It assumes that on our part there is weakness, wavering, changeableness; that there is peril for us on every hand from snares and assaults, from wiles and enmity, and that we are constantly liable to be uprooted and overthrown. We are without strength; compassed about with infirmities; apt to be carried about with every wind of doctrine; ready to be moved from the faith, or made to err from ways of uprightness. The process of stablishing is what we need so much; it is more than being "kept from falling," and we require both. While this stablishing, in one sense, comes directly from the eternal Stablisier, in another, it comes through present means and influences, such as the gospel ("my gospel" [10]), and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, and the revelation of the mystery. Through means of these, God establishes us, by the

power of the Holy Ghost, working in us according to His mighty power. The gospel (1) says to us, "Be steadfast";

(2) it shews us what steadfastness is; (3) it supplies us with the means of steadfastness. In clasping that gospel, we are holding that which alone can keep us from being moved. Let us lean on the cross; let us grasp it as the shipwrecked sailor grasps the life buoy, or is lashed to the mast to prevent his being washed overboard. The cross is thus everything for steadfastness. It stands firm, and it keeps firm all who keep hold of it. It is our prop; our resting place; our foundation; our anchor; our strong tower. The true stablishing (whether in faith, or love, or hope, or truth, or holiness) goes on only here. Apart from it, or away from it, all is instability, and feebleness, and destruction.

III. The stablished. These are, first of all, the saints at Rome, "called," "beloved of God," whose "faith was spoken of throughout the whole world." They needed "stablishing," though apostles were their pastors and teachers; not once, but all through; day by day; they needed to be "rooted and grounded in love"; to be "made perfect, stablished, strengthened, settled." And if these noble Roman Christians needed stablishing (men of faith and love, beyond us!), how much more we! For is not the, church of God in these last days far from steadfast? Is she not an unanchored, uncompassed, unballasted vessel, carried about with every wind of doctrine or speculation, departing from old beliefs as obsolete and fossile; rushing after what is new and fascinating; in love with change, and "progress," and "development," and "breadth," and liberality," according to modern phraseology proudly disdainful of what she calls "bigotry," and intolerance," and "stereotyping," and old-fashioned dogmas and theologies. Surely the church of

the last days needs stablishing even more than the church of the first age; there are so many half-and-half disciples now, the mixed multitude that led Israel astray. Let each believing man give heed to this, lest he fall from his steadfastness. Be strong in the Lord; be steadfast and immoveable; hold fast that which thou hast received.

This peculiar doxology, at the close of such an epistle, connecting such a song of praise with the steadfastness of the saints of God, is very striking, and fraught with deep lessons to us. The glory of the God only mighty, and eternal, and wise, is connected with our being stablished; and the process of stablishing us depends on His being what He is here represented to be. Let us feel that we have much to do with Him as the God of power, and wisdom, and eternity.

LXII.

The Saint's True Posture.

"Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."—1 Corinthians 1:1-7.

At Corinth there was a large and noble church. It was not perfect; there were errors and divisions in it; there was gross sin in it. Yet it was not only a true church, but one of high attainment. The Corinthian saints were enriched in all utterance and all knowledge. They had gifts as well as graces; manifold gifts; all gifts; they came behind or were deficient in no gift; they abounded in them. They were an advancing church; a church of true "progress" in knowledge, gifts, and holiness.

Thus there may in a church be much evil in the midst of much good. Even when there are divisions and inconsistencies, there may be life and fruit.

It is progress at which we are to aim; each church, each Christian. We must first start,—start in the right direction,—

for the walk or the race. We must begin with believing; we must be rooted and grounded in love. And then progress, true progress begins; not till then. Having begun, we go on unto perfection; we increase and abound in wisdom, truth, holiness, hatred of sin, love to the brethren, pity for the world. Onward, upward, is our motto.

But along with these gifts there was one thing specially noticeable in these Corinthians: they waited for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us mark here,—

I. The person. He is not here designated Son of man, or Son of God, King, or Master, or Bridegroom, but "Lord Jesus Christ"; His fullest, longest title, and one which the apostle delights to repeat at full length, as if never weary of it. He is (1.) Lord; nay, He is Lord of lords; He is Lord in the sense of God; He is Jehovah, for this is His Old Testament name. (2.) Jesus. Jah, the Saviour, He who saves us from our sins; a divine Saviour. (3.) Christ; Messiah, the anointed one; filled with the Spirit without measure; the vessel of infinite and divine fullness. These three names declare His glory, and also reveal His grace. In them we read, "God is love"; "God so loved the world"; "herein is love."

II. The event. "The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ." The word is properly "the apocalypse," or "revelation," or "manifestation." He is now hidden; unseen; within the veil. But this concealment is not always to last. God hath appointed a day for "revelation." Then He shall be visible; every eye shall see Him. His first coming is the greatest event in earth's past history; His second coming is the greatest in its future. He shall come! Behold the Lord cometh. He comes in glory, in majesty, with clouds, with all his saints, to destroy Antichrist; to deliver creation; to bind Satan; to convert Israel

and the Gentiles; to execute vengeance; to raise His, saints; to judge and to reign. For these things He comes. He is only waiting for the time appointed by the Father. Then He shall appear in His glory, no longer the man of sorrows, but the Conqueror, the Bridegroom, the crowned King.

III. The posture. "Waiting" (see Roman 8:19, 23), as the servant for the master; the traveler or mariner for the morning; the bride for the bridegroom. In all these there is eager and earnest expectation. The event is infinitely desirable; the person is the object of our love. We have heard of Him; we long to see Him and to hear His voice. His absence is sadness and gloom; as Rutherford says, "It is like a mountain of iron on our heavy hearts." All seems to go wrong in that time of absence. In such a case, "waiting" is a necessity; we cannot but wait. (1) We wait in faith; (2) in hope; (3) in patience; (4) in desire; (5) in love; (6) in watchfulness. Such was the church's posture before Messiah's first coming; such is it before His second. It is the posture of the church and of each saint. They are waiters and watchers. There must be no forgetfulness, no indifference, no sloth, no sleep; all wakefulness, eagerness, and longing. Many things tend to hinder this, and to throw us off our guard. Let us beware, and hold fast. Let us not sleep as do others; but watch.

IV. The connection between this posture and the gift. It is close, vital, and mutual. The gifts cherish the waiting, and the waiting the gifts; the one helps the other. The more we wait, the more the gifts will grow; and the more they grow, the more will we wait. (1.) The gifts are all from Christ, out of His fullness; and the more we possess of the gifts, the more shall we desire to know the giver; the more copious and pleasant our draughts of the stream, the more shall we long for the

fountainhead. (2.) The gifts are the gifts of the Spirit, and He is the witness of Christ; the more that we are filled with Him, the more shall we wait, and look, and long for Him to whom He testifies, and whom His office is to glorify. Thus they both are inseparably linked together. We cannot be growing Christians without waiting for Christ; and we cannot wait for Christ without growing.

(1.) Press on. Stationary saintship is as poor as it is perilous. Advance; advance! Make this your motto. Be progressive Christians; belong to the advanced school of theology and holiness in the true sense.

(2.) Beware of stumbling and backsliding. The tendencies both within and without are all against us. Snares and stumbling blocks are in our path. Be on your guard. Look to your feet. Dread one retrogressive step. Watch against coldness and formalism.

(3.) Wait for the revelation of Christ. Be this your posture constantly; not theoretical, but practical. Let nothing come between you and a crucified Christ; a risen Christ; a glorified Christ; a coming Christ.

LXIII.

Eternal Blamelessness.

"Blameless in the day of our Lord, Jesus Christ."—

1 Corinthians 1:8.

There are several words used to declare what a Christian man should be. He is to be "blameless" (1 Thessalonians 3:13), "unrebukeable" (Philippians 2:r5), "without spot" (1 Peter 1:19), "faultless" (Jude 24), "undefiled" (Song of Solomon 5:2). All these words are to be more or less realized in every Christian,—in measure here, in all fullness hereafter.

They are chiefly negative; in the Greek, remarkably so; describing a Christian not so much by what he is, as by what he is not. But this is striking and full of meaning; inasmuch as it reminds him of the sin out of which he was taken, and from which he is called to be separate. It reminds him of that evil world from which he has been delivered, and from which he is to keep himself unspotted. He was a sinner once, nothing but a sinner. From sin, wrath, pollution, ungodliness he is taken, and from them must keep aloof.

These characteristics may be divided into three kinds judicial, priestly, personal.

I. Judicial. The word used in our text is the judicial one. It means one that cannot be challenged, or accused, or impeached in law. It is another form of the same word as is used in Romans 8:33, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" A Christian is one against whom there is not

only no condemnation, but no accusation. He is a sinner yet no man, nor angel, nor devil, may accuse him, or mention his guilt to God. This is the footing on which we stand,—unaccusable! Blessed footing to one who feels that he is the chief of sinners. The chief of sinners, yet beyond the reach of all accusation! How is this? Because there was one who was accused in his stead; who owned the accusation as if it were His own; who allowed sentence to pass against Himself; and was condemned for another's guilt,—the Just for the unjust.

II. Priestly. I might call it sacrificial. The word used in such places as Ephesians 1:4 is the same as that in 1 Peter 1:19, "the Lamb without blemish, and without spot." This unblemishedness has special reference to our fitness for worship and service. And this we derive from the unblemished Lamb himself, and specially from His blood. It is His blood that cleanses and fits us for entering Jehovah's courts, and ministering as His priests at His altar; for "we have an altar." I speak of the priesthood of believers, the priesthood which a sinner enters on when he believes on the Son of God. Let us make constant use of the Lamb and His blood to keep ourselves unblemished for sacrifice or service; for we are to present even our bodies as living sacrifices unto God (Romans 12:1).

III. Personal (Philippians 2:15; 1 Thessalonians 3:13), We are forgiven and delivered from wrath that we may be personally holy; holy in heart and life; saved from sin, conformed to Christ. We are delivered from wrath, from Satan, from self; from the world, from sin, from vanity, from ignorance, from the lust of the flesh and eye. We are made like "the second man" (1 Corinthians 15:47), "the last Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:45), in God's image. We delight in the law of God; we are transformed by the renewing of our minds. Our life is

spiritual, our character, our conversation, our joys, our pursuits. Everything is spiritualized in character, aim, and tone. All true religion is personal, not a thing of proxy; a real inward thing, not a form, or a creed, or a shadow, or a rite. It penetrates the entire being, pervading the whole life, and influencing everything about the man, great or small. Holiness is to be everywhere in and about the man.

If, then, you call yourself a Christian, consider how much is expected from you; how much God expects from you; how much Christ, how much the angels, how much the church, how much the world. All eyes are on you, and great expectations are formed of you. Consider,

(1.) Your names. They are "saint," "Christian," "redeemed from among men," "follower of the Lamb." Do not these call you to holiness, to blamelessness!

(2.) Your designations. You are the lights of the world, the salt of the earth; pilgrims, strangers, virgins, cross bearers, kings and priests; a temple, a habitation of God.

(3.) Your calling. You are called with a holy calling. Everything connected with your calling is holy,—its past eternity, its present working, its everlasting prospects. You are called to glory, honour, and immortality.

(4.) Your hopes. They are sure and bright,—a holy kingdom, an undefiled inheritance, a pure and splendid city, into which nothing that defileth shall enter.

(5.) Your companionships. They are all heavenly and pure. Your ties have been broken with this present evil world. Old friendships are severed, and new ones formed. Of your new

companions the chief are God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and the saints that are on the earth. Holy companions should make a man holy, for as evil communications corrupt good manners, so do good communications elevate and purify evil ones.

If you are Christians then, be consistent. Be Christians out and out; Christians every hour, in every part, and in every matter. Beware of half-hearted discipleship, of compromise with evil, of conformity to the world, of trying to serve two masters,—to walk in two ways, the narrow and the broad, at once. It will not do. Half-hearted Christianity will only dishonour God, while it makes you miserable.

There is abundance of Christianity, so-called, in our day. Who does not call himself a Christian? But who cultivates the holiness, the blamelessness, the devotedness, the calm consistency of a follower of Christ? Who hates sin as it ought to be hated? Who separates from the world as he ought? Who follows Christ as He ought to be followed? Who walks in the footsteps of the holy Son of God?

The day of Christ here spoken of, is coming. How soon we know not. Year after year is bringing it round. It is the day of decision. It ends the finite and begins the infinite; it ends the temporal, and begins the eternal. It is the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is Satan's day, man's day, the world's day; that is the day of Christ. And it is to that day we look, for it we prepare.

LXIV.

Sonship And Fellowship.

"The fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."—

1 Corinthians 1:9.

God's faithfulness is our resting place. His true and unchanging love is our security. From first to last it is with a "faithful" God that we have to do. The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. There is none like the God of Jeshurun,—the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning.

It is this faithful God who calls us; saves us; blesses us; keeps us. It is He who begins the good work in us, and will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. He will keep what we have committed to Him.

This calling of His is often referred to. That which He calls us out of is noted: "Who bath called you out of darkness" (2 Peter 2:9). That to which He calls is also noted: "Called unto liberty" (Galatians 5:13); "called to glory" (2 Peter 1:3); "called you unto his kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:12). That by which He calls us is also noted: "Called by grace" (Galatians 1:15); "called by our gospel" (2 Thessalonians 2:14). But in the passage before us it is simply said that we are called into the fellowship of His Son. What does this mean?

Fellowship does not merely mean friendship, or converse, or sympathy; it means "partnership," sharing what belongs to

others,—"all that I have is thine." Thus the word is used, Luke 5:10, "which were partners with Simon." There is not merely partaking of something as a gift, but sharing, as common property, what another possesses. It is business partnership; family partnership; filial partnership; conjugal partnership; the partnership of adoption or heritage. Our text embraces all these, when it speaks of our being called to the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ; just as elsewhere it is said that we "are made partakers of Christ" (Hebrew 3:14). So that intercourse with Christ is only part of the boundless privilege which fellowship implies.

Let us consider this fellowship or partnership with Christ in the following aspects,—

I. Partnership with Him in what He was. He was crucified, He died, was buried, rose again. In all these we have part. Not that we helped Him to do His work and to bear His cross; not that we were joint sin-bearers, assisting Him to save us. In all this He was alone, suffering the wrath alone. But still we are said to be crucified with Him, to have died with Him, to be buried with Him, to have risen with Him. One cross, one death, one grave, one resurrection. Such is our fellowship with Him, that God looks on us as one with Him in all these things; treats us as having passed through what He did, as if we had actually paid the eternal penalty, and were entitled to the eternal righteousness. In believing we enter on this partnership, and into all the benefits of His death and resurrection. As one with Him, all these are ours.

II. Partnership with Him in what He is. He has not only risen, but He has ascended; He has been seated on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. We share His present dignity; for we are said to be seated with Him in heavenly places, and are

treated by God as such. His ascension is ours; His dignity and glory are ours. We are still no doubt here on earth; but we are called to feel, and act, and live as those who are already at the right hand of God. Simple forgiveness is not all our portion. We are raised higher than this; raised into high favor with God, and made to share in the fullness which belongs to Christ as the risen and ascended and glorified Son of man. Besides all this, we share His name, and are called sons of God. We share the Father's love,—“that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them.” We share His offices;—we are prophets, priests, and kings; heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ Jesus.

III. Partnership with Him in what He shall be. Much of His glory is yet in reserve; for now we see not yet all things put under Him. The day of glory and dominion; the day of the crown, and the throne, and the royal robe is coming; and in all these we are to have fellowship with Him; as one with Him; members of His body, sharing the glory of the head; as the bride of Christ, sharing the glory of the Bridegroom; one with Him in all His honour throughout eternity.

Thus, then, there is complete fellowship with Christ. It is to this that we are called by a faithful God; and is it not a high and glorious calling? Fellowship in His cross, His grave, His resurrection, His throne, His glory! All this faith secures to us; and of all this the Holy Spirit bears witness to us. Believing, we are reconciled, saved, accepted, blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.

Let us walk worthy of it; as men who really believe it; happy, holy, unworldly, zealous, generous, loving. Let us carry the consciousness of our calling into every thing,—great or small; into business, daily life, recreations, reading, education,

everything; maintaining our true position before men; manifesting our proper character; letting the world know our prospects, and doing nothing inconsistent with what we profess to be now, and with what we shall be when the Lord comes.

LXV.

The Foundation, The Building, And The Testing.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15.

It is of himself and of Apollos that Paul is specially speaking here ; or more generally, of "ministers of Christ;" "stewards of the mysteries of God" (4:1); the planters, the waterers, the labourers, the tillers, the builders (3:7, 9). Yet the great truth here taught is for all, Christians.

The special doctrine here is that there may be a right foundation and a wrong building. If the foundation be right, though the superstructure be faulty, all will not be lost; yet the loss will be great. The warning both to ministers and Christians is, to beware of building wrongly upon a right foundation.

I. The foundation. This is Christ alone. Other foundation can no man lay. Foundation stones are vast and massive; like those we see at Jerusalem, let into the solid rock of Moriah, as we see from the recent excavations. God has laid the

foundation Himself (Isaiah 28:16.) Both the foundation and the laying of it are His doing. "It is finished"; the stone has been laid; once for all. When Paul says, "as a wise master builder (or architect) I have laid the foundation" (verse 10), he means that he took the great foundation-stone laid in Zion with him wherever he went to preach the gospel, and laid it as the foundation for all the different churches,—Corinth, Ephesus, Antioch, or Rome. His proclamation of Christ was his laying the foundation-stone; for this is the one stone; the one living stone, "chosen of God, and precious," on which a church can be built or a soul rest.

II. The building. Ye are God's building, says the apostle, speaking of the Corinthian church. As he says in verse 6, Paul planted, and Apollos watered; so here he means to say, "I laid the foundation, and others are building on it." But there are two ways of building; the one right, enduring, precious; the other wrong, perishable, worthless; the one "gold, silver, precious stones"; the other "wood, hay, stubble." Both are on the true foundation; but the one is like Solomon's temple on Mount Moriah; the other like the present mosque of Omar on the same site. Applied to ministers, it points either to their actual teaching, or to the effects of their teaching; if to their teaching, it refers to the truths or errors taught by them in connection with the one truth of Christ; if to the effects of their teaching, it refers to their rearing a church made up of true saints or of formal professors. During the dark ages there might be some godly men in the ministry; but, cleaving to their superstitions, they taught much error, and built up churches full of superstitious formalists; mere wood, hay, and stubble; mere professors, who had no Christianity about them save the name. At the Reformation we see Calvin, Luther, Knox, Cranmer laying anew the foundation stone throughout Europe, and building on it gold, silver, and precious stones.

Subsequently we find the Port—Royalists in France, though retaining the one foundation, building wood, hay, and stubble. So is it with individual Christians. Let them take heed how they build. Let them not say, We have got the right foundation. That is not enough. Look to the whole of your creed, lest you be connecting falsehoods or fables with the cross of Christ. Look to your lives, lest your lives should be made up of most worthless materials. What a description is this of the life of some who perhaps, after all, are Christians! "Wood, hay, stubble;" nothing more. No gold, no silver, no precious stones; nothing that will come up to God's estimate; nothing that will stand the fire.

III. The testing. A day is coming when the building shall be "tried." The foundation stone was "tried," and it stood the proof; it is the "tried stone" (Isaiah 28:16, 2 Peter 2:6.) But the day of trial for the superstructures is yet to come; and the process of fire which is to try them is not yet begun. But it will come. "The fire shall devour the stubble, and the flame consume the chaff" (Isaiah 5:24.) The day is coming "that shall burn as an oven" (or furnace, Malachi 3:12.) He is coming whose "eyes are as a flame of fire"; who is "a consuming fire." That is the testing day. Sometimes we read of the fan (Matthew 3:12), and sometimes of the fire; but both processes are for similar ends,— sifting, searching, separating (whether by wind or flame) the real from the unreal, the true from the false. Till then both are together. Man is not allowed to try his hand at separation; "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come"; let both (tares add wheat) grow together until the harvest. The sifting time is coming. Nothing will then be taken for granted. All will be subjected to the fiery ordeal; "every one shall be salted with fire" (Mark 9:49.) This, then, is the question with regard to all we believe and all we do, "Will it stand the fire?" It may look

well, it may be praised by men, it may have "public opinion" on its side; but will it stand the fire? O man, will your life stand the fire? Will your religion, your creed, your politics, your plans and works, stand the fire? Soon will all be made manifest. The day shall declare it, "because it (or rather "He") shall be revealed by fire." Do all in anticipation of the day of fiery sifting.

IV. The result. If the work done stands the fire, and be proved to be gold and silver, then shall the doer not only be saved, but he shall receive a reward; he shall have an "abundant entrance" into the kingdom (2 Peter 1:11) If it won't stand the fire, but proves wood, and hay, and stubble, then the doer, if he be on the foundation, shall be saved; he shall not perish with his work, but he gets no reward; he is barely saved; saved so as by fire, like one escaping merely with life out of a burning house, like Lot out of Sodom.

(1.) The importance of a right foundation. There is but one rock, one stone, laid in Zion; one cross, one Saviour.

(2.) The difference between a right foundation and a right building. There maybe the former without the latter. A false life has sometimes been connected with a true creed.

(3.) The difference between the salvation and the reward. There is such a thing as being barely saved, like the thief on the cross. There is such a thing as a "starless crown,"—a low place in heaven,—deliverance from hell, without the "recompense" and the glory. There is such a thing as a saved soul, but a wasted life.

(4.) The importance of seeking the reward as well as the salvation. Some are all their lives occupied with the latter.

They never get beyond it; and, not having got the great question settled between them and God, they are not in a condition to aim at the reward. Let us at once get the matter of personal forgiveness settled, and press toward the mark (or along the line or mark, (κατὰ σκοπὸν, Philippians 3:14) for the prize of the high calling (the "above" or "heavenly" calling, τῆς ἄνω κλήσεως), laying up treasures in heaven, seeking to "attain to the resurrection of the dead," with all its glories.

(5.) Time ditty of judging ourselves now, that we may not be judged hereafter. Anticipate the day of the fire. Have all in readiness for it. Get quit of the wood, and hay, and stubble; all false doctrine; all unbelieving works or corrupt worship. Get the gold, and the silver, and the gems.

(6.) The awfulness of being unsaved. If to lose the reward be so terrible, what must it be to lose the salvation itself; to be lost; not to be "saved even so as by fire," but to perish in the fire?[11]

LXVI.

The Holiness Of God's Temple.

"The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."—

1 Corinthians 3:17.

I do not dwell upon the figure or picture which these words suggest. The magnificent emblem here employed is no mere sentimentalism or transcendentalism, but thoroughly practical. It is not for description or painting, but for the guidance of our Christian life, in its common rounds as well as in its nobler elevations and aspirations. Man's symbols are often mere poetry or sentimentalism, Bible-symbols are all practical.

These are words of weight and solemnity,—"Ye are the temple of God"; "the Spirit of God dwelleth in you"; "the temple of God is holy"; "ye are the temple of the living God"; "A habitation of God through the Spirit"; "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost"; "Ye are built up a spiritual house"; "I will dwell in them, and walk in them"; "We will come unto him, and make our abode with him"; "His Spirit that dwelleth in you"; "God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Take the figure in connection with any of the kinds of habitation spoken of in Scripture,—(1) the home; (2) the tent; (3) the palace; (4) the temple,—it exhibits a most comforting truth to us. To be God's home or dwelling, His tent or tabernacle, His royal palace, His chosen temple, of which that on Moriah was a mere shadow, how solemn the admonition as to personal holiness conveyed to us by this!

In God's temple there is the blood, the fire, the smoke, the water, the lamps, the incense, the shew bread, the cherubim, the glory,—all consecrated things, and all pertaining to what is heavenly! These symbols have gone, but the realities have come, the heavenly things themselves! If, then, we are God's temple, if even our bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness! It is this practical use of the inspired figure or symbol that I wish specially to bring before you. If you are God's temples, what then? How searching and solemn the question!

I. What intimacy with God. Acquaintanceship with Him who has made our heart His home is the least which could be expected. He must be no stranger to us. There must not merely be reconciliation,—for that may consist with some degree of distance,—but intimacy, peaceful friendship, loving acquaintanceship; He seeing into our heart with all its evil, and we into His with all its goodness, and longsuffering, and paternal, yet holy gentleness and love. If God be our inmate, how intimate ought we to be with Him in all respects; yet with a holy, reverend, solemn intimacy; an intimacy which expels fear, and which yet casts out all irreverent freedom. He asks for entrance, and He asks for intimacy: "Behold I stand at the door and knock," &c; "We will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). Of an old Scottish minister it is said (as the finishing stroke in his character), "He was one very intimate with God." So let it be said of us.

II. What calmness of spirit. In all false religion there is excitement, in true religion calmness. The more of God, the more of the inner and abiding calm. The coming of the Spirit of God into a soul calms it. The indwelling of God preserves that calm. Man is never more truly and deeply calm than

when filled with the Spirit of God. The tendency of much that is called religion in our day is to agitation, bustle, noise, unnatural fervor. In many "revival-scenes" there has been an amount of excitement which is of the flesh or of Satan; certainly not of God. The presence of Christ in the ship calmed the sea, so His presence in a human heart produces calm; and one evidence of His presence is the tranquility which reigns there. His words, His looks, His presence, all tend to calm, not to excite. The temple of God should be the calmest spot in the universe. No breath, no jar, no ruffle there. No storm, nor earthquake, nor war, nor tumult, can reach it. We see this in Stephen when before the council; his face was like that of an angel. God keeps His temple in perfect peace.

III. What solemnity of soul. If God be inhabiting us as His temple we ought surely to be solemn men,—called to a solemn life, speaking solemn words, manifesting a solemn deportment. We are not to be austere, sour, morose; these are Satan's caricatures of holy solemnity; yet we are to shun flippancy, frivolity, levity in word or deed. Should the world's rude laughter echo through the aisles of the divine temple? or its uproarious mirth ring through the holy of holies? Should the world's idle or unhallowed songs be sung under the sacred roof of this living cathedral? "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet," is God's injunction, "for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

IV. What recollectedness of thought and feeling. With God dwelling in us, shall we allow wandering thoughts or forgetfulness of the divine presence to prevail. Let us gather up our thoughts, and keep them gathered. Let not the ashes of the sacrifice, or the water of the laver, or the incense of the altar, or the fragments of the shew bread, be scattered to

the ends of the earth. Let us be self-recollected in the presence of the holy Inhabitant.

V. What spirituality and unworldliness. "God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." We need no rites, no dresses, no postures, no candles, no crosses,—these are the mockeries and gew-gaws of a dark materialism. We need the spiritual heart, shutting out the world from a shrine which Jehovah has entered and made His own.

If we are temples of the Holy Ghost, and if His temples are holy, then are not such things as the following shut out?

(1.) Vanity. What! Vanity in Jehovah's temple! Vanity of life, or word, or dress, or ornament, or deportment! How inconsistent! If the Holy Spirit comes in, these must go out; if these come in, He must depart.

(2.) Pleasure. Can a lover of pleasure be a temple of the Holy Ghost? Can a frequenter of the ballroom, a lover of the dance, a haunter of time theatre, a slave of lust or luxury—a pleasure-seeker have God dwelling in him? How do the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, suit the songs or the incense of the holy place?

(3.) Politics. What have the poor party politics of this world to do with the worship of this glorious temple? Can the smoke and dust of the world commingle with the incense of the golden altar? Shall parties strive for majorities under the very shadow of the cherubim and the glory?

(4.) Covetousness. Absorption even in lawful business is inconsistent with our being temples of God. We must have

business, but let us take heed how we bring our merchandise into the house of God. "Take these things hence," is God's rebuke to the man who tries to be both a worshipper of mammon and a temple of the Holy Ghost. The Lord of the temple comes with His scourge, sooner or later, to drive the buyers and sellers from His courts. He will not allow it to be a market for merchants, any more than a den of thieves.

We have a temple! As the apostle said, "We have an altar, so we can say more, "We have a temple"; nay, we are a temple; nay, we are the temple of the Holy Ghost, the temple of the living God. Not some believers only, who are more advanced than others, but every one who has God for his God, who has credited the divine report to Jesus the Son of God; he becomes a son, an heir, a saint, a temple.

Let us not grieve that Spirit whose temple we are. Let us allow Him to fill us wholly, and to cast out all that is unbecoming the holiness and glory of his habitation. "If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy." Awful words! Let us stand in awe, and seek to live as men who know what it is to be temples of God.

LXVII.

The Saints' Joy And Sorrow.

"I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you." —

1 Corinthians 4:8.

"The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it."

—Luke 17:22.

I place together these two verses, the words of the disciple, and the words of the Master, as breathing the same spirit. They speak of present pressure and trouble; they point to a day of deliverance and triumph; they indicate the feelings of Christ's church, in this evil day and evil world. Paul means to say "I wish the time of reigning were really come, as ye seem to think, for then should we share in that glory, instead of being the off scouring of all things"; as if feeling most deeply present trial, and longing for the day when the glory shall be revealed. The Lord means to say, "days are coming when ye shall long, even for one of the days of the Son of man"; pointing to approaching tribulation, and intimating that under the pressure of this, they would long for even one day's relief. Both these passages are written for us.

I. The pressure of present evil. There is evil in the world; and there will be till Christ come. There is evil in the church. There is sin, confusion, darkness, pain, affliction in many forms,

bereavements, persecutions, anxieties, cares, vexations, poverty, hatred, contempt, with many more such evils. They come on us daily. They press hard on us and weigh us down. Each disciple has his own special lot, and peculiar trial. Paul felt his deeply; and we must all feel ours, for we are not made insensible to sorrow by our becoming believers. The Head felt His sorrows, and prayed "let this cup pass from me," so the body in all its members feels its sorrows, and "desires one of the days of the Son of man," or desires "to depart and be with Christ," or longs that the day of reigning were come, or wishes to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. "O wretched man that I am," we crying reference to the inner conflict. "Woe is me that I dwell in Meshech," we cry concerning the fightings and storms without.

II. The anticipation of coming good. This good is called by our Lord "the days of the Son of man," in contrast with the present days, which are simply days of man, or "man's day," "this present evil world." It is called by the apostle the time of reigning, in contrast with the present time of down-treading and persecution. These good days are coming, and we fix our hope upon them. They are blessed, and glorious, and endless.

They shall reverse every thing that is evil now, whether pertaining to soul or body, to man and man's earth, to the church and to the world. It is resurrection that we look for; the times of restitution; a kingdom; new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Then all shall be holy, happy, peaceful; the body glorified, the earth renewed, Satan bound, Antichrist overthrown, sorrow turned into joy, the cross exchanged for the crown, the tents of Kedar for the New Jerusalem, the wilderness for Canaan, the weariness of the pilgrimage for the everlasting rest.

III. The desire of relief. Paul's words express this desire, and Christ's prediction intimates the same thing. We are not expected to be satisfied with pain and sorrow, so as not to long for their removal. We long for deliverance; nay for the most temporary respite, even for one of the days of the Son of man. The burden is at times so heavy that we cry out under it, and wish that the present days were shortened, and the glory hastened. One day's respite would be a great thing for us, when overwhelmed at times with evil. But the respite comes not; patience must have her perfect work. There is no sin in the desire; only let it not be impatient. "Not my will but thine be done."

IV.

The frequent disappointment. The sky seems for an hour to clear; and then the clouds return after the rain. The sunshine promises, and then passes away. We seem to come within sight of Canaan, and then another range of desert mountains rises up between. The day seems almost breaking, but it breaks not; the shadows seem just departing, but they depart not. Often we say, the long road is ending, the next turn will bring us to its termination; and then instead, another long stretch of road lengthens out before us. Often we say, Surely this darkness cannot last, this evil must have spent itself, but in vain we thus think. The time is not yet. Often we say, Surely Christ is coming, the reign of crime is ending, the era of holy peace is at hand, the kingdom is going to begin; and then the prospect darkens again; and we seem to hear the voice, "Not yet, not yet." Often we cry, "How long," and the answer is "Wait," be patient, stablish your hearts; it will not be long.

V.

The kingdom at last. These are sure things. They will come at last, though on the back of many disappointments. He that shall come will come and will not tarry. The signs of the times have often cheated us, but at length they shall be found true. They will introduce the kingdom and the rest. The glory shall break forth; the Son of man shall be revealed; He who is our life shall appear. The ransomed of the Lord shall return with songs; the days of our mourning shall be ended; sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

VI. The connection between present evil and future good. Our present light affliction worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Present evil is that out of which the coming good is to spring. Light is sown for the righteous; but it is sown in darkness. It is out of sickness and darkness that our immortal health and strength are to come. The grave is the birthplace of incorruption. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. Thus God shall overcome evil with good; out of sin educing holiness; out of our brief sorrow the eternal joy.

LXVIII.

The Past, Present, And Future Of A Christian Man.

"And such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."—

1 Corinthians 6:2.

These words describe a Christian's past, his present, and his future. In the past he was all unrighteousness. In the present he is washed, sanctified, justified. In the future he possesses the kingdom.

I. His past. It is one of sin, utter sin. It may, or it may not be marked by those horrid sins which the ninth verse describes; but it is all unrighteousness; from beginning to end, unrighteousness. The past of these Corinthians had been fearful. In outward sin among the worst of heathendom; the chief of sinners; scarlet and crimson sins; overflowing with abominable crimes. We may not have reached the same pitch of daring wickedness; but we have been "unrighteous," and that is enough; transgressors of the law. The rest is simply a question of degrees; a little more or a little less. One might say, I was not an idolater, or a fornicator, or a drunkard. Be it so. You were an "unrighteous" man, and that is enough. You may have done good deeds, spoken good words, borne a good character, lived a good life, yet you were an "unrighteous" man; and if you do not know this, you are no Christian, You know nothing of yourself.

II. His present. It is the complete reversal of the past. Not reformation merely, but transformation; such a transformation as God only could accomplish; so complete, that he who has undergone it could hardly know himself again. It is God's work; it is through the name of Jesus; it is by the Spirit of God. And he who describes the change was one who knew it by experience; one who had been a blasphemer, a persecutor, a murderer, but who can now tell of his washing, his sanctifying, his justifying; and who can say, "our God." The transformation is threefold:

(1.) Ye are washed. Or it may be, "Ye washed off these." The figure here is not that of baptism, but of the ritual washings, the Levitical purgations, which David referred to when he said, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than the snow"; to which Ezekiel referred when he said, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you"; to which Zechariah referred when he spoke of "the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness." The man is turned from an unclean into a clean thing. His filthy garments are taken off. "Now ye are clean through the word that I have spoken unto you." This is the "cleansing with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26).

(2.) Ye are sanctified. This is more than the washing. It is something to which the washing is preliminary. It refers specially to consecration or setting apart for the service of God. As the vessels of the sanctuary were first washed, and then set apart with blood,—the blood of consecration,— so it is with us. We are first washed, and then the blood is sprinkled on us for consecration or sanctifying. With this setting apart for God begins the inward work of sanctification; for the two things are inseparable. Formerly we were vessels

dedicated to the world's service, or Satan's service; now to the service of the living and holy Lord God.

(3.) Ye are justified. This is yet another step. It is the stamping of these consecrated vessels with a far higher value than they possessed. We are not only consecrated to God's service, but made righteous with the righteousness of God,—justified, raised up to a higher level, because of our oneness with the righteous One. First of all, we are clean as He is clean; then, we are set apart as He is set apart; then, we are righteous as He is righteous. Cleansed, sanctified, justified, these are the three conditions or privileges into which a believing man is brought. All this in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. The name washes, sanctifies, justifies. It is a name of power, containing everything in it that a sinner needs. He who consents to use it gets all that it contains or can procure! The Spirit washes, sanctifies, justifies. He has His part to do in all these; and He does it as the Spirit of Omnipotence! Oh the transformation which that name and that Spirit can accomplish!

III. His future. It is the possession of a kingdom. The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God; but they who are washed, sanctified, and justified shall! They are kings and priests, and shall sit upon the throne of Christ, and inherit the kingdom that cannot be moved. It is

(1.) The kingdom of God. His in every sense and aspect; God's kingdom; Christ's kingdom; the kingdom of heaven.

(2.) An eternal kingdom. It cannot be moved, but shall stand for ever,—unchangeable, incorruptible.

(3.) A holy kingdom. Into it nothing that defileth shall enter. No sin, no imperfection, no death, no evil thing pertaining either to soul or body.

(4.) A glorious kingdom. There the glory dwells, illuminating it in all its circuit. No night there; no darkness; no shadow. All glorious; the King, his princes, his subjects, his palace, his dominions everywhere. Glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land!

LXIX.

The Servant And The Freeman Of Christ.

"For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's free man: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant." —

1 Corinthians 7:22.

A Christian is one who is "called," not by self or man, but by God. The voice that calls him is almighty, irresistible. He must needs obey. He is born "of the will of God."

He is called "in the Lord." This refers not so much to his being called by the Lord, as to his being called to be "in the Lord." Christ in him and he in Christ, this is his standing. As once he was "in the world," and in himself, so now he is "in the Lord."

He is not of any one nation. According to the flesh, he may be a Jew or a Gentile, a Greek or a Roman, a barbarian, a Scythian, an African, an Indian, or a Briton. According to the Spirit, his nationality is not of earth; his citizenship is in heaven.

He is not of any special condition or rank. He may be a servant or a master, a peasant or a monarch, a merchant or a ploughman, a man of learning or a half-witted beggar.

Yet these two things are common to each,—he is called, and he is in the Lord. The other things connected with him are unessential and unenduring. These two only are important and abiding.

Keeping this in mind, the apostle takes up the two great conditions of society in his day,—master and slave,—in order to bring out the true and high bearing of Christianity on these. If you be a servant, what then? If a master, what then? These are the two questions he answers.

The answers to these two questions are contained in these two statements. A Christian is the Lord's freeman; a Christian is Christ's servant.

I. A Christian is the Lord's freeman. This expression means the following things:— (1.) He was once a slave. He was not born free. He did not free himself. Like Israel in Egypt, he was "delivered."

(2.) He was set free by the Lord. The name of his liberator is a glorious one; one betokening power and authority. His former masters were sin, the flesh, the devil. From these this mighty Lord hath set him free.

(3.) As a free man he still belongs to Christ. Nay, he belongs more to Him than ever; more to Him than to his former masters. A new tie has been formed between him and the Lord; the tie of liberty; the tie of love; the tie of gratitude.

(4.) His life is one of liberty. There is no return to bondage. All is the joy of freedom, Christ's own freedom; true, heavenly liberty; liberty in every part; perfect throughout; yet not the liberty of self-will.

(5.) His is liberty which earthly service cannot affect. He may be a slave or a prisoner, he is still the Lord's freeman. Hands, and feet, and body may be in chains, he is as free as ever. No

earthly bondage can intermeddle with or neutralize this liberty.

But how and when does all this begin? In what way is it carried on?

(1.) Ye are bought with a price. A ransom has been paid for our liberation; and the spring of all our liberty comes from this ransom. Christ hath redeemed us. We are redeemed not with corruptible things, but 'with the precious blood of Christ.

(2.) If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed. Our liberty is the direct work of the Son of God. He unbinds us and disimprisons us. He became a bondman for us. He took our chains and prison that we might have his liberty.

(3.) The truth shall make you free. The truth revealed in Christ contains in it all liberating elements and ingredients. It neutralizes and undoes all that made us slaves. And from the moment that we know it we are free! Our belief of this liberating truth sets us at full liberty.

II. A Christian is Christ's servant. Freed from one service which is bondage, he enters another which is liberty. Though free, he is a servant! Free because a servant! A servant because free! Such is the wonderful yet happy contradiction. As Messiah is the Father's servant, come to do His will, so are we Messiah's servants, engaged to do His will.

Thus we are both freemen and servants, truly both. And we begin our liberty and our service at the same time and in the same way. That truth which sets us free, introduces us into service. The two, so far from being incompatible, are harmonious and helpful to each other.

If we are Christ's servants, then we wear His livery; we dwell in His house; we do His work; we fix our eye on Him; we merge our wills in His; we get His wages, His reward,—"Well done good and faithful servant." Let us then realize and act out both our freemanship and our service faithfully and fully; at all times; all places; all conditions. Freemen, yet servants always! Servants, yet freemen always.

Let us close with the apostolic use of this truth. Are we masters? Let us remember we are Christ's servants, and only masters under Him; let this keep us humble and kind. We have a good, kind Master; let us be good and kind. Are we servants? Let not this trouble us or make us fretful. We are the Lord's freemen! That makes up for all. Though we were chained, imprisoned, exiled, like Paul at Rome, or John at Patmos, we are free! Nothing on earth can interfere with this privilege, or rob us of this honour; we are free indeed. Ours is glorious liberty.

LXX.

True Service And True Freedom.

"Be not ye the servants of men."—

1 Corinthians 7:23.

There is a liberty which no human bondage can affect or curtail,—"If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed"; and there is a bondage which no high sounding words about liberty can break or loosen,—"They promise them liberty, while they themselves are the servants of corruption." Where the truth reigns in the soul there is liberty; where error prevails there is bondage; for truth liberates, error enslaves. The great words of our day, "liberty," "liberal," and "liberalism," may come from hearts in bondage to sin, and may be perhaps the worst indications of that deep hatred of God, which cannot tolerate any holy restraints either upon their opinions or their lives. Liberalism is often the worst form of intolerance.

But let us look at the Apostle's line of argument with these Corinthian saints. "Were you called to Christ when a slave?" he asks. "Don't concern yourself about that," he answers; only if you may be free, avail yourself of the opportunity. He who is called while a slave, is not the less Christ's freeman; and he that is called while free, is not the less Christ's servant. In whatever state you are, bond or free, remember to abide with God; His fellowship sanctifies and sweetens every condition of human life. Mark the fullness of His statement:

(1.) Ye are bought. The price has been paid down. Previous ownership is dissolved.

(2.) Ye are bought with a price. That means with a good large sum; not for a trifle.

(3.) Ye are bought by Christ. Jesus is the purchaser. He wanted you for His property, and so he paid the full and heavy price.

(4.) Ye are bought for Christ. Not for another. Not to be sold again. His forever.

(5.) Ye are bought for a kingdom. Not to be servants, but kings. Heirs of God.

If these things are so, how incongruous, how degrading, to be the servants of men! This exhortation is very needful; for Christians are too prone to forget their true liberty and dignity; nay, to sell these,—to despise their birthright for some earthly consideration, some poor mess of pottage.

Be not the servants of men! Ye who are Christ's blood-bought freemen,—do not stoop to such bondage and degradation. Be not the servants of

(1.) Custom. Earth's customs and manners too often come between us and our birthright. Be on your guard.

(2.) Pleasure. Slaves of pleasure,—of lust, of vanity, of gaiety, of folly,—how inconsistent with Christ's freemen!

(3.) Business. Yes, even of lawful business, men are often slaves. Shall Christ's freemen be so?

(4.) Opinion. We fall into what is called public opinion, and shrink from independent thought and action.

(5.) Routine. "The course of this world" is often our only reason for a certain line of action. We do as others do; we allow our time to be broken up by worldly calls, parties, dinners, meetings, when as Christ's servants we ought to be doing His work. The routine of the world is carried into the church; and the routine of the "religious world" is weariness and slavery.

Do not be hangers on of the great, or rich, or influential, either in church or state. Do not be subservient to the leaders of party, or the representatives of public opinion, or the politicians of the day. Quit you like men. Be independent. Act on your own judgment, and follow out your own honest conclusions. Be not carried away with the excitement of controversy, or the enthusiasm of partisanship. Do not be obsequious, trimming, or facing both ways. Be upright before God and man. One is your Master, even Christ; follow Him. To follow others is to bring ourselves into bondage; to make ourselves servants of men. Be calm, be steadfast and unmovable, with your eye upon the great day of sifting, when the Judge shall reckon with you as to your fidelity to Himself. Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. Be not carried away either with the fear of the many. Be not overawed by the fear of man, which bringeth a snare, or influenced by the love of his approbation, which is no less ensnaring. To your own Master you stand or fall.

LXXI.

A Vanishing World.

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as thou they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away." —

1 Corinthians 7:29-31.

In the midst of counsels and exhortations about the relationships of life, the apostle stops abruptly, and interposes an emphatical announcement bearing upon all these relationships, "but this I say, brethren," as if lifting up his voice more loudly, and interrupting the line of discourse, by the proclamation of these three parenthetical verses, a proclamation importing this, "but after all brethren, these are but the little things of earth, the transient and temporary arrangements of our brief life below; let them not be exalted or magnified beyond their due; they are but the arrangements of a day; not to have any stress laid on them or importance attached to them, seeing they shall so soon end, and the world of which they form a part shall so speedily vanish away."

Mark (1) the two special truths which begin and end this emphatic announcement; (2) the conclusions to be drawn from these.

I. The two special truths. For we take the commencing and concluding declarations as linked together; forming either one great and solemn truth or two kindred truths, bearing both on certain duties and on our estimate of the importance of the things of our daily life. These must be measured by the shortness of time, and the length of eternity.

(1.) The time is short. It is cut short or contracted; it is the time referred to by our Lord (Romans 13:12) "the night is far spent," or "foreshortened." It is short for (1) So much is already spent and little remains; (2) Our individual life is brief, even at the longest; (3) The world's history is drawing to a close; (4) The coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Truly the time is short; and each ending year and setting sun says to us, "the time is short," it is becoming shorter and shorter. "What is our life? It is but a vapor" (James 4:4). "Our days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle" (Job 7:6). "Man that is born of a woman is of few days; he cometh forth as a flower and is cut down, he fleeth as a shadow and continueth not" (Job 14:1-2). "The end of all things is at hand" (2 Peter 4:7).

(2.) The fashion of this world passeth away. The outward form, or scene, or figure of this world is passing, or is just about to pass away.

This "fashion" is what the Apostle John refers to in warning us against the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life (or glorying in the good things of life); and of this he says "the world passeth away." Yes; like a flower; like a mist; like a shadow; like a dream; like a rainbow; like a vision of the night it passeth away; that which we admire in it, and call beautiful, that which men have all along been fascinated by, its glory, its pomp, its glitter, its splendor, its gaiety, its beauty and excellency and grandeur, shall pass away; its

songs, and jests, and mirth, and ringing laughter; its shows, its spectacles, its concerts, its balls, its theatres, its operas, with all its haunts of uncleanness and debauchery, its revellings, and banquetings, surfeitings and idolatries of the flesh, all shall pass away. These are not enduring things. Even at their best and purest they are the things of an hour. They fade as a leaf. They are crushed as a flower. They die away like the breeze. A short life is that of the world at its longest; shorter still that of the men of the world; and shortest of all is the frail and shifting fashion of the world. Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!

II. The lessons to be drawn from them. The substance of these lessons is that all earthly things are of minor moment, and ought not to be lifted out of their place, so as to engross us too much, or to be estimated at too high a rate. They are not eternal. They vanish with a vanishing world, and ought to be estimated accordingly. The seen and the corporeal never can be placed beside the unseen and the eternal.

(1.) Earthly relationships are of lesser moment. "It remaineth (or "henceforth" during the contracted space that is left) that both they who have wives, be as though they had none." The nearest human relationship will soon be dissolved; the closest earthly tie will soon be snapped. Let us not then over estimate it, or give it undue prominence. Let us keep even it, in its proper place. It is, after all, among the things that are seen and temporal. Husband, wife, father, mother, brother, sister, child, will soon remove; and each soul, unrelatoned, unlinked with others, pass from earth alone, into the presence of God.

(2.) Earthly sorrows are of lesser moment. Sorrow is in itself no trifle. Tears are real things. We do not weep for nothing;

nor shall we find that a needless piece of kindness that God shall do for us, when He shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. Still tears are among the things seen and temporal. They are unknown in heaven. Our weeping time is so short, that we must not make too much of time's sorrows. The vale of tears is not a long one. We shall soon be beyond it; and we shall wonder why we gave way to a sadness that was so soon to end, and to be exchanged for the perfect gladness and the everlasting song.

(3.) Earthly joys are of lesser moment. Joy is a real thing. Our hearts were made for gladness. We ought not to despise joy; nor indeed can we afford to do it. We are warranted in making much of joy; only let it not be too much. Let us keep our joys in their proper place; calmly taking them when they come, or as calmly foregoing them when they come not. For the time is short, and the joys we have here will soon be done. The fashion of this world passeth away; let us not then overvalue joy; but take it as if we had it not; sitting tranquilly loose to all that we can gain or lose.

(4.) Earthly business is of lesser moment. Our buying and selling will soon be done. Our merchandize will ere long disappear, for it is part of the fashion of that world which passeth away. Let us be diligent in business, but let us not overrate its importance, nor be engrossed by it. 'We shall soon buy no more; and sell no more; and make gain no more; and possess no more. Why so eager in business, as if it were eternal? Why so anxious to lay up treasure on earth, where the moth will corrupt it, and the thief break through and steal? Is it worth our while to be so much in earnest about the things that perish with the using?

(5.) Earthly gratifications are of lesser moment. They that use this world as not abusing it (or rather "as not using it at all"). We must use this world while we are in it; we must use its meat, and drink, and raiment; its comforts, its money, its friendships, its necessary recreations, and gratifications. But we are to sit loose from all these; not setting our heart upon them; but holding them as if letting them go, using them as if not using them. They are not sinful, and need not, therefore, be rejected; but they must be kept in their proper place, not coveted nor idolized. For the time is short, and the fashion of this world passeth away. Let the world be no world to us, in comparison of the glory and beauty, the magnitude and the eternity, of the world to come.

Thus, then, is our whole earthly life, in all its parts, to be regulated by the magnitude of the eternal. Things present must be subordinated to those which are to come, the seen to the unseen, the earthly to the heavenly. It is by the light of the coming glory that we must walk while here. It is from the clock of eternity that our time is to be always taken. Arrange your business, your recreations, your duties with reference to the invisible and unending future. Live, speak, work, move, as those who believe that the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

LXXII.

The Many Gods And The One God.

"As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."—

1 Corinthians 8:4-6.

The meaning of this passage might be more fully expressed thus: "As concerning the things sacrificed to idols, we know that an idol is a nothing in the world, and that there is no God but one; but even were there those beings that are called gods, either in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are gods many and lords many (gods and demigods as they are called), yet to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him (for His service and glory, •• and ••• contrasted); and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him." It is like Joshua's "as for me" (Joshua 24:15).

Here are (1) the world's many gods; (2) the saint's one God; (3) the saint's one Christ.

I. The world's many gods. To make gods for himself has been man's great object all along. Every nation has had its gods, and every age. Assyria had its gods; Babylon, Egypt, Persia,

Greece, Rome. Men multiplied gods without number. Everything or anything that could be a substitute for God, in any shape, animate or inanimate, men set up and worshipped. They were never tired of god-making. All of them vanity; things that profit nothing; vain helpers in the time of need. O world! what will become of thy many gods in the day when Jehovah arises to shake terribly the earth? And what profit will these gods afford the millions who have fled to them for refuge? Is there no god-making still, even in our day? Money, business, pleasure, lusts, luxuries! Are not these thy gods, O world? And are these better than the gods of Greece? Will they prove more helpful in the day of trouble than Baal, or Jupiter, or Buddha? Will they forgive, and save, and comfort?

II. The saint's one God. Yes; one only, the living and the true God. Jehovah is His name. With undistracted eye the Christian looks but to One, not many; with undivided heart he fixes on One, not many; His heart was made for only One, and that one sufficient to fill his whole heart, and soul, and being. How the thought of that one God,—infinite, eternal, and unchangeable,—makes all that are called gods to vanish utterly away. One infinite Jehovah, King eternal, immortal and invisible, He is our portion. "Jehovah is my portion, saith my soul." We need no other; we need no more. This God is our God. Whom have we in heaven but Him, and whom on earth do we desire besides Him? One God, Jehovah, King of kings, and Lord of lords, Creator of heaven and earth, who filleth all in all, "this is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm 48:14).

III. The saint's one Christ. "To us there is but one Lord Jesus Christ." As there are many beings who go under the name of God, so are there many who go under the name of Christ, yet

there is but one Christ, not two, nor many. The tendency of the present day is to multiply Christ's. A Christ as the impersonation or representative of humanity is quite in accordance with the spirit of the age. But every one wants to have his own Christ, just as each heathen wanted to have his own god; the Christ that suits his own fancy, or his own philosophy, or his own intellect, or his own circumstances. So that there are many Christ's in the world even among those who profess to take the Bible as their instructor; still more among those who reject it; for even among those there is a groping after a Christ, and the cry goes up, Ecce Homo! Some want a Christ who is not God; others a Christ who is not a sacrifice; a Christ without a cross, and without blood; a Christ who will teach but not expiate sin; a Christ whose life and death are an example of self-surrender to the utmost, but not an atonement; a Christ who is not a judge, nor a law-giver, nor a priest, and only a prophet in the sense of teacher. Thus in the present day there are many Christ's. It has been so all along; only the apostle John calls them not Christ's but Antichrists—"many Antichrists." To us there is but one Christ. He who was announced as the woman's seed; He of whom Abel's sacrifice spoke; He of whom Enoch prophesied as the avenger; He who was revealed to Abraham as his seed; He of whom Job spoke as the Redeemer; He of whom Moses spoke as the Prophet; of whose work the whole book of Leviticus is full; He of whom David sang, as the sufferer, yet the King; He of whom Isaiah and all the prophets sang; He who proclaimed Himself as come to seek the lost; to whom John the Baptist pointed as the Lamb of God; who hung on the cross, and died in anguish, yet rose again and ascended on high; He is the one Christ whom we recognize.

If thus, then, there is but one Christ, then there is but

(1.) One cross. Only one; the cross in which Paul gloried, and on which our Surety hung. To acknowledge that one cross is life; to reject it is death.

(2.) One Priest. Jesus, our great High Priest, whose is the one unchangeable and everlasting Priesthood; Jesus, who suffered the just for the unjust, and now ever liveth to make intercession for us!

(3.) One altar. The altar of the great burnt-offering is the one altar for us. If there be many Christ's, there may be many altars; if one Christ, then but one altar.

(4.) One sacrifice. Only one! No victim but the one Christ. No blood but that of the one Christ. All self appointed, self-made sacrifices are vain. They cannot take away sin. The one offering can.

(5.) One way to the kingdom. There is but a single gate, and a single way; yet these suffice. We need no more. "I am the way." "No man cometh unto the Father but by me."

LXXIII.

The One Church Of God.

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 well 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.

1 Corinthians 10:1-6.

The apostle's argument here may be thus paraphrased: "Moreover, brethren, let me remind you of some well known incidents in the history of our fathers; let me remind you of the cloud and of the sea; how our fathers marched under that cloud, and through that sea; how by that cloud and sea they were pledged to Moses as their leader (as we by the baptismal water are to Christ); how they did all eat the same spiritual meat, and drink the same spiritual drink as we do (in their symbolic manna and water); how all of them were put in possession of the same divine privileges in Christ as we; yet they incurred Jehovah's displeasure, and died in the wilderness. See what happened to them! Be warned." "Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (See Hebrew 3:7-19, 4:1, 2.)

The passage has many aspects. It brings Christ before us, the same yesterday, today, and forever. It exhibits the church of all ages,—its dangers, temptations, apostacies, unbelief, unfaithfulness. It illustrates the divine purpose and plan in the history of God's chosen and called ones here. The basis of the apostle's statement in it is a fragment of Israel's history,—a history all full of meaning, a history meant for us in these last days, a history which whether in parts or in whole, is a divine picture for the study of the Gentile church, and of every saint in every age. Let us take the passage in its exhibition of the church.

I. The oneness of the church. Israel was but a fragment of one great whole, one single vein of God's infinite mine.[12] Even in Israel's days Gentiles were brought into this whole, and became part of the church; but "before Abraham was" the church of God existed. As Messiah in Isaiah calls the church his "body" (Isaiah 26:19), so in the Psalms He calls it the church of the saints (Psalm 149:1). One church from the first believing soul down to the last,—"redeemed from among men"; the church of whose members the eleventh of the Hebrews gives us some instances. One, because (1) bought with one price; (2) washed with one blood; (3) clothed with one righteousness; (4) filled with one Spirit; (5) animated with one life; (6) loved with one love. These things belong to the saints of all ages and nations; all one church in Christ.

II. The oneness of the bread. It is on "bread" that this body, the church, is fed and nourished; but this is no earthly bread; no mere manna, nor even corn of Israel's fields. It is "the true bread"; the "bread of God"; the "bread which came down from heaven"; the "living bread"; the bread which Israel's manna only figured or symbolized. It is the same bread for all ages and nations; for all churches and all saints: "They did all

eat the same spiritual meat." The "fathers" from the beginning had but one table, one feast, one bread. Thus they were nourished up unto life eternal. That which a redeemed sinner is to feed upon must be the same in every age; for that which is to be nourished is the same, the appetite is the same, and the strength and stature into which they are to grow is the same. Sometimes it was typified by the flesh of the sacrifice; sometimes by the shew-bread; sometimes by the manna; sometimes by the fruits of the garden (Revelation 2:7). But all these pointed to the one heavenly bread,—Jesus, the Christ of God; to His broken body; to His flesh, which is meat indeed; to His whole person as the very and true bread of God, on which the church has been feeding from the beginning, and will feed to the end. This is the one bread which has satisfied the church's hunger all along; which sharpens even while it appeases the appetite; which suits itself to the thousand varied cases and constitutions; which creates as well as nourishes spiritual life; which invigorates the church's strength, and knits together the various members of the one body; producing a unity, and sympathy, and identity between them all which nothing else could do. The bread on which Paul fed is the same on which Abel fed. What a link, what a fellowship is this! The bread on which we feed in these last days is that on which Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David fed. What a fellowship is this! One body and one bread! Christ the one true bread for the sustenance of the one church; even of all who have been purchased by His one precious blood, and made alive by His one mighty Spirit, the one Spirit of life, the one Spirit of adoption, the one Spirit of grace and of glory. There are not two bodies, but one, so there are not two kinds of bread, but one; and that one suffices for every age. It is everlasting bread. It is the eternal loaf, of which the whole family have

eaten, and which yet remains undiminished and unchanged; still capable of feeding millions and millions more.

III. The oneness of the water. "They did all drink the same spiritual drink." The whole church,—all saints; not only Israel, but the saints before Israel, and the saints since these days. They were "all baptized into one Spirit," and all drank the one living water, out of the one eternal well. It was not one water for the Old Testament saints, and another for the New; but one for all. There was but one drink that could quench the thirst, and it was supplied abundantly from the beginning. The living water is the Holy Spirit, as we read in John (7:37, 38), where, after recording Christ's proclamation of living water in the temple, the evangelist adds, "This spake He of the Spirit." It is of this living water that Isaiah speaks (55:1); of it also it is that Jesus speaks to the woman of Sychar; of it also that John speaks in the Revelation (21:6, 22:17). In the passage before us it is specially connected with "the Rock." It is not a well, or a river, or a fountain, but a rock,—the rock of the desert,—and "that Rock was Christ." For it is Christ that contains the fullness of the Spirit for us. He is the Rock which holds the water; the Rock which, when touched by the rod of faith, pours forth its riches. One rock and one water from the beginning, for the one body, the one church; the rock of the desert, the rock which stands hard by the mountain of the law, yet which is not of it; the rock beside which faith stands, which faith touches, and which, to such a touch, yields its gushing fullness. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!"

IV. The oneness of the way. It is through the desert. Israel's desert was but a type of the church's. Israel's forty years' marches and encampments were but specimens and illustrations of ours. Differences there have been and will be;

yet substantially the way is the same, the perils the same, the difficulties the same, the sorrows the same. One way! Yes, one way from the first; sure and safe, yet rough, and hard, and dark. That way is not of chance, nor by the laws of nature or society; but directly of divine appointment. Each turn is arranged. Its beginning, duration, course, ending, are all divinely planned. God, in His pillar cloud, is our guide, protector, shade, security, so that we fear no evil. God in Christ is our companion, and friend, and comforter all through. It is His way, not ours; and it is good. We are strangers and pilgrims as were all the fathers,—Abraham (Hebrew 11:13), David, all the saints of old (1 Chronicles 29:15). One way! Only one way to the one city for the millions of the saved. While, in one sense, we say that the wilderness is the way, in another, we say that Christ is the way: "I am the way." What a truth for our day, when more than ever men are walking in ways of their own, and imagining that these ways are as numerous and as diverse as the feet that tread them, or the vain hearts that devise them.

V. The oneness of the discipline. The way is that of discipline and education throughout. The road may be longer or shorter, darker or brighter, still it is on that way that God deals with His own in discipline. As there is a oneness in discipline, so is there a oneness in sin, and backsliding, and unbelief in the tendency to depart from the living God. The discipline is various, yet one; it is suited to the case of each, yet is, up to a certain point, the same in all. The church has always needed this; and the interval between her being called and her reaching the inheritance is the time during which it is exercised. God does it Himself. He appoints it, provides it, carries it out. Each day's trials, each day's work, each day's business, each day's crosses, each day's cares and burdens,—all these are discipline. They are, whether lighter or heavier,

the rebukings and chastenings of Him into whose family we have been brought. He proves us, tries us, sifts us, empties us from vessel to vessel, tosses us up and down that the chaff may be blown away. He does not allow us to sit down, and say, This is my rest. He makes us feel that this is not our rest. Satan is here; sin is here; the flesh is here; pain is here; human passions are here; death is here; there cannot be rest. Thus God has dealt in past ages with His one family,—His sons and daughters,— His church; and thus He deals with them still. Israel's discipline in the desert, is the church's discipline till she enters Canaan. Through much tribulation she must enter the kingdom of heavens one rod, one hand, one wisdom, one love, for the one family, from the first.

VI. The oneness of the inheritance. The inheritance is not mentioned in our passage; but it is assumed; for the wilderness does not last forever, and the issue of the church's pilgrimage is glory. Israel's journey was toward Canaan; her hope was the land flowing with milk and honey, and her eye was on that goodly mountain, even Lebanon. All her tribes and families had one hope; and with that one hope in view they pressed forward. So for us there is one hope; the hope of the saints from the beginning; the church's heritage and kingdom; the glory to be revealed in the day of the Lord's appearing. One hope, one recompense, one glory, one kingdom, one inheritance, one eternal throne for herself and for her Lord. An inheritance it is, incorruptible and undefiled; made up of many parts, as we see in the epistles to the seven churches, yet but one, the inheritance of the saints in light; the center of which is the new Jerusalem,—the circumference, the illimitable universe of God's wide and glorious creation.

(1.) Learn our fellowship with all saints. Oneness with the church from the first day of salvation is our privilege. We

stand side by side with them, see the same sights, hear the same sounds, use the same words, stand before the same altar, eat the same bread, drink the same water. We are made "able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, what is the depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge."

(2.) Learn the common standing of all redeemed men. Their feet are on the one Rock of Ages. They are washed in the same blood. They are gathered round the one cross of Christ. Not one higher or lower; not the New Testament saints higher than the Old, but all alike occupying the same ground provided for sinners by the one Redeemer of the church.

(3.) Learn the strength for a holy walk. There is food provided; there is spiritual drink; there is companionship on the way,—all the saints are there; there is Christ himself our guide, keeper, light, life, strength. How inexcusable if we be inconsistent! And what a warning in the case of Israel! "With some of them God was not well pleased." They turned aside, they disbelieved His word, they followed idols. Let us take heed. God expects us to be holy; and He has provided for our being so. Onward then, right onward, through rough and smooth, through sorrow and joy, till we rest in Jerusalem.

LXXIV.

The One Loaf.

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."—

1 Corinthians 10:16, 17.

It is only in passing, and as an illustration of his argument on another subject that the apostle introduces the Lord's Supper here; and yet how full his statement, how bright the aspect in which he presents it to us! The oneness of the worshipper, even in a heathen temple, with the whole religion or system of worship, and with the false god into whose temple he comes; this is his theme. It is in illustration of this that he reminds us of the Supper. Strange that in connection with a pagan altar and a temple of devils he should be led to give us one of the most striking of all his statements regarding the Supper. He takes the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils, places them side by side, and shews us the one from the other. There is an infinite difference; and yet there is a likeness; for there is a oneness in both between the worshipper and the god worshipped. On this dark canvas of a heathen temple he draws his picture of the holiest of Christian ordinances. In the Evangelists we are shewn the Supper from the Jerusalem upper chamber; in the eleventh chapter of this epistle we see it from a Christian church; here we are shewn it from a heathen temple.

He speaks of the "cup" as symbolizing the body of our Lord which contained the blood or living wine. He puts the cup first, because in speaking of the heathen rites he had already made special mention of the cup first; perhaps also to shew that the order of the two symbols was of no consequence; and perhaps to prevent the possibility of Romish error in refusing the cup to the worshippers.

Let us now meditate on the cup and the bread, or the cup and the platter, as set before us here.

I. The cup. It may have been of gold, or silver, or brass, or wood; it matters not. It was made of earthly materials, as was the Lord's body, and it was the vessel for containing the wine, as was the Lord's body for containing His blood,—that blood which was drink indeed, which was the new wine of the kingdom.

(1.) Its name. "The cup of blessing which we bless." All blessing is in Scripture connected with Messiah, His person, and His work. Hence that vessel which so specially points to Him receives this name. It contains blessing,—the blessing,—the long-promised, long-looked for blessing. The wine in that cup is impregnated with blessing. Every drop of it speaks of blessing,—of that which God calls blessing,—of that which is fitted to do us good and make us happy, to remove death and give life. The words, "which we bless," are not priestly words, spoken to imply the consecration of the elements by a priest's blessing. The "we" is all believers; and the word "bless" is literally, "to speak well of"; and the whole expression is, "the cup of the well-speaking, of which we speak well," or praise; referring to the united praise and thanksgiving of the worshippers. And of that cup it is meet that we speak well. Though its literal contents are simply wine; yet that wine is

the divine symbol of all blessing; so that we may say truly. Its contents are blessing,—every drop fraught with blessing,—blessing which faith receives, and in which hope rejoices.

(2.) It's meaning. "Is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" or, "is it not communion with the blood of Christ?" That wine is then the symbol of the blood; the blood of the new covenant, the everlasting covenant. That blood is the life; and that life is the payment of the sinner's penalty: "The soul that sinneth it shall die." In that cup there is both death and life,—the death of the Surety, and the life flowing out of that death; our death flowing into Him, so that He dies; His life flowing into us, so that we live. Thus the cup is the cup of blessing for the sinner, because it contains both the death and the life. Of this blessing, symbolized by that cup and its contents, we become possessors when we believe on the name of the Son of God; for it is faith that opens up the communication between us and His fullness. But in the Lord's Supper there is more visible, more palpable contact, though still of the same kind. Hence, the words of our text, "the communion of the blood of Christ." The word communion is properly "partnership,"—"partnership in the blood of Christ"; all that the blood contains for the soul becoming ours,—the whole blood becoming the property of each believer. All its blessings,—the paid ransom, the cancelled penalty, the forgiveness, the life, the joy, all becoming ours; we being partakers of Christ, partakers of His blood, partners in His death and life.

He, then, that takes that cup is committed to all that it symbolizes; he is counted as one with it; the possessor of its contents; the partaker of its fullness. He is to reckon himself one with Jesus in His death; and God reckons him such. Nothing less. He has the whole, or he has nothing! It is not a

little strength, or healing, or refreshment from the blood which he is made partaker of; but the blood itself, and all that it contains. For the possession, the enjoyment of all that fullness, every communicant is responsible. If be a worthy communicant (a believing man), the blessing will flow in, and these symbols will help the inflow. If he be an unworthy communicant, he is not the less responsible for participation of all that fullness; and that will be his condemnation. He took into his hands the cup of blessing, he put it to his lips, and yet he did not drink one drop!

II. The bread. The word more properly signifies "the loaf" or "cake," intimating its original oneness or completeness. It is necessary to keep this in mind, as the point of the apostle's argument turns on this. Let us consider.

(1.) What the bread signifies. It is bread,—the common Passover loaf, unleavened bread,—made of the corn of earth; grown in our fields, cut down, gathered in, winnowed, ground, and formed into a loaf for the Passover table. Such was Christ's body,—our very flesh; born, growing up, ripening, cut down, prepared for our food. A thing by itself; unleavened and pure; free from sin; in all respects fit for the souls' food. "My flesh is meat indeed." It is Christ's body that is thus symbolized and set before us as the whole food and nourishment of our souls. Except we eat His flesh, we have no life in us.

(2.) What the breaking of the bread signifies. It points us to the cross; it speaks of a crucified Christ. Not a bone of Him was broken, and yet His body was broken; head, hands, feet, back, side, pierced and bruised and wounded. His body unbroken is no food for us. It is no nourishment for the soul of the sinner. It would not suit our taste, nor satisfy our

appetite, nor feed our souls, nor prove wholesome food. We need something in which death is; death as the payment of sin's penalty. All without this is tasteless and unnourishing. Hence the unprofitableness of that theology whose center or foundation is not the cross of the substitute; atonement by the death of the surety. "The bread which we break," says the apostle, evidently pointing with special emphasis to the breaking, and announcing this as the main feature of the symbol. It is on the broken body of our Lord that we feed. Incarnation without crucifixion does not satisfy the soul. Bethlehem without Golgotha would be mockery.

(3.) What our partaking of it signifies. For we do not merely gaze upon it or handle it; we take it and we eat; we eat not in solitude or in our chambers, but as a company at a feast. This act of eating, then, has a twofold signification or reference,—a reference to Christ and to ourselves.

(a) A reference to Christ. It is "communion with the body of Christ," partnership with that body; so that all that is in it of virtue, or health, or strength, or excellence, becomes ours. It is one with us and we with it. The whole fullness of blessing contained in it becomes ours. We reckon ourselves one with it, and God reckons us one with it. As he who eats of the idols' bread in a heathen temple is responsible for the whole idolatry of the place, and is so dealt with by God, so he who eats this broken bread in faith is identified with a crucified Christ and all His fullness. Partnership with the body of Christ; how much that implies!

(b) A reference to ourselves. It realizes to us the perfect oneness between the members of Christ's body. As the loaf is made up of many parts or crumbs, and yet is but one loaf; nay, gets its true oneness from the union of these many

parts, so is it with the members of the body of Christ. Many, yet one; one, yet many; the number not marring the oneness, but perfecting it; the oneness not hindering the number but requiring it for its full development. This is one of the numerous symbols used to unfold this peculiar truth. There are others no less expressive. One family, many members. One temple, many stones. One body, many limbs. One loaf, many parts! We may add others. One city, many citizens. One ocean, many drops. One firmament, many stars. One song, many words. One harmony, many notes. One sun, many rays.

Thus in these symbols we have partnership with Christ, with His blood, with His body, so that all that He has is ours. Each has the whole fullness, as each inhabitant of earth has the whole sun. Oneness with Christ and oneness with each are embodied in these symbols. We are many, yet one; many members yet one body, and one head. All that He has is ours. His life, our life; His light, our light; His fullness, our fullness; His strength, our strength; His righteousness, our righteousness; His crown, our crown; His glory, our glory; His inheritance, our inheritance: for we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

If these things be so,—

1. What a blessed place should the communion table be to us. A Peniel where we prevail with God, and receive the blessing in full. What strength, health, joy, light, should we find there! There the whole fullness of Christ is presented to us.

2. What manner of persons ought we to be. Holy, powerful, separate from the world, like Him by whose body and blood we are nourished. Nothing is lacking to those who have this heavenly communion, this divine partnership.

3. What love and unity should prevail amongst us? One with Christ, one with each other. This ordinance represents the oneness, increases it, cherishes it. Sitting side by side, we are drawn closer to the Lord, closer to each other in and through Him.

4. What longing for the time when we shall see Him face to face. Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Amen! Even so come Lord Jesus.

LXXV.

The Heavenly Banquet.

"The Lord's Supper."—

1 Corinthians 11:20.

Let me notice here the many words which are connected with "the Lord" by the apostle: The Lord's body, verse 29; the Lord's blood, verse 27; the Lord's bread, verse 27; the Lord's cup, verse 27; the Lord's death, verse 26; the Lord's supper, 20. For in this ordinance Christ is all and in all; everything here speaks of Jesus, and He speaks in everything; He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. His name is here as ointment poured forth; its spikenard sendeth forth its smell; He is as a bundle of myrrh, a cluster of camphire from the vineyards of Engedi. Here our fig-trees put forth their green figs, and our vines with the tender grapes give a good smell. Here is the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense, on which we sit and wait till the day break, and the shadows flee away. Christ is here "all and in all."

Why does the apostle call it the Lord's supper? Supper was the chief meal of the day; and besides, this feast, at its first introduction, was really a supper, like the passover; an evening meal, partaken of at the close of the day's toil and weariness:

I. The Lord appointed it. On the night in which He was betrayed, He took the bread and wine, saying, Do this in remembrance of me. This then is His commandment. If a

stranger ask, What is the meaning of this, and why do you observe this peculiar rite? we answer, The Master has bidden us. He instituted the ordinance, and so we call it by His name, the Lords supper. It is not man's feast, or the church's feast, it is the feast of the Lord. Each observance of it carries us straight back to the first institution by the Lord Himself. He has bidden us thus shew His death till He come.

II. He provides. The feast of fat things is of His providing, so is the table, so is the banqueting house, so is the raiment. All the viands are of His selection, His purchase, His setting out. He is both appointer and provider. The provisions must be rare, and suitable, and nourishing, in such a case. The fruit gathered by Him must be sweet to our taste; the grapes, and pomegranates, and figs, and olives, the milk, and honey, and wine, are all of His procuring. They have come out of His garden and storehouse, they have been gathered, and set on the table by Himself. His wisdom knows what we need, and His love prepares it all.

III. He invites. Come, is His message to us! My oxen and fatlings are killed, all things are ready, come to the marriage, come to the feast; eat, O friends; drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved. In coming to the table, do we remind ourselves of Christ's invitation, and say to ourselves, I come because the Lord invited me? Who am I that I should refuse His loving message? He bids me, and I come. It is the Lord's supper, because He invites us to it.

IV. He is Himself the feast. He is the Paschal Lamb. He is the bread and wine. Yes; Christ is Himself the provision, as well as the Provider. It is on His body and blood that we feed; His flesh is meat and His blood is drink indeed. Everything at the table speaks of Christ himself as the real and true food of our

souls. All that bread is to us, Christ's body is to our souls. All that wine is to us, Christ's blood is to our souls; and in partaking of the bread and wine, we feed by faith upon the body and blood of the Lord.

V. He partakes with us. He sits at the table Himself, and forms one of our number. The feast is for Him as well as for us. Here we have fellowship with Him and He with us. Here we have the closest and dearest intercourse that we can have on earth. We see eye to eye, we speak face to face. He gives us His love, and we give Him ours. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine," is the motto of the feast.

Such are the reasons why this feast is called the Lord's Supper. Seated at this table, and partaking of this Supper,

(1.) We look backward. And as we look back, we see the passover, we see the shew bread, we see the cross. These all come before us as we sit at the table.

(2.) We look forward. For we shew His death till He come. We fix our eye on the coming glory, on the resurrection blessedness, on the marriage supper of the Lamb. How bright that future seems in a dark world like ours!

(3.) We look inward. In doing so, we ask, Is my soul prospering? This feast is meant to nourish, Is it flourishing me? It is meant to quicken all my graces, faith, and love, and hope, Is it doing so to me? It is meant to elevate my affections, Is it doing so to me? Do I find my spiritual being invigorated and quickened by these heavenly viands, and by this divine fellowship?

(4.) We look around. Brethren in the Lord are on each side. Our fellow believers, our fellow pilgrims,—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ,—fellow citizens of the New Jerusalem. In each face we see one who has joined himself to our common Lord,—one who is a member of the one body, whose head is Christ. Love circulates around, as well as joy and peace.

(5.) We look outward. We cannot, at a feast like this, forget a world which is famishing; shutting itself out from this heavenly feast, and reveling in its lusts and vanities. Poor world! We say. Thou hast no gracious Master, no heavenly table, no life giving bread and wine. Oh that ye would bethink yourselves, and turn to Him who is the Bread of Life. We pity you, we pray for you, we plead with you to come.

For here at this table we find all we need,—the fullness of Christ. Here we taste.

(1.) His love. It is love that passeth knowledge, the love of Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. Yes; the love of Christ fills that cup, and pervades that bread.

(2.) His peace and joy. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." "These things have I spoken to you, that my joy might remain in you."

(3.) His consolations. These come to us with special power here. This is the place of comfort, the table of comfort. Here we have Christ as the Comforter, and the Holy Ghost also as such.

(4.) His glory. For that glory is our hope, specially at the table. Here we get the foretaste of it. As we eat and drink, we realize the coming glory in the day of His appearing, when that day shall break, and the shadows flee away. "Till He come!" This is our communion watchword. "Till He come!" This is the voice of the bread and wine. In them this blessed hope is wrapped up. To this they point and beckon us. Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him!

LXXVI.

The Apostolic Gospel.

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand."

—1 Corinthians 15:1.

There had been false teachers at Corinth; teachers bold as well as false; for they struck at the great central truth,—the resurrection. The apostolic message was, "Christ is risen"; theirs was, "Christ is not risen." They laid the axe to the root of the tree. If they did not attempt to cut down His cross, they tried to destroy His tomb.

As they boldly denied, so does the apostle fearlessly assert, the resurrection as the substance of the Christian's hope, and the essence of the gospel. But he does not content himself with this. He goes over the whole field. He begins at the foundation, and proceeds to the highest point.

I. Apostolic recollections. The first two verses carry us back to the apostle's first visit to Corinth, when he went as Christ's herald. He delights to recall the time of his "entrance"; and he finds it very necessary to go back to the beginning. He does not obtrude himself, or mention his doings, or parade either his feelings or his success. It is the gospel he brought to them that he recalls, especially when error is stealing in. He makes no appeal to self; he reminds them of his message. He puts the trumpet to his lips, and repeats the old note,—the good news. It was with the gospel that he came; it is to the gospel

that he would recall them,— the one same old gospel. But before re-stating it, he reminds them of its effects upon them...I preached, and ye received the good news! I held them out; ye took them! I spoke them; ye let them in! This was the simple process. No waiting, nor working, nor feeling, but simply receiving, as the thirsty man takes in the water, or the eye the beauty of the landscape. Then upon the receiving follows the standing, "in which ye have stood and are standing;" this "grace wherein ye stand;" "stand therefore;" be "steadfast." That on which we "stand" is the gospel; that which keeps us firm, free from stumbling or falling; that which keeps us erect and immoveable, is the gospel. This is our foundation, our anchor, our staff, our rock, our arm, our strong tower. By this, too, we are saved. There is salvation annexed to this gospel,—immediate, sure, everlasting. A Christian is a saved man! And he knows it! It is his belief of the gospel that saves him, that alone! Yes; he is saved at once, and saved for all eternity, and that simply in and by believing. But may not our believing be in vain? The apostle puts such a case, but only to reject it, and to demonstrate (as he does through the rest of the chapter) that this was an impossibility; for the foundation truth (Christ's resurrection) is established by infallible proofs, and therefore our faith is not in vain. This is the real meaning of the word "in vain"; as if he had said, "unless that which ye have believed has turned news out a fable." And this salvation is carried out in the simplest of all ways,—by keeping in memory that which was preached at first. A man is not saved by grasping the rope for a moment, if he let it go it will be of no avail. So here. These, then, are the only two possibilities of failure: (1) that the resurrection turns out a fable; (2) that we do not keep it in memory. How simple, how blessed! Could salvation be brought nearer or made freer?

Such are the apostle's reminiscences of his early ministry in Corinth;—all connected with the gospel, and the reception of it by the Corinthians. Blessed memories indeed! How full was his life of such.

II. The apostolic gospel. He now comes to the re-statement of the gospel; which gospel he briefly sums up in these three points.

(1.) He died for our sins according to the scriptures. It is "the Christ" that he speaks of,—Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God; He "died"; He died "for our sins"; He died "according to the scriptures." Each of these expressions help us to bring out the gospel. He died; and His death was the substitute for that of the sinner; He died, that we might not die; He was delivered for our offences; He suffered for sin, the just for the unjust,—as the whole word from the beginning had foretold.

(2.) He was buried. It was a true death that He died; such a death as needed a tomb. He did not see corruption, but He saw the tomb; He entered it; lay in it for three days. The grave of Jesus contains part of the good news.

(3.) He rose again the third day according to the scriptures. This is the crowning and sealing fact; it is the Father's testimony to the finished work to the acceptance of the sacrifice. This completes the good news. Christ is risen! God raised Him! Man crucified Him, but God raised Him. The wicked slew Him, the righteous buried Him, God raised Him.

These three facts contained the good news. Each is a vessel full of peace to the sinner. To know these facts is to be a saved man. What are these facts to us? Are they what they were to the early Christians? Are they fountains of living

water? Fragrant flowers? If not, why is it so? Are they not the same? Out of them the Corinthian sinners extracted peace and light, how is it that we do not do the same?

The preacher is nothing; the facts are everything; "whether it were I or they, so we preached, and so ye believed."

LXXVII.

The Advent, The Resurrection, And The Glory.

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under *him*, *it is* manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

1 Corinthians 15:23-28.

It is of resurrection that this whole chapter speaks. It begins with the risen Christ, and it ends with the risen church: "Christ the first fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming." "Pre-eminence" in all things belongs to Him; conformity to Him in that preeminence belongs to his saints: "We are a kind of first fruits of His creatures" (James 1:18).

Resurrection, then, is our hope. Not merely a happy immortality for the soul; but resurrection,—the "redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23). The cross has purchased resurrection for us; so that our "flesh rests in hope." The Lord's coming, not death, is our terminus or goal; for death is our enemy, Christ is our friend; death is loss, resurrection is gain.

Christ is risen! This is the announcement of the fact on which our faith rests. A risen Christ is our Redeemer. It is to the

fullness of a risen Christ that we go in our emptiness and sin. A risen Christ is the sum of our gospel, good news to the dead in sin.

We shall arise! This is the sure word of prophecy on which our hope rests. Our vile bodies shall be changed. This corruptible shall put on incorruption.

But, says our passage, "every one in his own order" (rank, or troop, a military expression); Christ the Captain, and each troop or regiment marching after their Captain; Christ the first-fruits, and then a long interval, already eighteen hundred years, and then they who are Christ's at His coming. Then after another interval, during which He is putting down all enemies, and consummating the kingdom, He shall present that kingdom to the Father in its perfection, having had all His enemies put under His feet. Of these enemies the last is death; and death shall then be swallowed up in this glorious victory of the great Captain, our risen Lord. For it is He who has overcome; and having overcome, points us to victory over the world and death. The first interval is the period from Christ's resurrection to His second coming. The second interval is His millennial reign, during which He brings all things into subjection. At the close of this reign, He presents the perfected kingdom to the Father, just as He presents to Himself the church without spot or wrinkle. All enemies shall be put under Him, and the victory which completes the whole will be that over death, the last enemy. Yet even then, when the Son shall have reached the highest point of dominion and glory, even then he shall retain that subjection to the Father which, as God-man, He exhibited on earth, as when He said, "My Father is greater than I,"[13] while also saying, "I and my Father are one." Thus the Son of God is not divested of His royalty, but rather confirmed in it; He does not put off His

crown when He presents the kingdom to the Father, but wears it for ever, as King of the universe, King of kings through all eternity; and yet while wearing it, making more fully manifest than ever has been done hitherto, that God is all in all. The completion of the work of Christ in the perfected kingdom hereafter, will be the full and glorious exhibition of Godhead to the universe. The man Christ Jesus as head over all things in heaven and in earth, instead of obscuring, will illustrate Godhead glory. He will be the eternal Mediator, the eternal channel of communication between Creator and creature, the everlasting link between heaven and earth, the security to redeemed creation that it shall never again fall or come under the curse, and the security to Godhead that the divine glory shall never again be eclipsed by sin or evil of any kind whatever.

Looking over this passage, we gather out of it such truths as the following:

I. Christ's resurrection. The apostle throughout the chapter lays great stress on this. Christ's death was not the completion of the good news. The cross was not the whole of that gospel which was preached by the apostles. He rose again! With this message the apostles went forth to Jew and Gentile. This was the summing up of the glad tidings; it was the filling up of the revelation of God's free love.

II. The resurrection of His saints. He took them up to His cross with Him; He took them down to His grave with Him; and He brought them up again along with Himself. His resurrection was virtually theirs, though separated by an interval of time. They shall arise, because He arose. It is to this that we look forward; not to death and the grave; but beyond these, to resurrection. We shall arise; this is our hope.

Each particle of precious dust shall come up again and take on glory. This corruptible shall put on incorruption. This vile body shall be changed.

III. The Lord's coming. "They that are Christ's at His coming." He shall come again; that same Jesus who departed. To this very earth He shall come. He shall come for His own. He shall come as the Resurrection and the Life; He shall come as the last Adam, the quickening Spirit; He shall come in His glory; He shall come to make all things new.

IV. The kingdom. He comes not only to raise His saints, but also to destroy His enemies. He comes with the iron rod to break kings in pieces as a potter's vessel; to smite Antichrist; to avenge the blood of saints; to have all things put under His feet; to take and wear the crown; to perfect the kingdom.

V. The death of death. This is the last of His enemies. It was the first (next to Satan), and has devoured the bodies of His saints for thousands of years; it has come, as the king of terrors, to each son of Adam. And He reserves its destruction to the last. He holds it up to view as His great enemy, and then, along with the grave, casts it into the lake of fire.

VI. The glory of the Son. This millennial reign, of which the apostle speaks, is the day of His glory. He has been glorified in heaven; He shall then be glorified on earth,—glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe. To Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess.

VII. The glory of Godhead. "That God may be all in all." How this is to be, we know not. But it is to be in connection with Christ, the King, and His perfected kingdom; in connection

with His work, and reign, and glory. It is through Him that God shall be glorified as "all in all."

Man of God, Is your eye on these things? Does the prospect gladden and influence you? Are you of one mind with God in regard to them; adopting His views, falling in with His plans, and recognizing His purpose, both in regard to the present and the future of our world? Or are you carried away with human ideas of "progress," self-regeneration, and self-enlightenment; dazzled with theories of "advanced politics" and "developed liberalism," from which all reference to the glory of Christ has been eliminated; won over into admiration of man's intellect, or philosophy, or statesmanship, as if these would suffice for the counteraction of Satan's subtleties, or the repression of human sin,—as if by these, earth's rebel kingdoms could be rightly ruled, without the Bible, and without that "Spirit of counsel and of might"(Isaiah 11:2), who alone can give wisdom for righteous legislation and holy government.

LXXVII.

The Sufferings And The Consolation.

"The sufferings of Christ abound in us."—

2 Corinthians 1:5.

The following paraphrase will help to bring out the meaning of this large passage concerning sorrow, and sympathy, and consolation. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are (and have been) comforted of God. For as Christ's sufferings overflow to us (like a river swelling over till they reach us, so that we get these overflowings, Colossians 1:24), so our consolation also overflows through Christ. Whether, then, we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is accomplished in (or by) the patient endurance of the same sufferings as we ourselves suffer; or whether we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope regarding you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so also shall ye be of the consolation."

Here are several striking expressions worthy of being noted, such as, "the God of all comfort;" "He comforteth us in all our tribulation;" "the comfort wherewith we are comforted of God," "partakers (partners) of Christ's sufferings;" "partakers (partners) of the consolation." On these, however, we do not dwell.

Our cross is not the same as Christ's, yet we have a cross. Our sufferings are not the same as Christ's, yet we have sufferings. The cross is like Christ's, and the sufferings are like His, but yet not the same in kind or object. Our cross is the shadow of His; our sufferings the overflowings of His. Yet there is a wide difference; for our trials have nothing to do with expiation. That was His work alone. He finished that on His cross when there "by Himself He purged our sins," leaving no part of the sacrifice uncompleted. The sacrifice was finished on Calvary. There the blood was shed which reconciles, and purges, and saves. After that there remains only its acceptance by God, and its application to the sinner upon believing.

But it is not of the likeness or unlikeness between our sufferings and those of Christ that we would speak, but simply of the meaning and use of trial. It needs to be interpreted to us, for often we misunderstand and pervert it.

I. It shews God to be in earnest with us. He does not let us alone. He takes great pains with our spiritual education and training. He desires fruit and progress. Therefore He prunes His vines and chastens His sons. He is no careless Father.

II. It assures us of His love. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." This was said to Laodicea, the worst of the seven churches, of whom the Master has not one good word to speak, and of which we may affirm that, judging from appearances, it had become totally worldly. Yet to Laodicea God speaks of His love, and announces chastisement as a proof of His love to her! Truly many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it.

III. It draws prayer to us. When one member suffers all the others suffer with it. As soon as it is said, "such a brother or sister is in sorrow," all who hear of this begin to pray for the afflicted one. Thus sorrow becomes a magnet which attracts the prayers of the church. It is God's prayer-bell, which whosoever heareth should immediately begin to plead for the sufferer.

IV. It knits us in sympathy to the whole body. There is but one body, past, present, and to come, the church from the beginning. It has been an ailing body, a suffering church. Were we exempt from trial, we should be out of harmony with the body to which we belong. But when sorrow comes, we are made to feel communion with the whole body, and to know that we are part of a great community of sufferers of all ages.

V. It teaches us sympathy with brethren. We cannot properly feel for others without having passed through sorrow. It is sorrow that creates or calls up the sympathetic feeling. Having tasted the cup, we know its bitterness, and feel for those who are called to drink it. Having known the cross, and the sharpness of its nails, we sympathize with them on whom we see it laid, and whose flesh we see pierced by the like nails that wounded ours.

VI. It brings us into a mood more receptive of blessing. It makes our spirits tender; it softens our hearts; it makes our consciences alive; it empties us of adverse influences; it makes us willing to receive and to learn; it breaks our stubborn wills; it makes us say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.

VII. It makes us prize the word. The Bible assumes a new aspect to us. All else darkens; but it brightens. It is like the sky at night when the stars appear, which were hidden by the day. How precious the word becomes! Each verse acquires new meaning; each promise sparkles with double light; each word of grace seems doubly gracious and suitable.

VIII. It shuts out the world. It all at once draws a curtain round us, and the world becomes invisible. The fairest things of a fair world lose their fairness and become dim. We are alone with our sorrow, or rather alone with God. What is the world to a man whose soul is filled with a sorrow which the world cannot heal?

IX. It bids us look up. Set your affection on things above. Look upwards now; the objects that drew your gaze downwards are vanishing away. Earth is fast becoming a blank; heaven is now all. You have nothing to expect here. All is vanity. Paradise and its dwellers are real and true. There is no sorrow there.

X. It turns our hope to the Lord's great coming. There is really nothing at any time worth caring for on this side the coming. But we often need sorrow to shew us this. Then when the trial comes we turn to that blessed hope, and find in it all we need for consolation, and strength, and glory. "Comfort one another with these words."

LXXIX.

The Power Of Christ's Resurrection.

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh."—

2 Corinthians 4:10, 11.

The old warrior, who has passed through many fights, carries about with him his scars, as memorials of his battles, evidences both of danger and deliverance. So Paul said, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." He was "in deaths oft"; "alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake"; "I die daily." The old warrior will narrate to you the history of every wound; pointing to each in succession he will say, this was Waterloo, this was Spain, this was Sebastopol, this was Lucknow. So Paul, pointing to his scars, could say this was Antioch, this was Iconium, this was Lystra, this was Philippi, this was Damascus, this was Jerusalem. Thus he describes his life, "in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft," &c. (2 Corinthians 11:23-27).

It is of this constant exposure to death that he is speaking in our text. Every part of his body, from head to foot, bore marks of death; the rods, the stones, the chains, the stocks, these were imprinted on his body; as seals both of death and life. We can imagine, too, his lean, pale, weather-beaten face and form; all telling of his encounters with hardship, danger, death, in an hundred forms. Did all these speak merely of his

endurance and bravery and patience and martyr-spirit? No, they told of the life which was sustaining him; a life beyond his own; a life super-human, super-angelic, nay, divine; the life of Christ; a life which sustains and invigorates, not the body only, but the soul as well. It is this life which keeps alive the spark, which a whole ocean with all its storms is seeking to quench. No life, but that of Christ—the mighty life of the God-man— all-sustaining, irresistible, irrepressible, unquenchable, could accomplish this. It is only such a life that can do battle victoriously with such death as is in us and around us.

The life here spoken of is not the substitutional or sacrificial; at least not in the substitutional or sacrificial aspects. It is life as a root, or fountain, or vital power. It is not a life given for us, but a life given to us. It is the life of the risen Christ; resurrection life, His risen life deposited as in a vessel for us, and shewing out all its fullness in the counteraction of the death which is in us, and around us. It is in reference to this life that the apostle reasons, "If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life"; that is, if a dying Christ did so much for us, what will not a living Christ do? Let us look then at this vessel and its contents; this well and its life-giving water. "Truly it has been said, Christ is life, others only live." Mark this "life of Christ."

I. It is large. The vessel is capacious; and its contents are commensurate with its capacity. The amount of life contained in the vessel is infinite; and being infinite, it assures us that no amount of death, or danger, or weakness on our part, can prove too great for it to counteract and overcome. O vastness, O infinity of life, what is there that thou canst not do for us? What is the extent of death, in a human soul or

body, when compared with this life divine? Good news indeed!

II. It is constant. This life is not fitful. It does not come in tides, ebbing and flowing; nor in seasons, sometimes winter, and again summer; nor in alternations, as day and night. It is continuous, unbroken, ever flowing. It is the river which ceases not. It is the deep well which never runs dry. It is the fresh clear atmosphere which always surrounds us, and which we breathe every moment. It is like Himself, the unchanging one; the same yesterday, today, and forever. O ever-constant life! Ever full and running over! That knowest no drought, no break, no change! Surely we were not meant to be the fitful changeful beings that we are! With such a life, should we not be calm and constant?

III. It is free. Priceless in every sense it is. Without price, and beyond price! "Free" is the word inscribed on this divine vessel. No condition, no merit, no price! The life is a gift; and that gift is absolutely and unconditionally free. All that the vessel contains of life for the dead, or dying, is as free as God Himself can make it. God interposes no limitation, no restriction, no purchase. He who would clog the gift with any price or condition, is a rejecter of the gift, and a disbeliever in the love of the giver. It comes to us without money; we come to it without merit. O life-giving energy of the Son of God, how free art thou!

IV. It is suitable. It takes up every act of our being, and extends to every region, every circumstance, of our life. It pours itself into every faculty, and feeling, and organ. It meets us at every point. It brings forth from its unsearchable riches the very things that we require in every exigency. In Paul's case, it was the body that it so specially suited;

meeting as by a miracle every emergency of disease or danger; not simply like an impenetrable shield, interposed toward off some mortal stroke, but an inward virtue or power, making the man himself impenetrable and invulnerable; nay, infusing new life where death sought to come. It not merely flings off death, but pours in life; and the man at whom the deadly stroke is aimed, rises not merely unwounded, but quickened, and refreshed! Who is there amongst us whose case is not met by this manifold life?

V. It is powerful. Omnipotence is in it. It is not the mere skill of the physician, or the efficacy of his medicines (a thing of experiment or probability). But it is the irresistible power of a divine vitality, which no kind nor amount of creature-death can neutralize or conquer. The power of the life of Christ was that which specially came forth in the history of the apostle, when every step was on the edge of death; so that any one looking at him, and knowing his daily history, would say, "his life is a miracle," and "what a life must that be which keeps that man alive, which prevents him from going down to the pit"! It is life-giving, comforting, reviving, healing power. O mighty life of the risen Christ! O all-quickening, all-invigorating life! What a fountain head of vital power art thou to us still, in this daily battle between life and death!

VI. It is available. We might say, it is placed at our disposal, and within our reach. It is not in the heavens, that we should have to ascend thither; it is not in the depths that we should have to dig down thither. It is nigh; it is the nearest thing in the universe; as near as He is in whom we live and move and have our being. How it pours itself into us we know not. It has a thousand channels, and will make itself known in a thousand ways; being administered and applied by the Holy Ghost. It quickens at first; it quickens to the last. It pours

itself in through faith; through the word; through prayer; through praise; through the sacraments. We are surrounded by this mighty life. It is within us; it is around us; a well of water springing up into everlasting life. It makes our life a continual resurrection. Like Abraham, we lay our life (as he did Isaac) on the altar; like Abraham, we receive it again from the dead. We live in, and through the living one. Because He lives, we live also. Our life is hid with Christ in God. Christ Himself is our life.

LXXX.

God Beseeching Men.

And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

2 Corinthians 5:18-21.

The words, "all things are of God," mean evidently, "all these things are of God;" for the apostle is not speaking generally of God being all in all; but of all the things connected with the new creation. These are all of Him, and through Him, and to Him; originating with and carried out by Him. Thus the fountainhead of the new creation is like that of the Old, in God. The plan, the means, the execution, the consummation, are entirely divine.

This new creation lies at the foundation of our relationship to God; it is something very thorough and decided; a divine process; a being "in Christ"; a passing away of old things; a making all things new.

How is this begun and carried out? By reconciliation. How is this reconciliation carried out? By an embassy of peace direct

from God himself. On what does this embassy base itself? On substitution,—"the just for the unjust."

I. The reconciliation. The beginning of our new relation is bringing us into peace with Himself. Distance, alienation, enmity, condemnation,— these are the main features of our natural condition. God proceeds to reverse all these; bringing us nigh; removing the estrangement and enmity; setting us free from the condemnation. In this we have the renewal of our unfallen state of holy friendship, as well as closer and dearer intimacy. Separation from God is to be exchanged for union; nearness for distance; love for wrath; forgiveness for condemnation. God and the sinner are made one; the prodigal leaves the far country; restored to his Father's arms and his Father's house. All past variances are forgotten; the quarrel is removed; the friendship cemented, sealed, secured forever. All God's love pours into the sinner; all his love pours into God. It is not the reconciliation of Joseph and his brethren, in which the latter still felt doubtful of the perpetuity of their brother's favor; it is complete and absolute; perfect love casting out fear. Nor is it the reconciliation of David to Absalom, in which the latter, though forgiven his offence, had to dwell at a distance, and saw not the king's face; it is reconciliation which brings the alienated one into the city, and presence, and palace of the King. It is complete and eternal.

II. The embassy. The ambassador is one who has himself been reconciled; neither an angel, who does not need reconciliation, and therefore could not tell out all its meaning and love; nor an unreconciled man, who has never tasted the blessedness, and therefore cannot speak of what he knows, nor point to himself as one who is a specimen of reconciling love. But a reconciled man,—"All these things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself." Having reconciled them

personally to Himself He commits to them the "word," "ministry," of reconciliation; constituting them His ambassadors, and sending them out on their embassy. Mark here, then:

(1.) The word of reconciliation. It is, "that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This is the gospel or good news of God's free pardon, or non-imputation of sin, and forgiving love.

(2.) The ministry of reconciliation. That is the office of dispensing the pardon. Pharaoh would send out the good news of the plenty in the storehouse of Egypt; and announce that it was to be got through and from Joseph. So does God as to the fullness of Christ.

(3.) The footing of the ambassador. He is an ambassador for Christ. He speaks in Christ's name and with Christ's authority, telling of Him, and saying what Christ would say were He here.

(4.) The manner of approaching the alienated sinner. Not by command or threat, but by entreaty and exhortation, for such is the force of the words, "As though God did exhort and entreat you by us, we pray you." What earnestness of pleading do these words imply! What depth of desire for the accomplishment of the reconciliation and of longing for their welfare! What gentleness, what patience, what perseverance! On bended knee, like a suppliant before a king, the apostle makes his suit to the sinner!

(5.) The identification of God and Christ with the ambassador, in this entreaty. He intimates that it is not so much he who is

speaking as God; it is God who is exhorting; it is not the voice of a fellow man but of God. He intimates also that the Son as well as the Father is in all this: "We pray men in Christ's stead." The expression denotes two things: (1) that he is representing Christ; (2) that he is serving him. And the words, "Be ye reconciled to God," sound like a quotation; as if Christ had given him this very message; and as if it were meant that we should regard them as Christ's own words, no less literally than, "Come unto me." This, then, is God's exhortation, and Christ's prayer or entreaty to the sons of men, "the world." It is our message, with which we are to go up to every man, "Be thou reconciled to God"; a personal message, as personal to each as if he were the only man upon the earth.

(II.) The Substitution. We do not enter on this, but simply point to it as the basis of all reconciliation, without which it would be vain to approach a sinner; for it must be a righteous reconciliation if it is to effect anything at all. We preach Christ the Sin bearer; and pointing to His cross, we pray men in His name, "Be ye reconciled to God."

LXXXI.

The Exchange Between The Sinful And The Sinless.

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."—

2 Corinthians 5:21.

In shewing favor to a criminal, an earthly sovereign must consider whether he can do so (1) without loss of character; (2) without breach of law; (3) without encouragement to crime; (4) without infringement or compromise of government. All these things have been amply provided for in the divine scheme of pardon; that scheme being the embodiment of such provision,—not only containing the prevention of any such wrongs to God and to His universe, but the development of principles and the revelation of facts, which far more than compensate for threatened evils, and bring immense glory to God and His government, out of that which otherwise would have been big with dishonour and confusion.

That scheme is announced in these words, "He hath made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made (or be, or become) the righteousness of God in Him." Thus God is just, and the justifier of the unjust. Here are two special points: (1) The sinless one made sin for the sinful; (2) the unrighteous becoming the righteousness of God in the righteous One.

I. The sinless One made sin for the Sinful. He was "without sin;" He "knew no sin;" not the shadow of evil was to be

found in Him; He was the "righteous one," the "holy one," the "Lamb without blemish, and without spot ;" altogether perfect, yet partaker of our very flesh, our true humanity; very man, of the substance of the virgin, partaker of the dust of earth, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, still sinless in the entirest sense of that word; loving righteousness and hating iniquity, this sinless One was made sin, made sin by God: "He hath made Him sin." The connection between Him and sin, between Him and the sinner, was one made, constituted by God. It was the Lord that laid our iniquity upon Him (Isaiah 53:6); that bruised Him and put Him to grief; that made His soul an offering for sin (Isaiah 53:10); that made Him a curse for us (Galatians 3:13). Our guilt was transferred to Him by God, and He was treated as if He were really the doer of it all. God "spared Him not, but delivered Him up" (Romans 8:32). In the Psalms He confesses our sin as if it were His own (see 38., 40, 69); during His life He acted as one shut out because of guilt; at His trial He was dumb, and answered not a word; on the cross He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." It is not merely that He was made a sin-offering, but he was "made sin," as if no words could fully express the closeness of His connection with our transgressions. He was treated as a sinner from His cradle to His cross. His was a vicarious life and a vicarious death. It was this that made Him the man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. On no other ground can we account for His profound and life-long sorrow, save that all His life long He was bearing sin for us,—He was being led as a lamb to the slaughter; and this leading to the slaughter was the real meaning of His sorrowful and burdened life. He was moving to the altar with the sins of His church upon Him; He was going to the cross, laden all through with this infinite burden which was laid upon Him, when He took flesh by the power of the Holy Ghost. As sacrifice, burnt-offering, sin-offering,

trespass offering, substitute, surety, sin-bearer, we find Him here on earth, till He had finished the work which was given Him to do, till He had by Himself purged our sins (Hebrew 1:2). Men call this a "fiction," or a "make believe;" it is the truth of God, with which the whole Bible is full,—the transference of our human guilt to our divine Substitute, that He might bear it all for us,—the transference of legal condemnation and divine displeasure from us to Him, that only acquittal, and pardon, and favor and love might belong to us.[14] "Thy wrath lieth hard upon me" (Psalm 88:7), are the words of the Sin-bearer; and that this was felt in a measure all His life through (though consummated on the cross), is shewn by what follows : "I am afflicted and ready to die ("sorrowful unto death") from my youth up" (Psalm 88:15). The sinless One made sin for the sinful is the pervading doctrine of both Testaments; such books as Leviticus and the Epistle to the Hebrews are unintelligible otherwise. It is this that so strongly and awfully establishes the doctrine of eternal recompense for sin. If sin deserves no eternal wrath, what an unmeaning thing is this divine sin-bearing! What a gratuitous expenditure of labour, and suffering, and death.

II. The unrighteousness becoming the righteousness of God in the righteous One. The name of our Substitute is, "Jehovah our Righteousness"; and the justifying righteousness is called by an apostle, "the righteousness of Him who is our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1). Thus the "righteousness of God" amid the "righteousness of Christ" are declared to be the same, and our common use of the expression, "the righteousness of Christ," is amply vindicated from the cavils of Socinians and others of like mind. Luther exhorted the brethren to learn, as their constant song of praise, "Lord Jesus, thou art my righteousness, and I thy sin." So must we,

if we would enjoy Luther's doctrine, his twofold teaching, "That a man is justified by faith, and that he is to know that he is justified." We are "unrighteous." There is no question as to that. Yet, says the apostle, "We become (not merely "righteous," but) the righteousness of God," in this righteous One. What is ours passes over to Him; what is His passes over to us. We become righteousness! As if, from the moment that we believe God's testimony to the righteous One and His work, we and righteousness become one and the same thing. So completely are we justified, and lifted up into the same righteous level or standing which the righteous One himself occupies in the sight of God. Thus are we "complete in Him,"—"found in Him,"—recognized as one with Him in righteousness, and entitled to possess all He possesses. What a transference! And how simply effected! Receive the Father's testimony to the righteousness of the beloved Son, and all that righteousness becomes yours! O man, canst thou refuse an exchange like this? A salvation so complete, so perfect and divine.

Yes; "It is finished!" On the cross it was finished. Then the blood was shed with which the sinner is sprinkled and purged in conscience; and all that followed (both resurrection and ascension) assumed the completion of the great sacrifice on Golgotha. Then the righteousness was finished also, in virtue of which we are "accepted in the Beloved." During all the preceding ages the voice of each sacrifice laid on the altar, morning and evening, was, "It is not finished;" but then the one voice of the one Sacrifice proclaimed before earth and heaven, "It is finished." Nothing was from that moment to be added to it or taken from it. All was done.

It is the ministry of this "righteousness" that is now preached to the unrighteous. There are many "ministries." There is the

ministry of "the word" (Acts 6:4); the ministry of "the grace" (Acts 20:24); the ministry of "the reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18); the ministration of "the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:8). There is also the ministry of "the righteousness" (2 Corinthians 3:9). Righteousness for the unrighteous is God's message to the world; righteousness for those whose only qualification is, that they need it; righteousness to the most unrighteous of the sons of men; for it is to the wretched prodigal, the wanderer in the far country, that the Father says, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him."

In Jesus, the sinner's substitute, we have "the perfect One." God sees perfection in Him. But this perfection, while it detects and condemns our imperfection, provides also for its forgiveness. It is by means of this perfection that God is enabled to deal in love with our imperfection, however great and manifold it may be. The good swallows up the evil, and yet is not tainted thereby. The sinner hands over his sins to the perfect One; and the perfect One hands over His perfection to the sinner. Thus, by reason of this blessed transference or exchange, the imperfect one becomes as the perfect One in the sight of God, and is dealt with as such in regard to all favor and blessing. Perfection covers imperfection, and the believing sinner stands "complete" in the perfect One: "accepted in the Beloved." Crediting God's testimony to the perfect One, and His perfect sacrifice, we stand before God on a new footing,—as men who have "become the righteousness of God in Him,"—and who now get life, and peace, and pardon, and blessing, simply because the perfect One has deserved it for them. We have all in Him.

LXXXII.

The Strength Of Weakness.

"For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God: far we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you."—

2 Corinthians 13:4.

The cross has many aspects, and embodies marvelous truths; all these connected with the Son of God. We learn much of Him in looking to that cross, and reading all its mysteries. No wonder that Paul should so glory in that cross. It contains so much of that which meets the whole case of every needy sinner. It brings out so much of the riches of the grace of God and exhibits to us, in Him who was crucified, the free love of God, that free and perfect love which casteth out fear. The cross contains peace, and the sight of the cross draws forth that peace, and fills our souls with it. The cross contains health, and the sight of it brings all that health into us. The cross is like the sun in the sky, which contains everything which our earth needs for light, and warmth, and health, and gladness. We look, and we are saved. We look, and we are comforted. There is the blood of the great sin-offering, the blood that cleanseth from all sin. There is the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. There is the well of living water, springing up into everlasting life. That cross is both death and life; condemnation and pardon, weakness and strength, shame and glory. It kills, and makes alive; it wounds, and it heals. It is wrath, and it is love; it is terror, and it is tenderness; it is righteousness, and it is grace. It is Satan's victory, and it is Satan's overthrow; it is the world's triumph, and it is the world's destruction. It saves in crucifying, and it

crucifies in saving. All hell is there, and all heaven is there; rebellion is there, and reconciliation is there. That cross seems the embodiment of man's unpardonable sin, and consequent rejection and banishment; yet it is the embodiment of an eternal pardon, the meeting-place between God and the sinner, the link that is to bind earth and heaven together for evermore.

But in the passage here, the apostle specially refers to the cross as the manifestation of weakness and of power; the meaning of the statements as follows,—“I the preacher of a crucified Christ am a weak man, but in being so, I am the more like Him whom I preach. He was crucified through weakness; such was the extremity of His weakness that He died under it; He made no use of His divine strength, but gave Himself to His enemies, to be by them crucified and slain His crucifixion was the exhibition of weakness, not of strength; yet He was raised again from the dead by power, the power of God; in the extremity of His weakness, power came in from another quarter. God raised Him up, and highly exalted Him. And as in His cross we see this combination of weakness and strength,—personal weakness and divine strength,—so we see the same in ourselves. We are men utterly without power in ourselves, yet we have the power of God working in us and for us.”

This, then, was the apostle's consolation. He was like His Master, weak yet strong, weak in Himself, but strong in God. This was the apostle's triumph, personal weakness attracting to himself divine strength, so that the weaker he was and the emptier, the more the opportunity was afforded for the display of the power of God,—power in weakness, as in the case of his crucified Lord. Thus he knew his Master better than he could otherwise have done; and thus the world was

made to know that Master (through the servant's weakness) better than it could otherwise have done.

Such is the church's true position in the world. That of weakness. That which she is to exhibit is the power of weakness; and the moment she loses sight of this she gives up her great testimony, and ceases to walk in apostolic footsteps, and as the follower of Him who was crucified through weakness. Ambition, covetousness of power, dread of personal weakness; unbelief of the divine power, which is placed at faith's disposal,—these have oftentimes utterly demoralized the church of God, and made her a poor earthly company, a mere worldly corporation, elated by position, or wealth, or influence, or learning, or intellect, and not knowing that she was poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked. She wanted to be something, where her Master was nothing, and so she did no work for Him. She got what she desired of earthly organization, and bulk, and importance, but the consequence was bareness of soul; she was great among the great, learned among the learned, powerful among the powerful, but she wrought no deliverance in the earth. She was ashamed of the cross and its weakness, and so forfeited her true power, her heavenly standing, her divine influence.

Our own true personal experience is like that of the apostle,—weakness,—in all that the world calls strength,—but drawing in supplies of strength, for work or for suffering, from a fountain of which the world knows nothing. "When I am weak, then am I strong" Let us be content to be weak. Let us glory in weakness. When used by faith, weakness is the mightiest thing on earth; for it affords room for God, and the power of God to work. As in a vacuum, the air rushes in from all sides, so with our weakness, the mighty power of God

rushes in to supply it. Thus we are strong, as He was who was crucified through weakness, but who liveth by the power of God.

LXXXIII.

Apostolic Blessing.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen."

2 Corinthians 13:14.

This is one of Paul's fullest blessings; none could be fuller; for it takes us to the divine fountainhead, and opens upon us the threefold spring of heaven, bidding it gush forth upon us in all its fullness. He takes us to a greater rock than that of Horeb, and touching it with his rod, calls on the water to pour itself out, not in one channel, but in a threefold course, and with a threefold fullness. All heaven is in this wondrous blessing; all Godhead is here, with the infinite and everlasting stores of Father, Son, and Spirit.

The order of the persons is not here the same as usual; perhaps to teach us, that in so far as blessing is concerned, that order is unimportant, and that we may go to any of the three persons for blessing without respect of order; or perhaps because Paul began with the usual form, "the grace of Christ," and then went on to the others; for generally he blesses them in the name of the Lord Jesus alone. Beginning with Christ, he goes on to the rest. In this full blessing the apostle's heart flowed out to these beloved Corinthians. For what could he say more? What could he ask more?

If Father, Son, and Spirit communicate their fullness, is not that enough? Our poverty, our narrowness, our worthlessness, our want, our sin, are nothing in the way of drawback or hindrance. Nay, their greatness does but the

more magnify and draw out the resources of the infinite Jehovah, all whose stores are thus placed at our disposal, and within our reach. The depth and breadth of the river's channel do but display the more the vastness and the brightness of that water which fills it; and that water, descending from the clouds in snow or rain, is inexhaustible. The creature's or the sinner's wants are but occasions for unfolding the riches of the love of God.

Now, let us mark the three points in this blessing. Yet in doing so, notice that the apostle specifies nothing in these three petitions. Elsewhere he does. He asks, for instance, joy and peace; he asks an increase of faith and comprehension; he asks light and wisdom; he asks comfort and strength. Here he specifies nothing; and yet he asks for more than if he had done so. All that the grace of Christ can give; all that the love of God can give; all that the communion of the Spirit can give,— all that can be given! What a prayer! What a blessing! Amen! So let it be.

I. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a frequent prayer of the apostle for the brethren. The free favor of our Lord and Master rest upon you; of Him in whose favor is life; of Him who is full of grace and truth (Romans 16:20, 24, I Corinthians 16:23). His favor! Yes; that is enough; for all heaven is in it. He on whom that favour rests, has all the sunshine of heaven compassing him about. That favor is presented in all its gladness to each one of us. Will you have the favor of Christ? He is willing to bestow it; and he who consents to take it, gets it at once. It is pressing for entrance into our souls, like the light which is beating on our windows every morning. Let it in. You need no more to make a heaven upon earth. You may not have man's favor,—and you certainly shall have Satan's hatred,—but if you have this

heavenly favor; you need no other. If you have this love, then the darkness is past, and the true light shineth; the day has broken, and the shadows fled away. O grace of our Lord Jesus Christ! What can we lack if we have thee? And which of all the dark, sorrowful sinners of earth can need be without thee? Does not Jesus say to thee, O man, come unto me?

II. The love of God. The word love expresses something yet wider, fuller, deeper, than grace. God is love; and thus it is the very thing which belongs so peculiarly to God,—this divine, perfect, glorious love, that is here pleaded for in our behalf; not simply favor but love,—full-hearted, overflowing love; love which not only secures against all possible evil, but bestows truly and only good,—the best of the best,—that which God himself selects as His choicest gifts for His beloved ones; for our name is, "Beloved of God" (Romans 1:7). It is as if he had said, All heaven, and no more than all heaven, be with you; that which gladdens angels, and pours sunshine over the universe, be with you. Of this deep deep well of love let us be ever drinking; in this bright sunshine of love let us be ever basking; in this fair heaven of love let us be ever dwelling. We have much of it here, we shall have more of it hereafter. Amen!

III. The communion of the Holy Ghost. The word communion means, partnership; or it may signify that fullness of which we are partners; that communicated or distributed fullness which dwells in the Holy Spirit, and which flows out of Him to us. In and through the Holy Ghost we have the community of feeling and of possession,—that common property of all things which is our heritage, as men believing in the name of the Son of God. All that is in the Father and in the Son,—all that is in Godhead flows out to us through the Holy Ghost. This is the ever-welling fountain out of which not only is the soul's thirst

quenched, but by means of which it is filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

(1.) What joy and peace are here. The threefold joy and peace coming from Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This is our daily portion, our life-long possession, our eternal heritage. Let us enter into it more and more fully each day. It is enough; and he who has it, hungers no more, neither thirsts any more.

(2.) What consolation is here. We need consolation in this troubled, stormy, sorrowful world. We need to hear, "Comfort ye," from the lips of God, for it is through much tribulation that we must enter the kingdom. There are many points at which the comfort pours in, many minor sources from which it flows. But here is the great fountain of divine consolation.

(3.) What power for work is here. Here is the secret of our strength in all work, or endurance, or suffering for God. Grace, love, and communion! And all this every moment. What influence over others will this give us! How it will make our faces shine! How it will purify and transform us! Let our daily life be that of men who possess all this fullness.

Footnotes

[1] The expression in Mark (1:12) "driveth" is not a correct rendering. The word ἐχζαλλω often means simply leading or causing to go forth, as John 10:4, "He putteth forth his own sheep."

[2] "In Malan's eyes to believe was no act. 'To believe does not give any trouble,' are his very words..'We must believe without striving.'" Life of Caesar Malan, p. 224. Truly faith is the cessation of effort and of work. It is repose, not energy. It is the simple recognition of that which is done. Effort is the attempt of the natural man to make up for the want of faith.

[3] "Unworthy of," or unmeet for; that is, those who did not need life, and whom it did not suit. Thus the Jew is represented as saying, "That life is not the thing for us; nor are we the persons for it."

[4] Or, "as many as were ordained, believed unto eternal life." Time words admit of either order, yet with the same meaning.

[5] See chap. 4:18, "Nor to teach in the name of Jesus." It is ἐπι τῷ ὀνόματι "over the name"; that name being the text or theme which formed the substance of their teaching.

[6] More exactly it should be rendered, "there stood by me this night the angel of that God whose I am, and whom I serve." How solemnly must these words have sounded in the ears of the Roman soldiers and Egyptian sailors, and the passengers from the various heathen nations around!

[7] That is, the present love of God to us, poured into us, is the pledge of the fulfillment of the hope hereafter. Then the apostle gives the proofs of God's love, in His gift of Christ to us.

[8] The expression, "not willing," would imply that the present state of things is not in accordance with the original constitution of creation. Creation's "reluctance" intimates that the primal course of "nature" is at present inverted,—the wheels reversed,—and the system itself not working out its original end. Hence many of what we call "laws of nature" (such as those of disease, and decay, and death), are not really such, or only partially so. The *vis naturae* was meant for good, not for evil; whereas in many cases, it is just now for evil, and not for good; or at best it is so feeble as to be unable to do battle with the virus of evil which has been injected by time fall.

[9] Heart simply means the inner man as contrasted with the outer. It does not refer to the feelings or affections, as if belief and love were the same.

[10] Perhaps the words simply mean, "in conformity with," or "according to," or "in fulfillment of," the gospel which I preach; not "through the instrumentality." Thus "the word of the truth of the gospel," is the rule or model of our establishing.

[11] They who think that all New Testament saints stand on higher ground than those of the Old, must be at a loss to understand how such men as Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, can be lower than those who are only "saved so as by fire." How these barely saved ones can be exalted above prophets and righteous men, is not easy to see.

[12] The New Testament word "church" is taken from the Old. "Church of the Lord," "church of the saints," &c., are Old Testament expressions which the Holy Spirit has employed in the New to denote sometimes the "church visible," sometimes the "church invisible." It is a mistake of great ignorance to affirm that "church" is a New Testament word or thing.

[13] The rendering should be, not "then shall the Son also be subject,"— but, "even then;" when at the height of His glory and dominion, the Son shall retain His subject condition as the Sent of the Father.

[14] Luther's words are very strong on these points. His troubled conscience found in the substitution of the just for the unjust its only refuge. It is the callous conscience that denies substitution. It does not feel sin, and does not care for that which can alone give relief. *Nos debemus involvere Christum, et involutum cognoscere, ut carne et sanguine, ita peccatis, maledictione, morte et omnibus malis nostris...quaecunque peccata ego, tu, et nos omnes fecimus, et in futurum faciemus tam propria sunt Christo quam si ea ipse fecisset.* —On Galatians 3:13.