



ESTABLISHED TESTIMONY.

BY
THOMAS BRADBURY

ESTABLISHED TESTIMONY.

TWELVE DISCOURSES

BY

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"He established a testimony in Jacob." - PSALM LXXVIII. 5.

London:

PUBLISHING COMMITTEE, C/O THE ROBINSON PRINTING
COMPANY, LTD., 39, DUKE STREET, BRIGHTON.
1902,

BRIGHTON:

THE ROBINSON PRINTING COMPANY, LIMITED,
DUKE STREET.

Preface

OUR God is immutable. His Word is infallible. He is pleased to convey this incorruptible seed to His loved ones in the times of His own appointing. This testimony of eternal love is confirmed, established, sure, by the Glorifier of the Father's Christ.

He thus secures to Himself a people in the earth to all generations. His truth and His people are, like Himself, age-enduring. It is our mercy to know that God's testimony of grace is with Jacob—with those who know themselves utterly unworthy and vile, yet graced in the Beloved.

Weakness is ours; strength is His. We fade; His testimony is ever fresh and green. Increasing weakness and felt inability compel me, with this volume, to cease my monthly communications with the Lord's own, far and near. God bless them all.

"AND NOW, BRETHREN, I COMMEND YOU TO GOD, AND TO THE WORD OF HIS GRACE, WHICH IS ABLE TO BUILD YOU UP, AND TO GIVE YOU AN INHERITANCE AMONG ALL THEM WHICH ARE SANCTIFIED" (Acts XX. 32).

THOMAS BRADBURY.

Grove Chapel, Camberwell,
December, 1902.

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TO MY DEAR WIFE,

ANN,

FOR MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY
MY UNFAILING COMPANION AND COUNSELLOR:
THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED,
WITH GOD-GIVEN GRATITUDE AND LOVE.

PROV. XXXI. 26-28.

T. B.

"If We Confess."

*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,
and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

—I John i. 9.

A subject of vast and vital importance lies before us. It is one in which we are each and all personally interested. I would rather say, a succession of subjects is presented to our view. They appear and rouse the interest of all - who are described therein, and, I am sure, I desire for all here present the enjoyment of the precious privileges thus brought to light. None but living souls, whose life is Christ, can truly appreciate the covenant blessings treasured in this short verse. None but the children of light can delight in the sparkles of glory, yes, gracious glory, springing forth from these words of spiritual life. Here, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart" (Ps. xcvi. n). Notice the characters of these privileged persons as set before us in this chapter. In the third verse they are described as having fellowship with the friends of Jesus, with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. They are worshippers—sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty—persons saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation—anoointed saints taught of the Spirit, and walking in the light of God. They enjoy fellowship one with another, and are blessed with the knowledge of the fact that "the blood of Jesus Christ GOD'S Son cleanseth THEM from all sin." There is no mistaking the character of these persons, their privileges, or of their relationship to God. Yet, with all the favours the God of all grace had showered upon them, they were compelled to say, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive

ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Here come the words of our text:

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

May the Lord the Spirit breathe upon us while we look at them according to His own arrangement—

- I. Confession—"If we confess our sins."
- II. Forgiveness—"He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."
- III. Cleansing—"and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

I. Confession—"If we confess our sins." This is a very salutary exercise for living souls. It is the acknowledgment to God of sin against Him, or wrong done to His word, works, or ways. Mark, it is to God against Whom we have sinned, and not to man, that we confess, except in the case where personal wrong has been done. This is right, scriptural, heavenly, godly. But to confess sin against God to man is wrong altogether, unscriptural, earthly, devilish. Those who do. so are sure to find themselves in unenviable company, such as Pharaoh (Exod. x. 16, 17), Saul (1 Sam. xv. 24, 25), Judas (Matt, xxvii. 3, 4). From all such company may the Good Lord preserve us. We live in a day when prayer is almost deified, and I hesitate not to say that if we had less so-called prayer and more Spirit-wrought, heartfelt, honest confession to God, we should have a healthier state of affairs than at present exists, even in the assemblies of the saints. God requires not flowery effusions—nicely rounded periods—eloquent phrases—strings of verses from the hymn book, Prayer Book, or the Bible—telling Him what He knows—dictating to Him what He should do, and the way to do it. Oh, no! God is not pleased with anything of the kind. He desires, and will have, the confession of sin, upon which He will not fail to prove Himself more willing to give than we are to desire or entreat.

God dwelleth in light, and light He loves. Reserve, guile, holding back that which is due, are foreign to His nature. He loves to open up His heart of love to His loved ones. He delights in teaching them to make a clean breast to Him of all they know to be wrong. He loves to hear them tell Him all their mind in confession of sins—pleas for forgiveness—entreaties for mercy and for acceptance with Him in the Beloved. Turn with me to that searching word in Prov. xxviii. 13: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." I know what that means. Confess I do, but I have to confess again. To forsake sins is my desire, determination and doing: but somehow or other they soon again overtake me. That is my sorrow. If I knew nothing of sin, salvation would be far off from me. If heartfelt confession were not mine, forgiveness would be strange to me. If sorrow, godly sorrow, were not mine, the consolations of God would not be enjoyed by me. Thank God, salvation stands not aloof from me—forgiveness is no stranger to me—God's consolations are the solace of my soul. But mark! Sin I know, and hate, and loathe. Confession I groan out in agony of spirit at times. This is the language of a heart that feels acutely its own sore and its own grief (2 Chron. vi. 29), and experiences deeply its own bitterness,

"True, I am a foolish creature,
 And have sinn'd against His grace!
But forgiveness is His nature,
 Though He justly hides His face.
Ere He call'd me well He knew,
 What a heart like mine would do."

As you turn to Ps. xxxii. 5, you will see that David was no stranger to these exercises. "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD, and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Here the Psalmist looks back to the time when guilty silence, self-deception, and obstinate dissimulation wrought wretchedness in him, keeping him at felt distance from his justifying God, with the lack of the

blessedness of transgression forgiven, sin covered, and the nonimputation of iniquity. This attempt to palliate or conceal sin in not confessing it, is a painful secret of spiritual decay and increased weight of sin, and guilt, and shame. David knew this as his past experience, and how, in the distress of his soul, he found sweet relief in open-hearted confession to his offended God, and the blessedness of full, free and frank forgiveness instantly following it. Confession was made. Guilt was gone. This is not written for David's sake alone, but for "every one that is godly" throughout all time. We who have been thus taught of God, and exercised by His indwelling Spirit, know this in the sorrowful solemnities and joyful thanksgivings of our hearts before Him. He searches—I confess. He forgives—I rejoice.

Now notice what I have just stated, that this is the experience of "every one that is godly." In no case is this more clearly exemplified than in that of Daniel. If ever there was a man who could claim exemption from confession of sin, surely that man was Daniel, for turning to Dan. vi. 5, we hear his enemies and those of his God saying, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Of how many of us here present to-night can this be said? Some of you may *fancy* you have the right to this judgment; but, I assure you, no such fancy, thought, or feeling dwells in me. I have prayed, groaned, energised to be blameless before men; but the more I have thus exercised myself, the farther I have found myself from the goal of my expectations. Turn with me to Dan. ix. 4, 5: "And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O LORD, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments; we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from Thy precepts, and from Thy judgments." Here we see a man high in the enjoyment of God's favour, and strictly moral in the eyes of the people—a saint indeed: yet, no cant, no sentimentalist. Though a saint, he knew and felt himself a sinner, and along with his fellows acknowledged himself

one with them in sinning against a God of purity and holiness. He knew this by the entrance of God's pure word and the power of His Convincing Spirit.

All taught of God know it in the same way and by the same process. This you see in the confession of the Psalmist in Ps. cvi. 6: "We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly." This verse is the keynote of the whole Psalm. It is so different to the one preceding it, the CVth, where God is revealed in the continuity of His covenant relationship to His people, and His loving regard to them under all circumstances, whatever the nature of the circumstances might be. But in this cvith Psalm we see the Israelites sinning—murmuring—provoking—rebellng—inventing ways to show their hostility to God, and to wander from His ways. But in the midst of this seething mass of rebellion against the Most High a godly remnant was preserved—"a remnant according to the election of grace"—a favoured number, who were restrained from sinning like the common mass, yet who took their place with them in the confession, "We have sinned with our fathers." Do you notice that? Fathers and children on one dreadful level. These children differ from the majority of those of the present day who think themselves endowed with wisdom superior to their fathers, and who treat their fathers as old fools. The reign of grace knows nothing of this spirit, though many of us who glory in the reign of grace have been betrayed into it. The Good Lord of grace pardon His poor children in this thing. "We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly." This was the confession of a forgiven, yet sinning people, who needed forgiveness every day; and forgiveness He gave them, for, "Many times did He deliver them; but they provoked Him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless He regarded their affliction, when He heard their cry" (Ps. cvi. 43-44).

We will look at one more confession of sin, and that appearing in a marvellously strange light, in Ps. xxv. 11: "For Thy Name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." This seems astounding,

and astounding it is in the judgment and experience of all those who know, feel, and understand, the relationship of convinced and forgiven sinners to their Pardoning God and Forgiving Father. In the light of that relationship sin becomes exceeding sinful—its burden intolerable—its plague insufferable—detestable beyond endurance. This calls forth the petition—"pardon mine iniquity." This secures the confession—"it is great." We have manifold illustrations of this in Holy Scripture, and none more sweetly forcible than those of the prodigal and the publican. The prodigal sinned against light and love and a Father's gracious liberality; He asked and received of his Father's living, and then, as all self-sufficient recipients can do, and do, he "wasted his substance with riotous living." All spent—famine felt—in want—perishing with hunger, his father's house is brought to mind. He frames a confession mixed with legality. He starts for home. "A great way off his father saw him—had compassion—ran—fell on his neck—kissed him." This was pure grace, which drew forth the confession purged from its legality—"Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Do you notice this is pure confession, with no petition, plea, nor promise. Grace was ready with everything needful for reception, provision, and future preservation. Grace humbles and exalts (Luke xv. 11-24). Now turn to the parable spoken to self-righteous souls in Luke xviii. 10-14. Two men appear. One is so much in love with himself that he has no time for anything but to tell God *he is so good*. The other knows nothing of goodness in himself. Without outward show, or parade to excite attention, he "smote upon his breast"—indicating the intensity of feeling experienced deep down in his heart's recesses—"saying, God be merciful to me a sinner"; or, "GOD BE PROPITIOUS TO ME—THE SINNER." In his own estimation he was the sinner not to be matched upon earth—the first of the first rank—not to be rivalled—chief of sinners. He knew by the convincing power of God's Holy Spirit that he deserved not God's notice only to condemn him and sentence him to everlasting despair and destruction. He knew also that access to God and acceptance with Him could be his only through expiation, propitiation, and reconciliation, by the obedience and blood of his

Surety. In this he was justified, cleared, accepted and exalted, while the good doer, tithe payer, and ceremonial observer was humbled to regions far lower than he liked. We are now brought to consider the very cream of the Gospel—

II. Forgiveness—"He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." This is a subject which commands general favour. In one of the creeds of Christendom thousands are led to say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." But do they believe it? Well, they may believe in that article of the creed; but do they believe in Him to Whom belongs the sole prerogative to forgive? With such we have nothing to do. The Master says to me, "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me." Let us follow, or go along with Him, in the consideration of this blessed subject. In Him alone we have the forgiveness of sins, and this according to the riches of His grace. "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses." The Spring and Fount of forgiveness is God Himself. This He reveals in His Blessed Book, where He hides not from His children the counsel of His will, nor the covenant of His grace. Of His Beloved Son He caused Paul to write, "In Whom we have redemption through His blood" (Eph. i. 7), and the price of His people's redemption He styles, "the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Heb. xiii. 20). From this covenant flows forth the irrevocable announcement concerning the whole election of grace, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. xxxi. 34; Heb. viii. 12). All this is through the provision and performances of a God-designed and Willing Surety. All the sins of all God's eternally - loved ones heaped upon Him, brought Him to the hell of their desert—to the agony and bloody sweat of Gethsemane—to the desertion and desolation of curse-crowned Calvary. He was made SIN. Not made *to* sin. Sin He never thought or did; but God constituted and dealt with Him as such. He was made A CURSE for us that we should be blessed. Yes, blessed with the sweets of full, free, and everlasting forgiveness. This is enjoyed only in Christ—with Christ—by Christ—for His Name's sake. As the Head of the body He put away the sin of the members. As the Bridegroom of His bride the Church He paid all her debts. As the

Shepherd of His flock He bore all the sins of His sheep into the land of eternal forgetfulness. Accepted of God in His Person and work, the Covenant-Surety stands. In Him, God's own stand forgiven, justified, graced and accepted. "In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. i. 7).

I wish you here to grasp and enjoy with me something of the perfection and perpetuity of divine forgiveness. It knows nothing of limit or restriction. Our God does not forgive in part. He forgives wholly. His work in this matter is like Himself—perfect. Did you ever think or dwell upon this marvellous expression—LIMITLESS FORGIVENESS? David knew the preciousness of it when he sang, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: WHO FORGIVETH ALL THINE INIQUITIES" (Ps. ciii. 2, 3). How many? ALL. Not many. Not some. ALL! Forgiveness is an act of boundless, infinite grace. It takes in and turns out sins of every shade and size. Sins from the womb to the tomb. Sins in public—sins in private—sins in the sanctuary—sins in seclusion—sins in the pulpit—sins in the pew—sins bold and daring—sins cowardly and sneaking. All forgiven! All forgiven! Forgiveness is grand in its design, glorious in its declaration, overwhelming in its communication. Here we can join in praise with dear John Kent—

"Here's pardon full for sin that's past,
It matters not how black the cast;
And, O my soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come here's pardon, too."

Now notice how perfectly Paul is one with David in Col. ii. 13: "And you, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you ALL TRESPASSES." The sins of God's own are debts all paid, and the receipt of the same was given in full by the Surety on curse-crowned Calvary, and is enjoyed in the heart as revealed by His Glorifier—God the Holy Ghost. Listen to the charming declaration of the God

of Israel by the weeping prophet: "And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against Me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against Me" (Jer. xxxiii. 8). It must be so, "as sure as God's own word is true" recorded in Jer. 1. 20, "In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve." Hezekiah knew the blessedness of sins not seen by his God when he could say to Him in childlike confidence, "Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back" (Isa. xxxviii. 17). Sins cast where God's omniscient eye, in love, would not see them; and with an Infinite God between him and his sins, Hezekiah, looking at the light of God's reconciling countenance, could see them not. Oh, the stupendous heights and the astounding depths of forgiving mercy.

We now are privileged to glance at a few evidences of, and associations with, the enjoyment of sins forgiven. Turn to that sweet declaration in Ps. xxxii. 1—: "BLESSED is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." The Father has blessed the forgiven sinner with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ—blessed him with oneness with Christ which can never be dissolved—with redemption complete—salvation with eternal glory—pardon beyond recall—forgiveness for ever—justification unalterable—acceptance unimpeachable. The forgiven is blessed sooner or later with the enjoyment of death destroyed—hell's gates barred—heaven opened—fellowship with the Father—intercourse with the Beloved—communion with the Spirit—and the anticipation of the King's welcome, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34). Blessed prospect! Blessed forgiveness! Blessed man!

FAITH is the companion of the blessed, forgiven sinner, "for he that cometh to God must believe that He is" (Heb. xi. 6). Come with me to Acts x. 43, where Peter declares to the house of Cornelius, "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His Name,

whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." What is faith? It "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. xi. i). It is simple trust in the word of the living God brought home to the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is only mine in living oneness with my Living Head. Apart from Him I have it not. Faith is the fruit of eternal union. It is the faith of a Believing Father communicated to His children. "*Have the faith of God*" (Mark xi. 22, margin). It is the work of God in the living members of the body of Christ (John vi. 29). It is the faith of the Head exercised in His members under the Anointing (Rom. iii. 22; Gal. ii. 20; Phil. iii. 9). It is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22). It works by love (Gal. v. 6). It purifies the heart (Acts xv. 9). It overcomes the world (1 John v. 4). It is a grace of marvellous solicitude in the heart of Jesus for His tried and tempted disciples (Luke xxii. 32). It has eyes never satisfied with Christ out of sight. It has ears on the alert for the sound of His voice. It delights in the fragrance of His saving Name. It opens its mouth wide for Him to fill. It feels after Him and for Him. It has for its entail "the salvation of the soul," which can never be cut off (1 Pet. i. 9). Sweet associate! Blessed evidence!

REPENTANCE is ever the associate of the blessed, forgiven, and believing sinner. This we see in the words of repentant Peter in Acts v. 31, "Him hath God exalted with His right hand a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." In this precious verse we see repentance and forgiveness hand in hand; aye, still more—blended together in the same heart experience by the Indwelling Spirit of our Prince and Saviour. You will also find faith and repentance stepping together in the path of life. They are honest companions all the way to glory. While one lives the other cannot die. The tear of true repentance glistens in the eye of God-wrought faith. What is repentance? Many would answer—Godly sorrow. No. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (2 Cor. vii. 10). Repentance is a clean turn round—a change of mind. Two New Testament words describe this princely grace. The first denotes change of mind with regret for the sins of the past. The second implies sorrow for past sins working care for

the future (Matt. xxi. 29-32; 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11). Godwrought repentance is a clean turn round in which each of the Eternal Three are engaged. The Father gives it (2 Tim. ii. 25). The Son secures it (Acts v. 31). The Spirit exercises it in the hearts of the Israel of God (Zech. xii. 10). Precious, pierced Saviour, show Thyself to me, that I may hasten from all to Thee.

JOY—God's forgiveness is a wellspring of joy. Come with me to that sweetly interesting word picture in Matt. ix. 1-7; also in Mark ii. 1-12. Four dear men blessed with the faith of God's elect—"mutual faith" (Rom. i. 12), exercised equally in each and all, are seen carrying their paralysed companion to One Whom they evidently knew could heal him. To His feet they would bring their afflicted burden, for love made their burden light. A crowd hinders their progress, but damps not their ardour. The selfish mass moves not, but faith moves in the face of the mass. The faith of the four could not be foiled—it was the faith overcoming the world—the *faith laughing at impossibilities, and saying, "IT MUST BE DONE."* Look at them. What are they after now! Having located the very spot where Jesus stood, with their burden they mount the roof, and over the exact spot the tiling is removed. They let their loved burden down in the right place—at the feet of Jesus. Wonderful!" When Jesus saw their faith." Nothing is said of the sick man's faith. Nothing is said of the sick man's prayer. But when Jesus saw His own faith—the faith common to His own elect exercised in the devoted four—He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, BE OF GOOD CHEER; thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matt. ix. 2). Incarnate Wisdom knew well the soul's deep need, and spoke forgiveness first. Then health and strength to the palsied frame were commanded. The joy of the LORD was his strength. He was of good cheer. He joyed in the joy of his God in the experience of sins forgiven. May this be the blessed lot of each of us here present.

A Bleeding Saviour seen by faith,
A sense of pard'ning love,

A hope that triumphs over death,
Gives joys like those above."

LOVE—This is what we may well style the fairest associate of "the forgiveness of sins."

"Love I much? I'm more forgiven;
I'm a miracle of grace."

For another illustration of this let me direct your attention to yet another word-picture of exquisite beauty at the close of Luke vii. A Pharisee asks Jesus to eat with him. Being truly courteous he complied with the request. While thus engaged, a woman, branded with infamy and held in abhorrence, astonished the guests by her appearance. Uninvited, and regardless of all etiquette and forms of civility, she hastened to the side of the One Object of her heart's affections. Love found vent in God-given tears, which fell abundantly upon His sacred feet; she wiped them with the hair of her head, kissed them, and anointed them with the ointment she had brought. Did not she love Him? It is evident she did. Why? Simply because she felt and enjoyed His love in the sweets of full forgiveness. Simon looked on with feelings of disgust. If his Guest were a Holy Prophet, why should He resign Himself to the attentions of a polluted harlot? Simon did not know Him as the Friend of sinners. But she knew and loved Him. Jesus said to His host, "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors, the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both." Precious Gospel!" Tell me, therefore, which of them will love Him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, thou hast rightly judged." Then He contrasted the glowing love of the forgiven trespasser with the cold attentions of His self-righteous host, adding, "Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Here sin

abounded, but grace did much more abound, and love in return was graciously abundant. In the enjoyment of forgiveness so great, so rich, so full, so free, we need not hesitate to confess—"We love HIM because He first loved us" (1 John iv. 19). Yet, often we can simply sigh—and we thank God for the sigh—

"Lord, it is my chief complaint,
That my love is weak and faint;
Yet I love Thee and adore!
Oh, for grace to love Thee more!"

FEAR—Not "the fear of man, *which* bringeth a snare" (Prov. xxix. 25); but, "the fear of the LORD, *which is* a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death" (Prov. xiv. 27), is the fruit of Divine forgiveness. Turn to Ps. cxxx. 4: "But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." Forgiveness and fear as inalienable companions are blessedly set forth in Jer. xxxiii. 8, 9: "I will pardon all their iniquities . . . they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness, and for all the prosperity, that I procure unto it." The forgiveness which is with God, and is ours through the wounds and blood of our most blessed Surety and Saviour, graciously commands and sweetly secures this commingling of love and veneration. Such is the fear, the covenant gift of a Covenant God to a covenant people (Jer. xxxii. 40), wrought in the heart where forgiveness is known and felt, enjoyed and appreciated. Love is prone to presume—veneration never. Now love and veneration marvellously mingle in the heart's experience of God's living children who delight in forgiveness through their iniquities being marked against their Surety, Head and Husband—a precious Christ. This fear of the LORD tendeth to life—Christ (Prov. xix. 23). It prolongeth days in the risen life of the God-Man (Prov. x. 27; Isa. liii. 10). This fear of God—this covenant blend of love and veneration in the heart of a redeemed sinner—secures unsearchable riches, unsullied honour, and life enduring (Prov. xxii. 4). The fear of the child of God in the enjoyment of forgiveness, and blessed with the smiles of his

reconciling Father, knows nothing of the fear that hath torment (1 John iv. 18).

Here we are brought to consider and examine minutely the groundwork of forgiveness. This cannot be done in the few words to be said to you now, but it will and must be done in our daily experience as forgiven sinners before Him Whom we know to be faithful and just. Yes, He is faithful and just to Himself, for He can never allow His covenant to fail—His purpose to be frustrated—His promise to be broken—His word to return to Him void. He will stick to all that He has purposed, promised, or spoken. "God is not a man," a poor, fickle arbitrary thing. He is not carried about on the wings, winds, or waters of His own creation. He is not influenced by any, or all, of them. He influences them all. Does He purpose? He perfects the same to the joy of His own. Does He promise? He performs (Heb. x. 23). Does He conceive or contemplate? He will bring to completeness all that has ever exercised His mind concerning the children of His love (1 Cor. i. 9; x. 13). He cannot do anything else (2 Tim. ii. 13). Having determined, He delights to do accordingly. Having purposed, it is His pleasure to perform. He is faithful to His Son. He is faithful to me as His gift in covenant to Him.

"SINCE CHRIST has my discharge procur'd,
And freely in my room endur'd
The whole of wrath divine;
Payment God will not twice demand,
First at my Bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine."

But God is just also in the forgiveness of sins, In this we see, and delight in seeing, that salvation, justification and forgiveness all flow from God's justice equally as from His mercy. As a just God He will not leave to perish in their sins those for whom Christ died. Thanks be to His Holy Name for revealing to us the glorious fact, and for teaching us the precious lesson, that our forgiveness gushes

forth in loving eagerness from the very attribute which frightened our souls almost to the depths of hell. God is faithful to every covenant promise. God is just to His Christ—Head and members all together. To the Head for His satisfactory sufferings. To the members for their relationship to the Head in His sufferings and death for them. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect "when justice justifies them? Justice and mercy sweetly blend in my salvation, and one is not lifted up above the other in my experience of God's loving forgiveness. Justice can never be so honoured—never shine so gloriously—as it does in CHRIST MADE SIN—Christ made a Curse for us—"SIN CONDEMNED and sinners loved"—forgiven—justified—accepted.

III. Cleansing—"and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Those who know most of the preciousness of the all-cleansing blood and the all-saving Christ, will not boast themselves of their personal attainments nor of conscious superiority in holy things. No. "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults" (Ps. xix. 12) will be their frequent cry. Ceremonial ablutions avail not. They only "wash to fouler stains." Sins of our daily walk require removing, and none can do it but He Who hath promised—"From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you" (Ezek. xxxvi. 25). This He certainly will do, and present His bloodwashed ones to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing—holy—without blemish. Lord, give us grace to enter into the true meaning and enjoyment of that precious word of Thine, so rich with pure and precious promises—"Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be My people, and I will be their God" (Ezek. xxxvii. 23).

May we be found amongst them. Amen and Amen.

THOMAS BRADBURY.
Grove Chapel, Camberwell

January, 1902.

"Humble Yourselves."

*"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that
He may exalt you in due time."*

—1 Peter

This advice is altogether foreign to the natural disposition of the adviser. Peter's prevailing characteristic was impetuosity. At times he was irrepressible, as many of his acts demonstrate. He determined to be second to none of the apostles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, which led him into committing many things contrary to the spirit of his Kind and Loving Master, and to the grace which was so marvellously bestowed upon him. When Jesus told the twelve that one of them would betray Him, and told Peter pointedly that he would deny Him, he protested against that reflection upon his faithfulness in very emphatic language, "Though all men should be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." Again he said, "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee" (Matt. xxvi. 33, 35). This was simply because Peter, for the time being, knew not himself, or what manner of man he was. He had lost sight of the weakness of his poor nature, and forgot also that without Christ he could do nothing but sin—that destitute of the grace and power of the Holy Ghost he could only go astray and wander from his God—that lacking the sustaining of the mighty hand of God he must falter, fail and fall.

Peter had many a hard and painful lesson to learn to bring him to, and keep him in, his right senses. I say this advisedly and scripturally. When Peter's *eyes* were fixed upon Christ he was filled with confidence—when his *ears* were attentive to the words of

Christ he was strong in faith—when his *nose* was refreshed with the fragrance of Christ's Saving Name he was filled with the joy of his God—when his *mouth* tasted that the Lord was gracious, and he was privileged to feed upon the Bread of life, the Breast of love, the Shoulder of authority, and the Wine of the kingdom, he was nourished and nerved for conflict and for conquest—when his *hands* touched, felt, handled and embraced the Lord of life and glory his heart thrilled with spiritual joy in fellowship with the Father, with His Son Jesus Christ, and His Indwelling Spirit. Therefore, I say, when Peter was brought to his right senses—to a right apprehension of his nothingness, and a true appreciation of his Lord's kindness, care, and concern over him—he was then able and willing to leave the management of his affairs in the all-skilful hands of his God, Who abounds to His own in all-wisdom and prudence. Sometimes we think we can trust God with our great things, and manage our small things ourselves. But *we cannot*. "HE MANAGES OUR MEAN AFFAIRS."

In a loving, yet faithful manner, Peter led the minds of the elect strangers to whom he wrote, to the remembrance of those weaknesses and sins in which he himself had fallen, and which he so terribly felt. Many times I have been interested in the counsel he gives to God's elect in the previous chapter. He says, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the Name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a *busybody in other men's matters*." Now, Peter had been a busybody in other men's matters, and, to his sorrow, he knew it. He had interfered in things which did not concern him. We see this in the incident recorded in John xxi. 20-23. Jesus told Peter to follow Him, but the disciple heeded not the counsel of his Master, and, moved with what he must

have felt to be his superior judgment, and thinking he had the right to order and regulate the movements of the beloved disciple, said to Jesus, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" The answer of Jesus must have fallen with humiliating effect upon Peter's impetuous spirit—"Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me." This was a smart rebuke to Peter's forward disposition, and, from the chastened spirit breathed throughout his epistles, it is evident that he profited from his Master's faithful and loving reproof. From heart-felt experience he could counsel thus—"Let none of you suffer as a busybody in other men's matters."

It is very easy for proud, restless, inquisitive human nature to busy itself with the concerns of others. Aye, with their spiritual concerns. Frequently I have seen unwarrantable attention paid by persons, who prided themselves in their clear views of truth, to feeble-minded ones whose conceptions of God's ways were hazy. Language not becoming the followers of a loving and gentle Saviour is too frequently used. I speak feelingly. If I meet a man giving evidence of life whose views of God's truth are cloudy, it becomes me in my dealings with him, as I believe myself under the Anointing, to ask myself the question, "Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive" (1 Cor. iv. 7). To be occupied with self in the presence of a just and holy God—not for self-assertion, but for self-judgment—not for self-exaltation, but for selfrenunciation—is the legitimate occupation of every child of God quickened into spiritual life, and blessed with the teaching and spirit of the Meek and Lowly Jesus Who "pleased not Himself" (Rom. xv. 3).

It is spiritually profitable to have the humility of Jesus for our daily study. "Who made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 7-8). Those are three remarkable words—"HE HUMBLED HIMSELF." That

is more than we poor, proud mortals can do. It is altogether out of our line of things. Humbling self is an utter impossibility with man, such is the pride and haughtiness of his deceitful and desperately wicked heart. Humbling power comes alone from a once humbled, but now exalted and reigning Christ—from a humbling God. "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low" (Isa. ii. 11, 12).

Now notice the context of the portion I have read for you by way of text. Peter declares himself to be simply an elder, and, what was far better, "a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." There is something very blessed in that, but far beyond poor nature's vision. Peter waited not until he was divested of the burden of the flesh, or until he entered into that bright home where darkness never dwells, to know what glory really was. He was called to it. He was a partaker of it. This he states very clearly in his 2nd Epistle, 1st chap., 3rd ver.: "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him Who hath called us to glory and virtue." You see this again in the 10th verse of our chapter," But the God of all grace, Who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Paul taught the same in Rom. viii. 30: "Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified ; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." See also 1 Thess. ii. 12: "That ye would walk worthy of God, Who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory." With Paul glory was a present reality—not in its fulness I grant you; but, though not in its fulness, no less a fact. The elders Peter exhorts—"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's

heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

He then directs his attention to the young folk, saying, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another." This is needful and very salutary advice. I felt it to be so recently in reading a letter from an aged saint, in which he apologized for his weakness and insufficiency. Reigning and triumphing grace immediately asserted itself in my affections in that precious portion of the old law, "Thou shalt' rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD" (Lev. xix. 32). Nothing will ever prove a loss to us through bowing down with due respect before our seniors, either in nature or in grace. Paul paid due respect to Andronicus and Junia, who were in Christ, experimentally, before him (Rom. xvi. 7). To be subject one to another by the power of sovereign grace is to enjoy sweet liberty from the spirit of self-sufficiency and self-assertion. Overcoming grace here proclaims its ascendancy—"And be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." Then comes the covenant command given by the Holy Ghost from the exercised and matured experience of Peter the penitent—not Peter the pope—"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."

We will notice a few particulars in the text, and may God bless our meditation to His glory and to our permanent profit.

I. The command.

II. The command enforced.

III. The outcome.

I. The command—"Humble yourselves, therefore.' In that word "therefore" we discover a good reason for the command. In the preceding context subjection to elders is enjoined upon the youngsters. Subjection one to another is required from all persons under the power and grace of the Spirit. But we must be careful to

notice that we are not called upon, for one moment, to be subject to the imperious tempers or dispositions of those saints, who, through lack of grace, are determined upon having things all their own way! Peter gives a very good reason for our being subject one to another, and our being clothed with humility. Some of us can boast—and we thank God for this privilege of boasting—that we stand before Him, accepted and welcome, in the righteousness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But there is a very great danger in our desire to tarry and stand still here. As justified ones in the obedience of Christ we are commanded to be clothed in the humility of Christ. Let our tongues and tempers, dispositions and doings, be characterised by the humility of Christ. The heart of many here present may well sigh with mine, I greatly need it. Lord, clothe me with Thy humility! Quite right, dear friends; for, if the persons to whom Peter wrote had not felt as you do now, he would never have counselled them as he did. There was a necessity in their experience and conduct for this evangelical counsel, and we feel that necessity existing in us—all springing from the pride and conceit of our wretched nature. God's living children have many hard lessons to learn before they delight in this rare spiritual adorning, and ere they seek for nothing but Christ to be seen in them, and for the disposition of Christ to govern and guard them. Peter's reason why we should be clothed with humility is this—"for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

Many instances of these—many displays of God's severity and goodness—are given to us in the Scriptures of truth, where He is revealed resisting the proud wills of His people for the destruction of their flesh, that their spirits might be saved in the day of Jesus Christ. But time forbids an attempt to enumerate them. God's regard for the humble is beautifully set forth in Isa. lvii. 15, "For thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose Name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with Him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Now I wish you to notice the transition from the singular to the plural in this verse. Who is the

person described as of a humble and contrite spirit? It is Jesus, Who for us became "a Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief." He is that Blessed One of Whom we sing—

"A Pilgrim through this lonely world
The Blessed Jesus pass'd;
A Mourner all His life was He—
A Dying Lamb at last."

For us He had not where to lay His head, and found no rest for His troubled soul. Though now exalted to the highest glories of heaven, He feels all the aches and pains, temptations and trials, sufferings and sorrows, of His members in the wilderness. "I dwell with Him," says the Father. To what purpose?" To revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." It is only through Jesus, Who sorrowed, groaned, and wept in the days of His flesh, that any reviving is experienced by His tempted members on their way through the enemy's country to their home of rest above. "He giveth grace to the humble." From these scriptures we see the spirit in which this covenant command is given—"Humble yourselves."

We will now look at these words in the light of the metaphor associated with them—"the mighty hand of God." All the preachers in Christendom may preach humility—demand obedience to this command—wear themselves out with their exhortations; but obedience to the command they cannot secure. To preach humility and to expect it from proud and imperious human nature is folly as flagrant as to seek for holiness in hell—purity in putridity—or to anticipate seeing envious devils bowing willingly to the sovereignty of Jesus Christ, "because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. viii. 7). The question may be asked, Why should they demand a seeming impossibility? To this I answer, We must look at the command in the light of its metaphor. As we thus see it, all fleshly free-will opposition to God's sovereign truth will immediately cease. Look at

it—mark it well—and may the Holy Ghost seal home instruction to your hearts: "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God."

Mark well the place where this humbling process is carried on. The saints of God are spiritually enabled, graciously privileged and sweetly compelled to humble themselves in the presence of Him Whose eyes are upon the haughty to bring them down, and Who will save His afflicted people (2 Sam. xxii. 28). I have been told that man has naturally both will and ability to obey all the commands given in God's blessed Book. But the very circumstances of the case prove the very opposite. Natural means can never produce spiritual effects. All that springs from the flesh is flesh. All the productions of the Spirit are spirit (John iii. 6). Whatever we can see of spiritual life in redeemed sinners, is theirs in virtue of their spiritual oneness with their Living Head, Who has said for our instruction in righteousness, "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John xv. 5). Impotency is not only the state of the members of Christ apart from vital oneness with Him; but the very reprobates themselves prove themselves not so clever as they fain would have us believe. That free-willer, Pilate,, thought he could do what he pleased with our Lord Jesus Christ; but Jesus justly rebuked his fleshly presumption, saying, "Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above" (John xix. 10,11). Then notice the sweeping testimony of John the Baptist—"A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven" (John iii. 27). So, if I humble myself, it is no more I that do it, but the Spirit of Christ Who dwelleth in me, according to God's eternal purpose of grace.

If a man tells me that he can humble himself, I ask, Where are you? Are you under the mighty hand of God spiritually, experimentally, scripturally? Has it been heavy upon you (Ps. xxxii. 4)? Has it pressed you sore (Ps. xxxviii. 2)? Have you been consumed, worn out, exhausted by the conflict of it (Ps. xxxix. 10)? When questions like these are put to those who profess their ability to work at will,, they stare—they gape—they wonder what is meant. "THE HAND OF

GOD!" What means it? The Bible is a spiritual book. The truths therein are couched in spiritual language, frequently given under earthly figures and metaphors. So when we see God's hand mentioned, it either means something or nothing. But it means something very significant. When its meaning is explained to the clever free-willer and free worker, he is mortified ; and the discovery of his ignorance in the matter does not improve his temper. See Acts iv. 28, "For to do whatsoever THY HAND and Thy counsel determined before to be done." In God's hand we see His purpose. The: free-willer will not have it. His imaginary deity works without a purpose—builds without design—fights without a plan. Paul was brought in the humility of Christ to bow before the will of a purposing God—to acquiesce in His all-wise counsel—to declare it faithfully according to the revelation of it to his spiritual understanding by the Holy Ghost.

See !" Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, ACCORDING TO THE GOOD PLEASURE OF HIS WILL" (Eph. i. 5).

Our God keeps not His secrets to Himself. "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, ACCORDING TO His GOOD PLEASURE which He hath purposed in Himself" (Eph. i. 9). To the spiritual possession of all that He has purposed God will bring His children. "In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things AFTER THE COUNSEL OF HIS OWN WILL" (Eph. i. 11). His elect and redeemed people are taught and graciously wrought upon, "According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. iii. 11). Ask the free-willer, Have you obtained an inheritance to which you were eternally predestinated? Do you fall willingly before the declaration of God's truth concerning His salvation by purpose, purchase and power? He will be fit to kick you. He would if the law allowed him. He hates the God of Eph. 1st, and, with all his profession of loving everybody, he would hate you, He could not help it. So thank God for better

teaching. David knew that all God's doings are according to His purpose, when He sang, "But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased" (Psa. cxv. 3). Again, "For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the -seas, and all deep places" (Psa. cxxxv. 5, 6). There God is set forth in His sovereign purpose and works. We may ask, Are we spiritually, scripturally, and willingly, under the hand or gracious purpose of God? If so, we shall acknowledge His sovereign right to do with us as He wills, though our poor nature may murmur and rebel, and according to our carnal judgment we would have the accomplishment of the purpose altogether different. I love that sweet .expression of the secret will of JEHOVAH, by Joseph Swain—

"When frowns appear to veil His face,
And clouds surround His throne,
He hides the purpose of His grace,
To make it better known."

"THE HAND OF GOD" also means *His power*. "And His brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of His HAND: and there was the hiding of *His power*" (Hab. iii. 4). We find it also in David's acknowledgment of God's sovereignty in 1 Chron. xxix. 12, "Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in THINE HAND is power and might; and in THINE HAND it is to make great, and to *give strength* unto all." His HAND provides (Ps. cxlv. 16). His HAND *preserves* {Exod. xxxiii. 22). His HAND *protects* (John x. 28, 29). Has the resurrection power of Christ been communicated to us? Then we are willing to submit to the gracious, yet perplexing dealings of our Covenant God in Him. We shall know something of the meaning of the words of the text—"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God."

II. The command enforced. Peter speaks not simply of the hand of God, but of His *mighty* hand. The Scriptures abound with this expression—"My power." It frequently occurs in the record of God's

judgments in Egypt, and His redemption of Israel from that house of bondage. Notice it in God's word to Pharaoh—"And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee *My power*; and that My Name may be declared throughout all the earth" (Exod. ix. 16). Of Pharaoh, God said to Moses, "And I am sure the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out MY HAND, and smite Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go" (Exod., iii. 19, 20). This proved true to the very letter. Humility was no trait in Pharaoh's character. He could not—he would not—humble himself before the God of a poor, oppressed people. This was foreign to his disposition. We read, "And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before Me" (Exod. x. 3). Subsequent events proved how long God had raised him up to make His mighty power to be known through him, and that all the earth might be filled with His glory. Plague after plague came upon Egypt, but these only served to make hardness still harder, and obstinacy still more obstinate. Humbling power Pharaoh never knew, but the humiliating hand of Israel's God he terribly felt when he was sinking as helpless as lead in the mighty waters.

Obedience may be rendered to a humbling command when the obedient one has no part or lot in the grace of God, as seen in the case of Ahab. He humbled himself when the word of God came to him by the mouth of Elijah (1 Kings xxi. 27). Yet Ahab had no spiritual interest in the kingdom of God, and hated the God of Israel. We see strange humbling power in the case of Josiah (2 Kings xxii. 18, 20), "Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard; because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD. . . . Behold . . . thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace." This may sound strange to many of God's children as they read the record of Josiah's fall in battle, when fighting contrary to the direct command of his God. This is one of the mysteries of God never to be fully explained until we through grace arrive at home. Here we learn a salutary lesson—that

it is not for us to judge of the eternal state of those who pass out of the world under doubtful circumstances. Look now at Hezekiah. In 2 Chron. xxxii. we read of him sick, nigh into death, filled with anxiety and distress. He prayed—he recovered. No sooner is he recovered but he forgets his Restorer, and seeks his own glory. "Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him." The proud professor will be ready to cry out, "What a naughty man!" I advise such an one not to be so ready to announce the faults of any child of God. Haughty judges must be brought low, and frequently lower than they like. When affliction humbles us to the dust, we are tempted to vow as to our future conduct; but we had better be careful—forgetfulness is almost sure to attend us. "Therefore"—because of the pride of his heart—"there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Notwithstanding"—precious word!—"he humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah." In the midst of all God's gracious dealings with him, he appears as a beacon casting its warning light upon our perilous pathway. "Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart."

Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, felt the humbling power of God's hand. He filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and made "Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel." After all this, grace was triumphant in his humiliation. See! "And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and *humbled himself greatly* before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him: and He was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD He was God" (2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13). The Scriptures of truth abound with instances of the humbling power of the mighty hand of God. He knows how to bring down His own from their towering heights of pride—teach them to kiss the rod—

acknowledge His sovereign appointments, and confess that, "those who walk in pride He is able to abase" (Dan. iv. 37). A lesson in this humbling process we read in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. The Pharisee was high and mighty in his own esteem, and lifted up with religious pride—the most hateful of all pride. He really had nothing to pray for. He was so good, and delighted to acquaint God with that very important fact. The publican, graciously wrought upon, saw sin—his own sin—and felt it to be exceeding sinful. To him sin was a raging fire within, burning up the very thought of peace or rest. In an agony of soul he smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." In his judgment, his equal in sin could not be found. But mark well the Blessed Teacher's judgment—"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke xviii. 13, 14).

III. The outcome—"that He may exalt you in due time." "Due time!" What time is that? The time fixed, set, and stated by God in His eternal counsels—in His record of all events. When the time appointed by the Father for the spiritual exaltation of His humbled ones arrives, exalted they must be by His mighty hand. Speaking of these, David says, "In Thy righteousness shall they be exalted" (Ps. lxxxix. 16). He exalts them above their grovelling notions of self-righteousness and fleshly holiness. He exalts them far above all their dreams of religious superiority or experimental greatness. He exalts them by rich mercy, great love, and quickening grace to sit together in heart communion with Christ in heavenly places (Eph. ii. 4, 6). He exalts them by the power of Christ's resurrection, with their affection set upon things above, where their Head and Surety sits at God's right hand. He exalts them by the power of the Holy Ghost to a good hope through grace—which hope as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, entereth into THAT within the vail. He exalts them by the prevalency of Christ's intercession to delight in His salvation, and to long for that fulness of joy which His presence

alone can secure, and for pleasures unalloyed which are at God's right hand for evermore.

Amen.

THOMAS BRADBURY.

Grove Chapel, Camberwell,
February, 1902.

"Nothing Amiss."

"This Man hath done nothing amiss."

—Luke xxiii. 41.

JUDGING "this Man" according to the world's estimate and treatment of Him, we should be forced to the conclusion that He had done everything amiss. The cry of the worldling and the proud professor is, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." It is not necessary for us to go to the haunts of vice and dens of infamy to learn this. The high and the low—the rich and the poor—the religious and the irreligious—the *pious* and the profane, all manifest a spirit of hostility to God's Christ. A Suffering Christ will do, they will tolerate Him, because they think they can use Him at will. A Sovereign Christ they hate and ignore, because they think He can use them without consulting them. Those who are blessed with spiritual discernment, are painfully conscious of the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is not required by the world at large. The irreligious world simply ignores Him. The religious world foolishly trifles with Him. The fleshly religionist will make mention of His Name to suit his own purpose, and will allow Him a place in the pulpit or in the pew—in the drawing-room—or, in the kitchen

when it is *convenient*. Those who are blessed with spiritual enlightenment, and a right judgment from God, know, to their sorrow, that very few people desire the unceasing presence of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But I will tell you where I am in respect to Him, I cannot do anything right without Him. I cannot think aright without Him—I cannot look in the right direction

without Him. I cannot speak correctly without Him. If He is not in the pulpit with me, I had far rather be out of it.

Christ Himself is the Life, aye, the Very Being of every living child of the Father. Without Him, and destitute of the godly motions of the Spirit, all is death, even where religious activity most is seen. Without His love shed abroad in the heart, enmity against God is sure to assert itself. If the Spirit of Truth reign not in the judgment, error and opposition to Christ and His simplicity are sure to appear.

If Jesus is not precious to me as my Law-fulfilling Righteousness, my restless spirit is sure to seek for fancied good in self, and that is where real good can never be found. But blessed be His Holy Name, He has revealed Himself to me as my Wisdom, Righteousness, Holiness, and All in all. Yet there are times when the heart is faint, and the spirit is languid—when faith's light flickers and the lamp of grace shines dimly—when the flesh struggles for the mastery and Satan's buffetings are keenly and cruelly felt—then the heart knoweth its own bitterness and would seek for comfort in its own wormwood and gall. At such times the Lord is pleased to teach His people the salutary lesson that in His gracious hands it is by these things elect, redeemed and regenerate men live, and discover the life of their spirit (Isa. xxxviii. 16).

We will now seek for instruction from the very interesting words of the text—

"This Man hath done nothing amiss."

This is an extraordinary statement, made by an extraordinary man, at a very extraordinary time, in fact, the most extraordinary time in the world's history. The Prince of life was then ceasing to live. King Messiah was then suffering for the nation He loved so well, and which ever lay upon His heart. He was born King of the Jews (Matt. ii. 2), and He died with the title proclaimed upon His cross (Mark xv. 26). Though this title appeared there in accusation and scorn, yet

all who are not aliens from the holy nation of God's election, rejoice in the experimental possession of it as written upon the fleshy tables of their heart by the Holy Ghost. These are Jews indeed—spiritual Jews: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Romans ii. 28, 29). Here we learn that all are Jews in God's estimation who are spiritually circumcised. These experience a cutting off—a cutting all round—a severance from the world.

The children of God thus separated from this world of sin and death, know something of the pungent pains attending this separating work. "For the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. iv. 12). The circumcising knife of divine truth separates between nature and grace—between the flesh and spirit—between that which is mine and that which is God's. Those who are thus spiritually and effectively cut off from the fleshly world and from all fleshly hopes of salvation or favour are fully entitled to say with Paul, "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. iii. 3). The Lord Jesus Christ is spiritually King of all those who are Jews inwardly, and in His own time He makes His sovereignty and authority to be known, felt and enjoyed by them. There is no want or failure in His way and work. He knows when, and He knows how, to bring His own to bow before the sceptre of His grace.

Let us scan the narrative in which our text appears. We are told that two malefactors were crucified with Jesus, one on His right, and the other on the left. Matthew and Mark inform us that the thieves who were crucified with Him reviled Him. In a remarkably short space of time one of them was brought under the power of sovereign, reigning grace. There are those who in their ignorance would limit

the Holy One of Israel to time and means in the spiritual work of regeneration, but our God is not limited to either. When He pleases He will bring one of His children through long dreary seasons and weary wastes before the sweets of gospel liberty are enjoyed. He is also pleased to speak home life, light, love and liberty in the twinkling of an eye. Look at the three thousand upon the day of Pentecost. They assembled in the order of God's providence—Peter preached—they heard—the Spirit applied the preaching with quickening power—they cried—God experimentally saved them—that selfsame day they were added to the church—the thing was done suddenly (Acts ii. *passim*). Also notice the case of the Philippian jailor. In the afternoon he was thrusting Paul and Silas into the inner prison. At night he was crying for mercy—sighing for salvation. Next morning he was a new creature in Christ Jesus, and he was conscious of the fact (Acts xvi. 23-36).

But it is not wise to make any case recorded in God's Word a standard for Him to work by. The Holy One of Israel will not be limited, and those who attempt to limit Him will know something of it sooner or later. This was the sin of ancient Israel. But God reigned and Israel rued. He will work with His own in His own way. The lambs and the sheep of His flock will be gathered into the fold according to the counsel of His own will, without the interference, help, or meddling of prophet, priest, or pastor. In the accomplishment of His designs of grace He is pleased to pass by the wise and the learned, and use the unlearned and despised among men. Bright unfoldings of divine truth beam forth from the queer and the quaint, and none but fools will ignore the lessons God teaches through the foolish. Many times I have seen the rude and the refined brought together in the order of God's providence, but the rude has shined the brighter of the two. According to the choice of Infinite Wisdom one is just as effectual as another. This is demonstrative proof that God will do His own work in His own way. He will bring the blind by a way that they know not, but which is well known to Him, and thus bless them with the enjoyment of His

covenant mercy flowing through the sufferings, sorrows, and blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let us return to the narrative.

One malefactor railed on our Suffering Lord, but the other rebuked him, saying: "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" That poor dying thief was well taught, far better taught than many of our present day preachers. Loved -with an everlasting love he breathed the language of love—the language of heaven. There was nothing of hell, or fire and brimstone, in his rebuke. The other thief would know all that soon enough. I have shunned the company of those whose language has savoured more of hell than heaven, while those who have been privileged to speak to me of the Surety and Sufferer, Who endured the hell which I deserved, are cherished in my memory. To me hell and damnation are terrible realities. To me heaven and salvation are covenant verities. But notice the rebuke of the elect thief—"Dost thou not fear God?" He held the truth in righteousness, for, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. cxi. 10). When the fear of the Lord is implanted in the heart of a sinner, sin is hated—guilt is felt—condemnation is dreaded—evil associations are shunned—salvation is sought for—grace is experienced, and glory is desired. The thief acknowledged the justice of his sentence, the sinfulness of his sin, the sinlessness of his Saviour, and then prayed—

"Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." I wish you to pay particular attention to this precious, spiritual, heaven-born prayer. Sovereignty is breathed at both ends. It commences with His title denoting authority and dominion—"Lord." This was an acknowledgment that Jesus, though a Sufferer, was a Sovereign. The thief owned Him as Lord of his person—Master of his destiny—and King of his heart. His Saviour had sole authority over him. It is a very easy matter for a smooth-tongued professor to say, "Dear Lord," or "Dearest Lord "; but it is different altogether for a broken heart and contrite spirit, weighted with the solemnities of eternity, and the glory of God, to sigh out the gracious title, "Lord." "No man can say that Jesus Christ is the Lord, but by the Holy

Ghost" (1 Cor. xii. 3). Those whom He claims by the indwelling, witnessing and sealing of His Blessed Spirit as the redeemed of the Lord, the fruit of His soul travail, and the beloved of His heart, delight to acknowledge Him as the Lord of their works, ways and wills. At the consecration of the priests of the Mosaic dispensation the tip of the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the great toe of the right foot were touched with blood and oil. This signifies that all those whom Christ has made kings and priests to God by His blood, are His property and possession in will, work and way. Paul knew this when he wrote for our instruction and guidance: "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). His by predestinating purpose—His by redemption purchase—His by regeneration power—His by sanctifying grace.

Do we know Him as having the sole right to the thoughts of our hearts, the looks of our eyes, the work of our hands, and the words of our lips? I do sometimes. Sometimes? Yes, for I have to say to my shame, that frequently I am forgetful and heedless of these blessed privileges. None can need the gracious attention of the Covenant Remembrancer more than I, and none has greater occasion to thank Him for it. He is ever mindful of His own. Though they are frequently forgetful of Him, He ever remembers them, and when far off from Him He will bring them near to Him by His gracious power. It is a marvellous mercy to be brought to that spot. None but God can bring us there, and when brought to His sacred feet we are willing to be just as He will have us to be, and to possess experimentally His kingdom, which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; to know and feel that His service is perfect freedom, and to look with anticipation for the day when we shall enter into His eternal glory.

"And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be-with Me in Paradise." Gracious answer of our Precious Lord to one so unworthy and so vile. "Verily." Jesus meant what He said and would enforce it in the most sacred, certain and solemn manner.

Christ's "Verily" is His Amen—His word, promise, and oath. He pledged His veracity to the poor thief that he should spend a blissful eternity with Him. Here the Lord of life and glory deigned to descend to the very depths of the poor thief's sorrow and soul trouble. To that dear man's prayer Jesus had a prompt Amen. That Amen secured eternal glory to the thief. What a wonder! Grace and glory all in one day. "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." Where is Paradise? To this question a Papist would point in a downward direction. A proud and haughty free grace professor once told me that Paradise was below. I did not believe him. How could I with such a statement of Paul's experience before my eyes: "He was caught *up* into Paradise" (2 Cor. xii. 4). "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath" (Prov. xv. 24). The thief, loved with an everlasting love, saved with an everlasting salvation, clothed in everlasting righteousness, an heir of everlasting bliss, was carried upon the bosom of Incarnate Compassion to the heights of everlasting glory. We will now look at the text. It is a glorious one. Look at it—

"This Man hath done nothing amiss."

It is wonderful! We will notice it thus—

I. "THIS MAN."

II. "NOTHING AMISS."

I. "THIS MAN." There never was one to compete with Him in heaven or in earth. On earth all are fools who essay to do so. I love to dwell upon the Godhead of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is hated and despised by thousands who have sworn that they believe it. Disprove the Godhead of Jesus and you prove Him to be the greatest impostor that ever disgraced the pages of history. But, blessed be His Holy Name, He reveals Himself to every pardoned sinner as the Glorious, Great I AM. To David and Isaiah He revealed Himself as the Mighty God (Ps. 1. 1; Isa. ix. 6). Matthew knew Him as "Emmanuel, God with us" (Matt. i. 23). Paul delighted in Him as "over all, God blessed for ever," and as "the Great God,

and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Rom. ix. 5; Titus ii. 13). He is God with the Father from eternity to eternity. Perfect God—Perfect Man. Why Perfect God and Perfect man? The necessity for this appears to a spiritual mind. Elect man must be saved; but that could not be, but through obedience and suffering, Now God cannot suffer, and there is none superior to Him for Him to obey. Man cannot give the satisfaction required. But here we have One Who is God and Man in one Person. Man to suffer, God to satisfy. As the God-Man-Mediator, He eagerly and perfectly obeyed His Father's law—He willingly endured its dread death penalty—He voluntarily yielded satisfactory suffering to outraged justice, and all for those in eternal oneness with Him. As the Head He received the members to Himself in the eternal covenant to supply them with all needful good, to succour them in all their temptations, and to sympathise with them in all their sufferings. As the Husband of His Bride He paid all her debts, and everlastingly removed all her deformities. Identified with Him before the worlds were framed, the Church was redeemed by Him in time, and will reign with Him in His eternal glory.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was Very God—God blessed for ever—the Mighty God—the Great God, the Only Wise God. Yet, for us elect men and for our salvation, was made Man. Of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. He ate, drank, sorrowed, sighed, suffered and died. Joseph Hart quaintly, yet blessedly, sounds forth His praise—

"A Man there is, a real Man,
With wounds still gaping wide,
From which rich streams of blood once ran,
In hands, and feet, and side.

"This Wondrous Man, of whom we tell,
Is true Almighty God;
He bought our souls from death and hell;
The price, His own heart's blood.

"That human heart He still retains
 Tho' throned in highest bliss;
He feels each tempted member's pains;
 For our affliction's His."

He was a perfect Man in a world of imperfection—a Man of sorrows from Bethlehem's manger to Calvary's cross—a suffering Man from the virgin womb of Mary to the virgin tomb of Joseph of Arimathea—a Man tempted in all points, like as we are, yet without sin. There was no sin *in* Him at any time, yet sin was His by imputation. He knew not sin by impartation or infusion; but the whole accumulated sin of the election of grace was laid by the Father upon Him, and borne by Him into the land of eternal forgetfulness. Did you ever feelingly and intelligently enjoy that sweet outpouring of Hezekiah's heart—"Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back" (Isa.xxxviii. 17)? Where is God's back? You cannot tell. Neither can you tell where are the sins of His people. As the smiles of His face, and the light of His countenance beam upon His eternally-loved children, infinite space exists between them and their sins. Endless distance lies between the sin-burdened and the penal consequences of their transgressions. The Sin-bearing Surety, having dealt judicially with every question of sin for His people, "the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, *but* they shall not be found" (Jer. 1. 20).

It is most blessed when the Holy Spirit exercises the heart with hallowed contemplations on the true and proper manhood of Christ. Look at this—

"As Man, a Man of sorrows, Thou
 Hast suffered every human woe,
And thus enthroned in glory now,
 Canst pity all Thy saints below."

In the days of His flesh, when He was brought into the straits and trials of His people, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and being made perfect—ripe in fellow-feeling with His exercised members—"He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Heb. v. 7-9).

He is not only revealed to us as Man in the New Testament, but we see Him appearing in human form in different periods of Old Testament history. He appeared as such most blessedly and opportunely to Jacob when he fled from the face of his enraged brother *Esau*. Turn to Gen. xxxii. 24: "And Jacob was left alone." True religion blooms in private. Hypocrisy flourishes in public. "Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled a Man with Him until the breaking of the day." Always pay strict attention to the exact phraseology of Holy Scripture. "There wrestled a Man with Him." We hear much of wrestling Jacob, but we rarely hear of WRESTLING JESUS. Here we see the Covenant Angel first in this experimental contention—the Holy Ghost revealing the Man commencing the conflict—not Jacob.

"No sinner can be beforehand with Thee,
Thy grace is almighty, preventing, and free."

Paul knew this when he said: "I follow after, ii that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 12). The living child of God objects not to the fact, but rather delights in it. The Holy Ghost has arrested and taken possession of his heart and understanding for the reign of its sole Owner, Jesus Christ.

The Man touched Jacob's thigh, which was immediately out of joint. The sinner, who is ignorant of this disjuncting process, will know nothing of that strength which the Covenant Wrestler alone imparts. The Man said, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." Jacob answered: "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." This was the very simplicity of faith. Had the Man left him with his dislocated thigh, to the ground he must have fallen. Spiritual importunity is rewarded

with spiritual power. Jacob pleads. In the Man's strength he prevails. His name is no longer Jacob, but Israel. He is a prince with God. "And He blessed him there." The scene is precious. Jacob was blessed in that glorious Man before all worlds, and the Man, faithful to His charge, was there to bless Jacob with all needful grace, and to perfect His strength in Jacob's weakness. It is tranquilizing to the spirit to know by divine persuasion that every blessing we enjoy is ours without fail in the appointed time by the faithfulness of the Covenant Communicator.

This Glorious Man appeared most gloriously to faint-hearted Manoah and his courageous wife, as recorded in Judges xiii. He appeared to the woman and narrated to her the circumstances which would attend the birth of her son Samson. She hastened to communicate to her husband the cheering intelligence. Manoah prayed. The Man again appeared with further heavenly revelations. Manoah offered a burnt offering to Him who had given His Name as Secret—Wonderful. The Man departed, but not before He had left the indelible impression upon Manoah's mind that He was the God of Heaven—the Revealer of covenant secrets. At the sight of these wonderful transactions, Manoah thought death would certainly ensue; but his faithful wife was equal to the occasion, and buoyed up his fearing spirit with the assurance of God's unfailing care and solicitude. It is no mean mercy for God to give to a poor unworthy sinner a wife who is heir together with him of the grace of life. The Visitor who appeared so graciously to Jacob and Manoah was none other than the Man of JEHOVAH'S right hand, the Son of man, whom He made strong for His own glory, and the everlasting salvation of His people (Ps. lxxx. 17).

This Gracious Man reveals Himself so gracious in Proverbs xviii. 24: "A Man that hath friends must show Himself friendly." He is the Man Who shows Himself friendly to all the friends associated with Him in covenant before the foundation of the world. This is He of whom Isaiah wrote so blessedly: "A Man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a

dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." He Whose heart was broken in Gethsemane, and on Calvary, is the only Hope and Hiding-place for miserable and mourning sinners. But in the New Testament we see this Man a living, loving reality. A Tempted Man in the wilderness for all His tempted ones. A Weary Man at Sychar to give sweet repose and refreshment to one whom He had made weary with the burden of her sins. A Suffering Man through life to solace all His suffering brethren. A Dying Man redeeming sinners dead in trespasses and sins. "A Broken-hearted Saviour suits well a brokenhearted sinner." He finds no place in the affections of whole-hearted sinners. Trace His pathway all along the history recorded of Him in the inspired Word, and there you see Him, a Man suffering, sorrowing, dying. Still further, we see Him rising from the dead—ascended to Heaven's highest glory. There He ever lives to make intercession for transgressors. We now notice—

II. "NOTHING AMISS." This can be said of none but Jesus. The dying thief gave a glorious testimony to the spotless obedience of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—the glorious righteousness which makes the sinner just. "This Man hath done nothing amiss." This flows of necessity from His nature, for *' He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26). "In Him is no sin" (1 John iii. 5). This lies hidden in the very recesses of His being; for "He knew no sin" (2 Cor. v. 21). His whole life declares "He did no sin" (1 Peter ii. 22). Yes, His life was unblameable and unproveable—spotless holiness—unsullied righteousness. He thought nothing amiss—He said nothing amiss—He did nothing amiss. He was ever liberal without extravagance. He was purely economical without parsimony. He was no meddler, yet ever attentive to the work His Father gave Him to do. He was not a busybody, yet always about His Father's business. The first Adam failed in yielding obedience to his God, and ruined all his posterity. The Last Adam succeeded in all He undertook as the Surety of the covenant, and saved the whole election of grace with an everlasting salvation. He wrought out a righteousness commensurate with all the requirements of God's

righteous law, and thus secured the eternal justification of all the loved ones of His heart.

All Heaven, earth and hell bear witness to the impeccable purity and sinless obedience of Jesus. The devil styled Him "the Holy One of God" (Luke iv. 34), and concerning his subtle approaches to, and violent assaults upon Him, He could say, undauntedly: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (John xiv. 30). There was nothing in the sinless Jesus for Satan to work upon. No weakness for hell to overcome. Pilate, His vacillating and unjust judge, gave testimony concerning Him, saying: "I find no fault in Him" (John xix. 6). The centurion who conducted His execution, cried: "Certainly this was a Righteous Man" (Luke xxiii. 47). Universal nature declared that He was righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works. In the thief's testimony we behold "the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe" (Rom. iii. 22). The righteousness is Christ's. The faith is Christ's. He makes Himself and all that He has, as the Mediator of the covenant, over unto us. The faith of the Head is the faith of His members.

"And lest the shadow of a spot
Should on my soul be found,
He took the robe the Saviour wrought
And wrapp'd it all around."

The Psalmist delighted himself in this righteousness, saying: "I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only" (Ps. lxxi. 16). Feeling his deadness, he cried: "Quicken me in Thy righteousness" (Ps. cxix. 40). Lamenting the silence of God, he replied: "Answer me in Thy righteousness" (Ps. cxliii. 1). Harassed in his pathway, he prayed: "Lead me, O Lord, in Thy righteousness" (Ps. v. 8). Bound in spiritual captivity, he groaned: "Deliver me in Thy righteousness" (Ps. xxxi. 1). In this righteousness he would be judged (Ps. xxxv. 24), and in it he would stand before God everlastingly justified. On the ground of His perfect obedience Jesus

is the Righteousness of God to His people, and they are the Righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. v. 21). Paul's creed and confidence is clearly given in 1 Cor. i. 30: "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption." As He appears now in the heights of glory, so we appear in Him. Is He righteous? We are righteous in Him. Is He holy? We are holy in Him. Perfect. Complete. Because of the purity of His life, and the perfection of His obedience, His Name is "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer. xxiii.6). Because of the relationship existing between Him and the church, "this is the name wherewith she shall be called—THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer. xxxiii. 16).

The precious testimony of the thief concerning Christ is true of all found in Him. The world may defame—conscience may accuse—and Satan may distress with his fiery darts, but the Eternal Justifier will never cease to behold them in the Son of His love as having "done nothing amiss," and will cheer them with His own good words of promise: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord" (Isa. liv. 17).

Happy are the people who are in such a case, who, in their own estimation, are sinners vile and base; but, in the estimation of their Covenant God and Father, are free from sin—without fault—whiter than snow—"Nothing amiss."

THOMAS BRADBURY.

Grove Chapel, Camberwell,
March, 1902.

"I Know."

"I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My Name."

—Rev. iii. 8.

I remember hearing, long years ago, in the days of my youth, from the lips of one now safe in his Father's house above, and for ever freed from the fierce temptations and spiritual bewilderments which then distressed him, the precious words found in chap. xix. 10: "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." They produced a lasting and salutary impression upon my mind, by which I have been led to seek for Jesus and His precious testimony in every part of God's Blessed Book. Glory be to His Holy Name, I have not been left to seek in vain, but have been caused to confess with adoring gratitude, "I have found Him of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth." Yes, "I have found Him Whom my soul loveth."

In this part of the inspired writings He is revealed in a variety of glorious and gracious characters; hence it is styled, "THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST." This signifies the lifting up, the drawing aside, or, the taking away of the veil of ignorance, error and superstition, and in the light of God discovering the beauties, excellencies, grace, salvation and Person of Emmanuel. Our God thus makes Himself known to His loved ones in the most unlikely places, and by means surprising and unthought of by mortal minds. He passes by the great ones of the earth, whose massive brains are ever restless for earth's empty and perishing distinctions, and who

fill the world with discord and discomfort simply to gratify their ambitious designs. These may make their mark in a world which will perish like themselves, but they make no mark in heaven except that which must call forth JEHOVAH'S wrath and indignation. This solemn and searching truth we learn from the lips of Incarnate Wisdom as recorded in Matt. xi. 25-27, "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him."

It is galling to the pride of clean handed Pharisees to hear of a God of infinite purity passing them by, and conveying to the guilty, the abandoned, and the lost, the purity of His Christ, the pardon of their sins, and the peace of His covenant. This is beautifully seen in the conduct of God's Christ when He turned His back upon the temple and its punctilious washers of tables, and cups, and sought the society of an alien from all such, who had left a devil in her house that day (Matt. xv. 21). His grace is exquisite as discovered in His gracious request to drink from a pitcher fouled with the lips of an outcast adulteress at Jacob's lonely well. In all this the eye of Godwrought faith sees and admires the abounding of God's sovereign grace over the abounding of His people's sins, Infinite Purity is seen communicating life and salvation to filthy sinners, yet contracting no defilement, but imparting to them His own purity and perfection. He hides Himself from the proud pietist—He shuns the pulpit, the pew and the priestly palace—He leaves destitute of His grace the ceremony and the sacrament—He beggars and baffles the prater of pious platitudes, while He visits the garret, the gutter, and the abodes of affliction, and cheers the longing soul with sweet messages of His love and reviving inspirations of His life. The great, the mighty, the intellectual, the wise men of the world, knew not the

Lord of glory, or they would not have crucified Him (i Cor. ii. 8). A sovereign God makes all things subserve the purpose of His grace.

"Great was the myst'ry, truly great,
That hell's designs should hell defeat;
But here Eternal Wisdom shines,
For Satan works what God designs."

But, why speak I thus? Because I would lead you in the Spirit to notice and admire with me the loving attention of our blessed Lord and Saviour, which was not spent upon the magnificent temple at Jerusalem, nor upon the pompous schools of philosophy in Greece or Rome. O no! The choice of Jesus was the illiterate, not the intellectual—the foolish, not the wise—the weak, not the mighty—the base, not the noble—the despised, not the *elite*. Not to the great and grand in this world's estimation did He turn His attention, or manifest loving care and tender sympathy. Here we see Him in the lonely sea-girt Isle of Patmos appearing unexpectedly to one who dwelt there in banishment and loneliness for His Name's sake—His beloved disciple John. He speaks. John says, "I turned to see the Voice that spake with me." "*And being turned.*" Do you notice that? John did not attribute to himself the ability to turn himself. He gloried in the privilege of lying passive in the hands of Jesus, and being wholly wrought upon according to His gracious will and good pleasure.

"And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks"—symbols of God's perfect, precious church here upon earth. "And in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks One like unto the Son of Man"—Christ associated with His people in all sufferings and sorrows, temptations and tribulations. "Clothed with a garment down to the foot"—our glorious King-Priest. "Royal and priestly His seamless attire." "Girt about the paps with a golden girdle"—sustained in all His care and attention to His people by the unceasing and unwearied love of His heart. "His head and his hairs were white like wool"—setting forth the eternity of His existence and the imperishability of

His love. "His eyes were as a flame of fire"—piercing to the length, breadth, depth and height of all the sorrows and necessities of those whom His love and blood has saved. "And His feet were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace"—this displays the stability of all His gracious appointments and the certainty of all His covenant promises. "And His voice as the sound of many waters"—this makes known the majesty and authority of His word. "The Voice that speaks the promises rolls all the stars along." "And He had in His right hand seven stars"—the diversity and perfection of the ministry of gospel grace efficiently carried on under His sovereign control. "And out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword"—in this is secured the enforcement and triumph of eternal truth. "And His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength"—this is life renewed to the new man and death to the old (Ps. ix. 3; xlii. 5, mar.). At the sight of Jesus, John fell at His feet as dead—not simply as inanimate, but as a mass of corruption. At the sight of "this same Jesus" centuries before, Daniel—that model man—declares, "I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength" (Dan. x. 8).

In this state of humiliation John received gracious strength and God-given confidence from the hand of Sovereign Power and from the lips of Infinite Wisdom. "Fear not." These words when brought home to the heart by the power of the Speaker, impart both confidence and peace. Strong believers and timid trusters alike need, at times, these heart-cheering words from the lips of their Compassionate and Faithful High Priest; and blessed be His Holy name, they shall never perish for the want of them. "I am the First and the Last"—the source and consummation of His people's salvation—the Life and Power of divine revelation. "I am He that liveth." Sin for ever gone by His one offering of Himself, death hath no dominion over Him. He liveth to bring to a successful issue everything that concerns the eternal well-being of His redeemed. "And was dead"—in His dying, death was defeated, destroyed—and

everlasting life and glory secured to every member of His mystical body. "And, behold, I am alive for evermore"

Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. vii. 25). "And have the keys of hell and of death."

Universal sovereignty is His. Not a saved one can enter glory but by Him. Not a loved one can be separated from us and taken home but by Him. Not a lost one can enter the portals of darkness and despair, but Jesus holds the key. He commanded John to write the things which he saw. True Protestantism clings tenaciously to the things which are written—not to things springing from and spoken by men, for these form a confused mass of truth and error. It is by the things which are written that we both know and believe anything savingly of God, and are guided aright by the Spirit in preaching, proof and practice (i John v. 13).

In the second and third chapters of this book we have recorded the epistles to each of the angels, bishops or pastors, of the seven churches in Asia. In these we see the being and well-being of the church of Christ to the end of time. Giving a description of professing churches—mixtures of good and bad—the statements therein are not to be wrested from their connection and applied to individual members of the living church of Christ. By so doing much error exists, and uncertainty unhinges the minds of many of the living family of God. Communities spring into existence, and when they have served God's purpose He removes them, and nothing in creation can restore them; but this does not prove that any living child of God can fall from grace and be eternally lost. This is an utter impossibility, foreign to God's mind, and antagonistic to the clear declarations of the Scriptures of truth. The seven churches in Asia lasted God's time, and then, as candlesticks no longer required, were removed out of their places. Yet, through centuries of error, corruption and superstition, and in the midst of hostile forces, the Name of Jesus has been heard, and a church of professing followers

of the Lamb has maintained its existence in Philadelphia. It was a Greek city, deriving its name from its founder, Attalus Philadelphus, and was the last of the cities of Asia Minor which fell into the hands of the Turks. The epistle to the angel of this church contains no spirit of rebuke or reproof, and is wholly commendatory, which is not the case with the rest, excepting Smyrna.

We must now look at the kindly words of commendation spoken by Jesus to His weak and weary church, and dwell upon them in the following order:—

I. Acquaintance: "I know thy works."

II. Attention: "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it."

III. Acknowledgment: "For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My Name."

I. Acquaintance: "I know thy works." Of Jesus, and to Jesus, we can say truly in the heart searching words of the psalmist, "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, Thou knowest it altogether" (Ps. cxxxix. 2-4). As God Omniscient He knows all about each and every one of His creatures. As the Surety of the covenant He is fully acquainted with the whole election of grace, for whose salvation, security, and glorification, He held Himself responsible to the Father in the counsels of eternity before the worlds were made. As the Head and Saviour of His body, the church, He associated Himself in sin-bearing, suffering and sorrow with every member thereof. As our brother, born for adversity He proves Himself true to His word, faithful to His Father, kindly considerate and sweetly compassionate to all His frail and helpless followers. In the progress, welfare and perfection of His one church He has an unwearied interest, and upon every lamb and sheep of His redeemed flock His ever-watchful eye is fixed. Of Abraham, in His purpose of salvation, He said, "I know

Him" (Gen. xviii. 19). Of Israel in bondage and hard servitude He said, "I know their sorrows" (Exod. iii. 7). To Moses, in a time of great anxiety, He said, "Thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name" (Exod. xxxiii. 17). To Jeremiah, when qualifying and fortifying him for his arduous commission, He said, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou earnest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jer. i. 5). Of all the sheep given to Him by the Father, and redeemed by His own most precious blood, He says, "I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine" (John x. 14).

He not only knows them for' His own joy and glory, but He makes them participate with Him in the blessedness of that knowledge. In the midst of trials excruciating and distracting, Job, by divine teaching, could say, "But He knoweth the way that I take: and when He hath tried me I shall come forth as gold" (Job xxiii. 10). When terrible judgments and wide-spread desolation reigned in the land, a godly remnant found refuge in the covenant care and faithfulness of JEHOVAH. See Nahum i. 7: "The LORD is good, a Stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him." The way of the righteous (Ps. i. 6), and the days of the upright are well known to Him who appointed them all (Ps. xxxvii. 18). And to Him David could experimentally and confidently say, "Thou hast known my soul in adversities" (Ps. xxxi. 7), and, "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then Thou knewest my path" (Ps. cxlii. 3). That is a wonderful and searching scripture to souls convinced of sin, "O house of Israel, I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them" (Ezek. xi. 5). But that is a precious and most glorious declaration to those who experience the performance of the good word of promise of their Covenant God and Father, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD; thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jer. xxix. 11). With disorder and confusion abounding on every hand, Paul could write so confidently to his son Timothy, "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth

them that are His. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. ii. 19). The first inscription on God's seal confronts all Arminians, while the second confounds all fleshly Antinomians.

But the words of the text assert Christ's knowledge of His people's works—"I know thy works." This may puzzle and perplex many an exercised child of God, who has sought in vain to find in self some good thing acceptable to God. This reminds me of one now in glory, who, when told of the good he had been privileged to do, responded with all the vehemence of his Irish spirit, "*/ never did a good work in my life.*" He knew that in his flesh abounding evil, and no good, could be found. This teaching leads from self to Christ. Here we may ask and answer the question, How does He know our works? He knows them because He is the Origin, Author and Performer of all that finds acceptance in His pure eyes. "From HIM all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed." In the days of my youth I was taught, and thank God, I am not allowed to forget it, that the grafting of the love of His Name in my heart—all increase in true religion—all nourishing in all goodness—all keeping in the same, is through Jesus Christ, by the Lord of all power and might. Who is the Author and Giver of all good things. "In Him we live, ARE MOVED, and have our being." Do good works manifest themselves in me? They only appear as so much fruit from Christ my Root. See how the living children of God acknowledged this in the days of Isaiah—"LORD, Thou wilt ordain peace for us: for Thou hast wrought all our works in us" (Isa. xxvi. 12). Should we really work for the Lord until our bodies were reduced to shadows, we should be constrained to say from the very ground of our heart, "Yet, not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (i Cor. xv. 10). "Himself hath done it," whatsoever there is of good in me. All of grace! All of grace!!

We see this in a pre-eminent degree in that magnificent utterance of the Apostle Paul in Eph. ii. 10, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before

ordained (marg., *prepared*) that we should walk in them." Do you notice that? Paul boasted not in the performance of good works; but gloried in his God Who prepared good works for him to walk in. All the Father's works are good. All the Saviour's works are good. All the Spirit's works are good, and in these we desire and delight to walk.

He alone can teach us the true and right way, and set us in the way of His steps. Then, and there alone are we a people zealous of good works. If we are His and He is ours we shall not require a Dorcas Committee to air our good works for the world's gaze, neither shall we seek to appear liberal with the funds of a benevolent society. Oh, no! The poor thief who hung by the side of his Blessed Saviour was rich in good works. He rebuked sin—1 contended for the fear of God—extolled God's Christ—preached Christ's righteousness when he said, "This Man hath done nothing amiss," and prayed for the companionship of Christ in His kingdom and glory. Our precious Lord Jesus knows every motion and spring of action, and acknowledges every seeming trifle produced in the fear of God, even though it be but two mites cast into God's treasury (Mark xii. 41-44), or a cup of cold water given to one because he belongs to Christ (Mark ix. 41). Before assembled worlds Christ will exhibit and acknowledge the good works of His own which follow them, and of which they know nothing, think nothing, until He surprises them with their enumeration. "When?" say they. Then, says He, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (Matt. xxv. 34-40." II. Attention: "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." Here we behold a glorious revelation of the sovereign sway our Jesus exercises over all things for His people He is the Head of His church, and He is also the Head over all things to His church (Eph. i. 22; v. 23). When He wills, His church is in a low place to test the faith of His own giving; and when He wills, His people are raised up together, and made to sit together with Him in heavenly places, to commune with Him and to glory in the grace that raised them to such a gracious dignity. For His people's good, their growth in

grace, and establishment in the truth, He calls, commissions, qualifies, and sends forth His messengers to preach His gospel, publish His fame, and proclaim the glad tidings of His salvation, succour and solicitude. Ministerial success is wholly in His hands. Arminians and mongrels are ever looking away from Christ to second causes, because second causes are far more to them than Christ. When He calls a man to His work that man has no occasion to advertise himself. Wherever the Lord has need of him there He will send him, and command *ravens* or poor widows to sustain him, until He has no further need of him there. And here I would record to the glory of my Gracious God, that from the day He first sent me forth to preach His truth, concerning each spot with its multiplied mercies, "*neither thought it, sought it, nor bought it.*" I have no faith in advertising preachers.

Paul knew well his Master's mind when he wrote to the Corinthian saints, "A great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (i Cor. xvi. 9). Again, "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me of the Lord" (2 Cor. ii. 12). Paul's consciousness that Christ was All in this matter did not produce in him a spirit of indifference; he entreated the Colossian saints to "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving: withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ" (Col. iv. 2-3). When a door of ministerial toil and labour is opened by the Lord to any man, all obstacles, hindrances, and difficulties, must sooner or later—in the Lord's own time—flee before Him. The kings of the earth and the rulers of the people may take counsel against the Lord and against His Christ—the heathen may rage and imagine vanity in thinking that they can break the bands of election and predestination, and cast away the cords of God's counsels and decrees—while He Who sitteth in the heavens—laughs at them, and holds them in derision. Does Christ set before His servant an open door? He says to that servant, "No man can shut it." Do mountains of difficulty arise? Before our Zerubbabel they become a plain. Does Pharaoh seek to check the increase of Israel?

By these very means God multiplied the number of His chosen people in Egypt. Does Herod murder James and seek to apprehend Peter? James is comfortably at home with his Saviour-God—Peter proceeds successfully with his loved employment of preaching Jesus, and praying to Him—Herod is ignominiously eaten of worms. Does hellish malice bind Paul in chains at Rome? The word of God is not bound, and the things that happened at hell's instigation fall out rather to the furtherance of the gospel, so that the power of Christ is felt and enjoyed in Nero's court and in all places named in the counsels of eternal love, while the Word of God has free course and is glorified (Phil. i. 12-13).

The obdurate enmity of the carnal mind of every sinner opposes itself to the onward and ever triumphant progress of gospel truth. Every avenue is closed against the entrance of the Word of Life, while legions of prejudices are marshalled against it. Neither judgments nor mercies move the natural man, while he stands proof against persuasive eloquence and forcible arguments. In the opening of the door of the heart, the logic of Paul, the zeal of Peter, the eloquence of Apollos, all fall pointless; but when our blessed Emmanuel begins to work all opposition is fruitless. He wastes not His time tapping to be hindered; but where He knocks He removes all hindrances, removes them altogether and discovers to His loved ones a door of hope—a door of faith—a door of utterance. Jesus will be Master. The key of the house of David is on His shoulder. When He opens none can shut. When He shuts none can open (Isa. xxii. 22). This reminds me of the saying of a godly, clergyman as he referred to one seeking the favour of ecclesiastical patrons: "He forgets, if he even knew, the Patron of all the livings in the kingdom." When He opens a pulpit door for one of His anointed messengers, not all the powers of earth and hell combined can keep him out.

III. Acknowledgment: "For thou hast a little strength." It is blessed to notice the tender solicitude of Jesus for the little things of His kingdom. To His handful among men He says, "Fear not, little

flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke xii. 32). Each lamb He tenderly carries in His bosom (Isa. xl. 11). He cautions proud oppressors against dealing harshly with His weaklings: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt, xviii. 6). Of the safety of those who cannot defend themselves Jesus says, "It is not the will of your Father Which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish" (Matt, xviii. 14). God's elect ones are a feeble folk, but their Dwelling Place is the Rock of Ages (Prov. xxx. 26). Christ's reeds though bruised can never be broken, but strengthened and perfected to eternal glory. His smoking flax can never be quenched, but must glow to a flame of everlasting joy and praise (Isa. xlii; 3). The little cloud rising from the deep sea of eternal love will increase until it drops in showers of heavenly blessing (1 Kings xviii. 44).

Yes. Jesus knows and acknowledges the tiny graces of His feeble folk. Some rise no higher than those who desire to fear the Name of Israel's God (Neh. i. 11). Others tremble to talk, fearing they might say more than is true; but they fear the LORD, and *think upon His Name* (Mai. iii. 16). Some dread to be heard in prayer before their fellows, who delight in the Spirit's inward intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered (Rom. viii. 26). Little-Faith receives marvellous attention from Him upon Whom help was laid by the Mighty God of Jacob. He refreshes His drooping plants. He revives the desponding spirit. He strengthens the weak hands. He confirms the feeble knees. He calms the troubled heart. He says to His worm Jacob, Fear not (Isa. xli. 14). He grows not weary in giving power to the faint, nor in increasing strength to them that have no might (Isa. xl. 28-29). Little-Strength does wondrous things. Before timid Gideon the oppressing Midianites flew like the chaff of the summer threshing floor (Judges vi. 15-16). Giant Goliath was laid low by Little David. "Ye feeble saints, your strength endures because young David's God is yours."

"And hast kept My word." That is wonderful in the face of all the conflict Christ's weaklings endure at the hands of the world, the flesh, and the devil. The counsels of hell are ever ready to supplement, supplant, or stifle the Word sown in the hearts of God's elect. With hypocrites Satan succeeds, but with God's own, never. Listen to Jesus: "I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world. Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; *and they have kept Thy Word*" (John xvii. 6). I have wondered how the eleven felt as these words of gracious acknowledgment fell upon their ears. They were men of like passions with us, and subject to the same fits of forgetfulness. He knew what He was talking about.

So did His Father. And so did the Holy Ghost. Words kept. How could they do other than keep them? This reminds me of an oft-repeated expression of dear West of Winchelsea—"Burnt in!" That which God makes ours "by the Spirit of judgment and by the Spirit of burning" can never be forfeited or lost.

"And hast not denied My Name." As we belong to Him in ties of love, blood and power, we shall be exercised before Him on this score. Who can say they have never been ashamed of owning His Name? I cannot; yet I have never been weary of it since first its sweetness charmed me to Himself. In promise He said to His Father, "I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren" (Heb. ii. 12). In the fulfilment of the same He said to the Father, "I have declared unto them Thy Name" (John xvii. 26). This could only be through the preciousness of His own Name—JESUS. Let this be intelligently experienced and enjoyed by the anointing of the Holy Ghost, then suffering, contempt, and shame for it will be welcome; but no denying the grace and glory revealed in it. Salvation is in the revelation of it to the heart. Not salvation offered, but salvation itself—full, free, and for ever. Salvation in purpose, purchase, and power. Salvation from sin, Satan, and self. Salvation "each day full a thousand times o'er." Here we may well sing

"The mention of Thy Name shall bow
Our hearts to worship Thee;
The Chiefest of ten thousand Thou—
The chief of sinners we."

THOMAS BRADBURY.

Grove Chapel, Camberwell.
April, 1902.

"My Thoughts."

"In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul."

—Ps. xciv. 19.

NONE but one quickened into spiritual life, and brought into the enjoyment of relationship with Israel's Covenant God, could honestly express himself in the language set before us in the text. It is the language of a heart possessed by God—the confession of a spirit chastened in God's faith and fear—the delight of a soul exercised by the hidden movements of God the Holy Ghost. Blessed indeed are those who are brought into some knowledge and understanding of these perplexing exercises which ever precede the enjoyment of that peace which the world cannot give, neither can it take away. You will notice throughout the whole of this Psalm how David sets before us the blessedness of affliction. The, worldling cannot talk like that. The mere professor can only look upon afflictions as so many evidences of God's wrath and indignation. But the true-born child of God, "begotten again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"—quickened by Father, Son, and Spirit—"born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever"—knows better, being taught of God. He is privileged to say with the Psalmist, "I know, O LORD, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me" (Ps. cxix. 75). The confession goes forth from the heart of all such, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes (Ps. cxix. 71).' The statutes, or royal laws, of the Redeemer's Kingdom are learned exclusively in the school of human suffering. It is blessed to

say with Him, "Unless Thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction" (Ps. cxix. 92).

It was in that school that the Great and Glorious Head of the church learned obedience. See Heb. v. 8: "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." In these things He was made perfect. Was He not perfect in every point and in every particular of His Person and work here below, and as He appears before His Father's throne above? Certainly; but here we consider Him in His *official*, not in His personal perfectness. When the Scriptures speak of His being *consecrated, perfected, full handed*, it refers to the completeness of His obedience and sacrifice, and of the maturity of that experience of His people's sufferings and temptations, by which He is able to enter fully into all their exercises in communion and fellowship with them. He knows every pang and every - trial experienced by every member of His mystical body, and in His own good time He is pleased to communicate the blessedness of the same to the heart of each and all. As the Head was taught so must the members be trained in the same school. As "He learned obedience by-the things which He suffered," so must we experience in our measure fellowship with Him in His sufferings, and be brought to the enjoyment of God's presence and blessing therein.

At the commencement of the Psalm David calls upon the God to Whom vengeance belongeth to settle all matters between him and his adversaries. He leads our minds to the contemplation of the glorious fact, that He Who planted the ear will be attentive to the cries of His suffering people—that He Who formed the eye will watch over His persecuted ones and screen them from the designs of Satan and his emissaries—that He Who chastiseth the heathen will not stop short in His corrections—that He Who teacheth man knowledge knows all things concerning the creatures of His hand. He "knoweth the thoughts of man that they are vanity," and those of us who are spiritually one with Him can abundantly testify to the truth of it. Left to ourselves for a moment or two where are we? Carried hither and thither by every puff of worldly circumstance—

our thoughts occupied sadly too much with self—and when thus exercised naught but disorder, dissatisfaction, and discontent are found within. Yet, in the experience of all this the Psalmist could say, “Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of Thy law.” This he said from personal and heartfelt experience, and he knew full well that this teaching was not simply from the *ten words* given upon Sinai; but in the revelation of JEHOVAH'S glorious sovereignty and absolute authority over all things in heaven, earth, and hell—His right to do as He will with His creatures—to choose whom He will to be His companions to the ages of eternity : and also His undisputed right to leave out of His gracious consideration altogether whom He would. He teaches His own that His is the choice of our pleasures, pains, joys, and sorrows. Our comforts flow from His sacred hands, while our seasons of sorrow are skilfully arranged for us in the abounding of His all-wisdom and prudence.

God's sovereignty is blessedly set forth in the language of adoring affection in Ps. cxxxv. 1-6: ‘! Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the Name of the LORD; praise Him, O ye servants of the LORD. Ye that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God, Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good: sing praises unto His Name; for it is pleasant. For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure. For I know that the LORD is great, and that our LORD is above all gods. Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.” In heaven the LORD hath done whatsoever He hath pleased, in His everlasting and unchangeable covenant before all worlds—when He gave the whole election of grace to “His Elect,” Christ, for Him to save from the consequences of the Adam fall—to redeem with His most precious blood—to wash from all sin, filth and uncleanness—to justify in His perfect and spotless obedience—in the set time of favour to quicken them by His Spirit—give them an intelligent and grateful apprehension and appreciation of their Father's mind and will, though they know that the communication of the same will be through sufferings, afflictions, and temptations.

The blendings of judgment and mercy, severity and goodness, are all wrought in them in the fondest manner by the love of His heart and the skilfulness of His own right hand.

Whatsoever He pleases He does. He brings His own elect, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, into living and experimental oneness with Himself, to sit at the Master's feet, and to learn increasingly, day by day—aye, I mean what I say, even in moments when they mourn their lack of tuition, He is teaching them imperceptibly—lasting lessons of grace and glory. Whatsoever He pleases He does upon earth.

He gave to each of us a creature existence at the very moment He designed, whether morning, noon, or night—whether in storm or tempest, or when evening zephyrs sweetly flowed around. He brings His child into being, and causes it to be cared for with no small care—to drink in nourishment from a poor weak mother's breast—attends to it each step of its wilderness journey—preserves it when wandering from Him, caring nothing about Him, and when the mind is dead set against Him, so graphically set forth in the moving and almost matchless language of dear John Kent—

"Indulgent God, how kind
Are all Thy ways to me,
Whose dark benighted mind
Was enmity with Thee;
Yet now subdued by sov'reign grace,
My spirit longs for Thy embrace!"

It is blessed for me to-night to look, back at first one step and then another before I knew my Gracious God, and to remember the frames of mind stealing over me, which led to thoughts of another world. These I confessed to one and another, and was considered a fool for my pains; yet, I thank God for what these looked upon as my folly. Yes, these exercises I look upon as so many marks of His covenant care over me, and pledges of future communications of His

gracious mind and will to me, and the revelation of our covenant relationship to each other as Father and child. Not only did He accomplish His mind toward me in my birth, and during the days of my unregeneracy; but, in the set time of favour, brought me to a spiritual birth—gave me a new heart with new thoughts and desires* and earnest longings after Himself. Some of these longings would appear never to be fulfilled, filling me with anxiety and perplexity, causing me at times to wonder had I any part or lot in the gospel of God at all had I a place in His kingdom—a welcome seat at His feet—by the witness of His Spirit. Oh, for the sprinkling of atoning blood, cleansing, justifying, sanctifying, or, separating from everything that opposes itself to Him. Can the Blessed Spirit have begun His good work in one who feels himself to be sin all over? Can He dwell in such corruption—in spite of the continuous determinations of the flesh to have nothing whatever to do with Him, as the Convincer of sin and the Glorifier of the Father's Christ?

Oh, how blessed to be privileged to say with the Psalmist, "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of Thy law; that Thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity." Blessed be His Holy Name. "There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God" (Heb. iv. 9). Mark you, I do not look at that declaration according to the general acceptation thereof; that is, there is a rest awaiting me after the toils and trials of the journey are over. I know that is true, but it is not the truth of that portion. It means that in the midst of all the world's restlessness—the restlessness experienced by the people of God—the opposition encountered by the life of God in them—the fierce temptations from the world, the flesh and the devil—the dire distresses through which their anxious minds have to wade—in the face of all these, "there remaineth"—there abideth—"a rest to the people of God." It cannot be worn out—a period cannot be put to it. The rest which He has for His restless ones is simply Himself. Listen! "We which have believed"—mark well the exact phraseology—I like it—I glory in it—it has been the comfort and joy of my heart in many a sorrowful hour!—"We which have believed DO enter into rest"—into the rest

prepared, provided and preserved for every elect vessel of mercy—every sinner saved by the blood of the Lamb—every redeemed offender justified in the righteousness of his Redeemer—a rest for these according to the will, desire and determination of a Sovereign God. This is true—the nearer God seems to bring me to the gates of death—the nearer I am carried in spirit to the confines of eternity—the closer I contemplate the solemnities of the grave and glory, the more my spirit is established in those glorious realities preached by me before I knew any of you—to which a faithful God has kept me faithful—by which He has made me a speckled bird among the preachers of the day. But these things I receive from His gracious hand as continued tokens of His love. Yes, the nearer I am brought to the spot where flesh and heart fail, the more I feel confirmed in the glorious realities of the Gospel, and the more the testimony of Christ is confirmed in me.

"For the LORD will not cast off His people." I shall say nothing specially upon this point to-night. You will see my mind upon it in the Volume "Grove Pasture," page 113, "Not castaway." No, "The LORD will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance." Here I wish you to notice briefly the experimental opposites appearing in the text and its context. Look at the seventeenth verse, "Unless the LORD had been my Help, my soul had *quickly* dwelt in silence" (margin). That is true as God is true. I know it is. Read verse 18, "When I said, My foot slippeth; Thy mercy, O LORD, held me up." Why did he say, "My foot slippeth"? Because he knew it—because he felt it—because he experienced his weakness—was conscious of his frailty, and his utter inability to take a single step, or even to stand for a single moment without Divine support, Divine enabling, and Divine upholding. The felt experience of human weakness and frailty is a forerunner of God's mercy manifested and communicated—"Thy mercy, O God, held me up." Then look at the very blessed words of the text—"In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul." There we discover a strange, mysterious experience, different altogether to that of the religious world, and from the expectation of

the newly quickened child of God. The eager hope of the babe in grace is to be free altogether from anxiety, fear, and perplexity, and to be blessed with unceasing companionship with Jesus. The longing of the soul under the experience of this bewildering uncertainty is expressed in the language of Bathurst—

Oh for a faith that will not shrink
 Though press'd by many a foe;
That will not tremble on the brink
 Of poverty or woe ;—

That will not murmur nor complain
 Beneath Thy chast'ning rod,
But in the hour of grief and pain
 Can lean upon her God ;—

A faith that shines more bright and clear
 When tempests rage without;
That when in danger knows no fear,
 In darkness feels no doubt ;—

A faith that keeps the narrow way
 Till life's last spark is fled;
And with a pure and heavenly ray
 Lights up a dying bed.

Lord, give me such a faith as this, .
 And then whate'er may come, . . . , <
I'll taste e'en here the hallow'd bliss
 Of my eternal home.

Has God given me faith? Then He has given me also the trial of it. Has he given me confidence in Him? It will be attended with many a rough shaking in the midst of which *my* confidence will remain unshaken. Does He bless me with triumphing always in Christ? He will bless me also with the trials and the tests which prove the

triumph to be genuine. The faith, the triumph, and the trial are all His own. But let us look at the words of the text. The first, the prominent truth arresting our attention, is, "My thoughts," and the multitude of them. Thoughts! What are they? Mere volitions of the mind, taking into consideration, coolly and dispassionately, passing events? No! There is something more tangible and trying in that expression, "My thoughts." As we look through God's blessed Word we discover that the heart of man is exercised with thoughts of strange variety. See Gen. vi. 5. Here we meet with the painful fact—that the thoughts of man's heart are only evil and always evil. That is true all the world over. The Master tells us the self-same thing—"Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts" (Matt. xv. 19). The Psalmist was troubled with "vain thoughts." So am I. He hated them with a cordial hatred. So do I. Yet it appears that vain thoughts do not hate me. They seem to be very fond of me—they woo me with a seeming determination to win me and possess me. They oft-times mar the enjoyment of communion with a Covenant God in Christ, as He is revealed in His most Holy Word. Yet it is very blessed to estimate "vain thoughts" at the same value Jeremiah put upon them. He says, "How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge in thee" (Jer. iv. 14). Vain thoughts are only lodgers, and when, by the power and grace of His blessed Spirit, the Master of the house comes—when He is pleased to reveal Himself to the heart, asserting His right to the proprietorship thereof—these base intruders all take flight.

But, we will look at the word "thoughts" according to its meaning in the text. Now turn with me to Matt. vi. 25-34, "Therefore I say unto you, take no THOUGHT for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink: nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." Again, "Which of you by taking THOUGHT can add one cubit to his stature? And why take ye THOUGHT for raiment?" Again, "Therefore take no THOUGHT, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Again, "Take therefore no THOUGHT for the morrow." Let it be remembered that Incarnate Wisdom never encouraged His disciples in carelessness or indifference. Turn to Luke xxiv. 38: "And He said unto them, Why

are ye troubled? and why do THOUGHTS arise in your hearts?" My dear friends, that word THOUGHT has a vastly different meaning now from that which characterised it when our Bible was translated, when the Prayer Book was compiled, and when Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and Chaucer wrote. In these we discover the meaning to be "undue anxiety." We read of one of whom it was said, "He died of thought." Of such an one we should now say, "He died of a broken heart—he fretted his life away—he worried his life out of him." Turn to Luke xii. 29: "And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of *doubtful mind*"; or, as you read in the margin, "*live not in careful suspense.*" But there we are, and there we ever should be, were it not for the deliverances "the God of all grace" has secured for us in His covenant of unfailing grace.

Our fickleness is well described in Ps. xxxix. 6: "Surely every man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up *riches*, and knoweth not who shall gather them. And now, LORD, what wait I for? my hope is in Thee." Vain show—a fleshly determination to show ourselves off, in the display of things we possess, which we could do better without, or, something that our proud flesh can do, or our tongues, "set on fire of hell," can say (James iii. 6). It is astonishing to think of the trifles which beget "vain disquietude." Do you expect a letter? Let the postman pass your house without his usual knock—without an expected letter for you—or, without a message from somebody, or anybody, to you. This trifling disappointment makes you as disagreeable as the flesh can possibly be, making everyone who has anything to do with you miserable with your discontent. You act as though you had lived on vinegar for a month. In this we see something of the "vain disquietude" caused by the "vain thoughts" in the minds of God's children when a fleeting disappointment occurs to them. The thoughts sally forth occupied wholly by self, and while thus exercised, there is no rest or quietness for the troubled spirit, or those in contact with it. We are frequently distressed in the thoughts of our hearts because of our felt helplessness, and I have found relief for my restless spirit in the words of the prayer—"Almighty God,

Who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves; keep us both outwardly in our, bodies, and inwardly in our souls; that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." Many times I have thanked God for those words, and I thank Him for them now. That is the expression of a heart convinced of the fallacy of the figment, creature ability—the longing of a heart knowing that conditional comfort to an exercised child of God is a huge lie sent forth from hell's council chamber to harass and distress the tempted followers of the Lamb.

Do not think for a moment that I desire to lead any of God's children into the sinful regions of carelessness and indifference. Such a desire is foreign to me. The perplexities of the children of God abound because of the frailty and treachery of all human props upon which they lean—the multitude of life's sorrows—the depravity of their nature—the deceitfulness of their heart, and the weakness of the flesh. Yes, the weakness of the flesh, for it is weak to perform anything right, but strong to oppose that which God in the riches of His goodness, is working in the hearts of His own. Many a child of God is burdened with, anxious thoughts on a grave subject which appears to be the sum total of the experience of many—"Oh, if I only make a good end—if I can only get to heaven at last—it will be well if I escape the wrath to come, and get home among the glorified." Well, that may be very good so far as it goes, yet, according to my judgment, it is vilely selfish. The experience worth having is that exercised in the heart by a present God. See! "God, is our Refuge and Strength, a Very Present Help in trouble" (Ps. xlvii. 1). This is the God Who has given His promise—"Certainly I will be with thee" (Exod. iii. 12)—Who reiterates His promise to His own Israel, "In all places where I record My Name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee" (Exod. xx. 24)—Who holds to His promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt, xviii. 20). Again, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt, xxviii. 20). How

blessed it is to have to do with a present, performing God. But many in His family are "all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. ii. 15). They are not in bondage all their lifetime, but they are subject to it. Certain persons are subject to certain maladies, so many of God's children are subject to bondage through fear of death. How blessed, when death's Destroyer appears to such, and sweetly reveals the blessed truth that "the Way of life is above to the wise"—that He has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel—that He Himself is the Resurrection and the Life to those whom He brings to trust and confide in Him.

Many of the children of God are full of anxious thoughts concerning the future. Notice the exact word, "thoughts." Not "thought," but "thoughts," and those in multitude. The word is taken from a striking figure—the many branches of a tree entwining and chafing each other in times of storm and tempest. Oh, how the heart is oftentimes chafed with perplexing thoughts. When my heart is exercised with anything apart from what God has made His Christ to me, then my vain and foolish thoughts abound. In the midst of such bewilderment I wonder whether that precious Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who revealed Himself so blessedly to His disciples in days gone by is mine, or not? I wonder, can He remain in the midst of corruptions and inconsistencies such as I feel myself the subject of, and whether God can have began His good work in me, when the flesh opposes His Blessed Spirit at every gracious movement in His glorification of Christ in me. Ah! when left to myself I wonder, shall I endure to the end—"join in the everlasting song and crown Emmanuel Lord of all"? When even a little love to Him moves my heart, unbelieving thoughts are gone and covenant comforts are blessedly mine. Even here strange opposites mingle as the acknowledgment flows from my adoring spirit, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul." In seasons of sorrow He brings me His joy. When felt sin is my distress, He visits me with His salvation. 'When my soul cleaves to the dust, He cheers me with His own good word of promise. When a feeling of deadness steals over me, He restoreth my soul and gladdens me with deliverance from the gates

of death. "When the toils of the wilderness fill my soul with perplexity, then He appears with His own sweet "Peace, be still." When my heart is bowed down with heaviness, "His comforts delight my soul."

Oh, how blessed in such seasons to enjoy by the God of all comfort the assurance that Jesus is mine. In the midst of sore temptations, vile corruptions, base wanderings, and many waverings, when feelingly ready to perish, I know the preciousness of His appearing in promise after promise, assuring me that if He—"Jesus.—did once upon me shine, then Jesus is for ever mine." I love—I delight—to be occupied with Him as my own God, and to know that as assuredly as He has begun to teach me He will perfect my spiritual education in eternal glory. Problems most perplexing He will teach me to solve, or will solve them for me in my experimental salvation, while I fear and tremble, as He works in me "to will and to do of His good pleasure." It is my felt privilege to know that my Covenant Surety, Who settled the question of sin for me upon Calvary's accursed tree, and will settle the question of every one of my sins by the witness and seal of His Blessed Spirit within me; that He, the Consolation of Israel, will not fail me when the powers of hell assault me, and sorrows tell their sad tale upon my soul. Sometimes I have the assurance that the God of all comfort will not desert me when I am cast down because of the toils and trials of the way home, and when I forget and lose sight of Him altogether. Oh, what a mercy to find a place in the interest of the Covenant Remembrancer, Who will not allow us to remain ignorant of the blessings conferred upon us by the Father, secured to us in the Son, and revealed in us by His rich grace. He will bring all things to our remembrance whatsoever the Father has bestowed upon us—whatsoever Christ has said to us—and all His heart's delight is to make known to us His and our Beloved in His adorable Person and full salvation.

I have spoken longer than I intended. But, HE KNOWS. May the God of all grace bless us with the rich enjoyment of His love, and say to every fearing heart, "I, even I, am He that comforteth you: who art

thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be as grass; and forgettest the LORD thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?" (Isa. li. 12,13). May a precious Lord Jesus, Who came forth from the bosom of the Father to comfort all Zion's mourners, say to each burdened spirit, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem" (Isa. lxvi. 13). May that other Comforter, the Blessed Spirit, comfort us with His choicest gifts and consolations, and glorify the Father's Christ in our sorrowful experiences.

"Dear Lord, may I a mourner be
Over my sins and after Thee;
And when my mourning days are o'er,
Enjoy Thy comforts evermore."

It has pleased God of late to bring me down very low to learn afresh the frailty of poor mortality. And frailty it has proved itself to be indeed and in truth. It pleased Him to take me to bed to feel my weakness and utter helplessness. The first two weeks I was left in darkness—destitute and bare. I had not a desire to open my Bible. Through mercy that is a rare thing in my experience; but, though rare, it was mighty humbling. I felt myself a pretty character to be a pastor, unworthy to be God's mouthpiece. The Master's words were mine feelingly and intelligently—"without Me ye can do nothing." Yet I had no rebelliousness—no repining—no fault finding with Him. I felt sick of earth, and longed for home. He will have His own to wait His time, and do His work according to His will. When the wind from the Throne dispersed the clouds, I felt

"AMAZED TO FIND MYSELF so VILE,
AND JESUS SMILING ALL THE WHILE."

"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 comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ" (2 Cor. i. 3-5).

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May, 1902.

"Joined Together."

"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."
—Mark x. g.

IN this interesting chapter we have a variety of characters presented for our consideration. Not long ago I directed your attention to the persons mentioned therein, and to their different peculiarities. We then saw the young ruler, so earnest, for he came running to Jesus—so humble, for he kneeled to Jesus—so anxious, for he asked Jesus to instruct him, saying: "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" What a question! Inheriting is not by doing. Inheritance is by birth, and descends by right and title from a progenitor. It is not bought, earned, or merited. Jesus answered the young man on his own ground—directed him to the law's demands, showed him where he was lacking—and convinced him of the impossibility of the heart being fixed upon both heavenly and earthly treasure. With a heart sad and sorrowful he went his way, for he had great possessions. Yet Jesus loved him for all that.

Then we see the disciples astonished out of measure at the heavenly teaching of their Gracious Master. Peter could talk of what he and the others had left; but Jesus could tell him what they should endure for His sake. And as they were in the way going up to Jerusalem, they were amazed and afraid as He told them of His approaching condemnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. In the face of all this, ignorance and pride characterised them. James and John were bent on earthly preferment. On the right hand and on the left of the King they would sit in a fancied worldly kingdom. He questions them as to the baptism of suffering they should endure, and tells them that

His granting the privilege to sit on His right hand and on His left hand was only to those for whom the same was prepared. He teaches them also a lesson of humility, showing them by His own example, that to be great in His kingdom was to be satisfied with being insignificantly small, saying, "For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28).

The last character to notice in association with Jesus is blind Bartimaeus. And how different he appears from the others! Their hearts were set upon earthly possessions and positions. The blind man's heart was fixed upon a Heavenly Person. No sooner did he hear that Jesus was near, than he began to cry to Him for mercy. When charged to hold his peace he cried the more a great deal. When Jesus commanded him to be brought to Him, the poor blind man cast away his garment and came to Him. What was his garment in his estimation to the mercy, pity, and Person of Jesus ?" What wilt thou that I should do unto thee ?" asked Jesus. The blind man replied, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." His sight was given to him with the charge, "Go thy way;" when, instead of yielding prompt obedience, and going about his own business, he "followed Jesus in the way." The Person of Jesus was everything to him, while his heart found no time to waste in the thought of "great possessions," or a place of pre-eminence in the Redeemer's coming kingdom and glory. Jesus found no occasion to question him as to the baptism of suffering in prospect. Heart attachment to Jesus fortifies against all that.

The chapter opens with a view of the Father's Obedient Servant pursuing His gracious work of salvation, succour, and sympathy. The first verse closes with one of the sweetest sentences in the Book—"And as He was wont, He taught them again." He is more ready to impart the lessons of His grace than we are to receive them. And when we have received them how soon we forget them. Yet forget them as oft as we may, He will not leave us to perish in our ignorance, for He will teach us again, and by His Promised Spirit,

the Covenant Remembrancer, will bring to our remembrance all things whatsoever He has said unto us, which we have forgotten (John xiv. 26). Patient, Forbearing Teacher! We shall never be ignorant through His want of attention. The following paragraph reveals a class of persons distinct from all the others appearing in this remarkable chapter. The Pharisees, marvellously good in their own estimation, tempters of Jesus. They came and asked Him "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?" He referred them to their own prophet and law-giver, asking in return, "What did Moses command you?" And they said, "Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away." And Jesus answered and said unto them, "For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept." Have you noticed that the word "precept" occurs but twice in "The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?" It is strictly a law term, and savours not of the gospel of free and sovereign grace, which is a proclamation of bestowments, not of requirements. Here we see that the precept was for hard-hearted hypocrites—not for broken-hearted sinners. The other portion alluded to is Hebrew ix. 1g: "For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the New Testament, which God hath enjoined unto you." When the New Testament is understood, and the blood of the Lamb is sweetly applied, the precept, though not despised, is left in the hands of the precept-Fulfiller. "Gospel precepts" is a contradiction in terms.

The Master continued His answer to the tempters, "But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female." Not male and females. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and they twain"—not more—"shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh." This is clear as light to those whom God, in these things, has made chaste, pure, and sensitive. When He created man He created woman—not women. Out of Adam's side He took a rib, not two ribs or more. He

knew that one woman was quite sufficient for one man. Throughout the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, God keeps His mind in this matter clearly and prominently before the minds of His people, and in dealing out to them a paternal reproof at the winding up of Old Testament vision and prophecy. He says—"And did not He make one? Yet had He the residue of the Spirit. And wherefore one? That He might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth" (Mai. ii. 15). Certainly a plurality of wives existed among the people of God from Lamech to the coming of Christ in the flesh. At this God seemed to wink, but in His dealings with His own He ever acknowledged but one—the wife of youth., Sarah for Abraham—Leah for Jacob. We all know that Rachel was the wife of Jacob's heart, but Leah was his wife in God's eye and judgment. This Jacob was constrained to acknowledge when he gave his sons commandment concerning his burial, saying—"I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah" (Gen. xlix. 29-31). Why did he not say, *' Leah my wife?" It may seem surprising that he mentioned Leah at all, when Rachel was the wife of his heart, but he must speak according to God, and be buried with the wife of heaven's appointing. "Rachel was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem" (Gen. xxxv. 19). God's ordinance is—male and female—man and woman—husband and wife—twain yet one flesh. We come to the words of the text:—

"What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder."

These words flowed from the lips of Incarnate Wisdom rebuking the Pharisees for their readiness to separate from their wives because of any unimportant weakness. He declared that divorce was legalised

by Moses purely because of the hardness of man's heart, and that from the beginning it was not so in the mind of God, Who hateth putting away (Mai. ii, j6). But it is not my intention to extend my remarks on this subject of marriage and divorce, but to endeavour under the Spirit's guidance to direct your minds to the consideration of several things which God has permanently joined together, and which man in his perversity seeks to separate. Short-sighted mortals are ever meddling with things they do not understand, and, in their own puny judgment, sever that which is inseparable in the mind of the Eternal. We will notice :—

I. JEHOVAH—THREE in ONE and ONE in THREE. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are revealed in the sacred scriptures as One. God co-essential, co-equal, co-eternal. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not three Gods but One God, for God is One (Gal. iii. 20). Neither do the Eternal-Three form one Person, for then they could not be Three, but simply One. The Revealed Three are the Unsearchable One. All that can be apprehended of the Unsearchable One is revealed in the Adorable Three. Paul says, "There is one God" (1 Tim. ii. 5). Christ says, "I and My Father are One" (John x. 30). John says, "These Three are One" (1 John v. 7). One Self-existent, Underived, Omniscient, Omnipresent, Omnipotent JEHOVAH, the Sole Creator, Upholder and Governor of all men, spirits, and things. This "mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ" (Col.ii. 2), is a height too vast for finite understandings. It is a depth too profound for seraphs to fathom. Yet here the faith of God's elect delights to apprehend all that is revealed of the Incomprehensible.

Only in the covenant of grace, and the accomplishment of the purposes of redeeming love, can the mystery of the Trinity be held inviolate. The Father wills the salvation of His own. The Son desires not to over-run the Father's will. He therefore saves as many as the Father gave to Him to save. The Son's work is equal to the Father's will, and both are infinite. The Spirit determines not to overstep the will of the Father, nor the work of the Son—hence all God's elect

are saved—all Christ's redeemed are regenerate—and none other. In this day of gospel grace, the Spirit delights in the over-sight of all whose names are in the Lamb's Book of life—of all who repose in undisturbed security upon the bosom of everlasting love. Who would have it otherwise? None taught of the Lord. Would any? Yes, the devil has ever sown discord in the minds of men respecting this Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity. The fleshly Jews would have stoned God's Christ for saying, "I and my Father are One," and thus, in their judgment, making Himself God (John x. 30-33). The devil loves not the Son of God, and has ever sought to make Him altogether inferior to the Father. There are thousands now who profess and call themselves Christians, who are one with the devil and the devilish Jews in scandalising Christ and declaring Him to be a mere man and no God. Such persons are too good and virtuous to need salvation from sin by love, blood, and power. They are too full of self to hunger and thirst after the everlasting righteousness of God the Eternal Son. O for grace to sing with all one's heart and soul—"Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen." The Father is glorified for His electing love—the Son is glorified for His redeeming grace—the Spirit is glorified for His regenerating power. This is eternally secured to them in the *will* of the Father, through the *work* of the Son, by the *way* of the Holy Ghost in the heart's experience of all the members of the one Body. Here we heartily and spiritually say—"WHOM God hath joined together"—in His truth—"let not man put asunder."

II. THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD. The inherent perfections of God gloriously harmonise and are thus revealed in Jesus Christ. Creation heralds forth continually the wisdom, power, skill, and Godhead of JEHOVAH; but the love of His heart can only be known and enjoyed in the Son of His love. All His works praise Him, but all His Saints bless Him (Ps. cxlv. 10). They bless Him for His manifold wisdom and prudence characterising His plan of salvation by grace, through the interposition, mediation, and intercession of the Covenant Surety. They bless Him for His invincible power in executing His

will in the doing and dying of the Faithful Covenantee, and the indwelling operations, witness and seal of the Covenant Comforter. They bless Him for His glorious sovereignty in ordering, arranging and regulating everything for His own glory in the glorification of His people. They bless Him for His sovereign grace, which secures to Him their company, adoration, praise and love. They bless Him for His matchless mercy, which saves them from sin, shields them from wrath, redeems them from death, succours them in temptation, and carries them to glory. They bless Him for His impartial and unmixed justice, by which He deals to all in heaven, earth or hell, their due, according to law or love. They bless Him for His holiness, in which He adorns and qualifies them for companionship and communion with Him for ever. They bless Him for His faithfulness, which secures to them every gift, grace, and blessing promised to them in Christ Jesus before the world began. In our Adorable Lord, justice and mercy fall not out by the way—righteousness and peace are one in sweet embracings. God is one, and oneness without sameness is the distinguishing quality of all His attributes.

Here we behold, in the clear waters of divine truth, all the perfections of JEHOVAH resting in sweet agreement. Who would disturb this unruffled serenity? The devil—the Papist—the Unitarian—the Arminian. Yes, that is all true. Each and all of these will not be pleased with me for saying so; yet, I say it not to vex them, but simply because it is true. Many talk of the love of God who hate His truth. Thousands delight to set His mercy and justice at war with each other. To tone down His truth and to make spiritual food palatable to carnal appetites—which is an impossibility—the multitude speak of "*God's darling attribute, Mercy.*" These know not what they are talking about. They "understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." God has no darling attribute. His attributes are not like the legs of the lame, unequal, up and down, in and out, off and on. There is no inequality or discordance in Deity. His mercy deceives not those whom His justice will damn. Christ saving those who are eternally lost is a strange muddle which Arminian meddlers can never clear. God accepting Christ as a

Ransom for some who shall be everlastingly shut up in the prison of hell casts a reflection upon the wisdom, justice and faithfulness of God that I should not like to feel guilty of. God's justice is tempered with His mercy, and His mercy with His justice, so that whatever be the display of His mercy, He is never too soft, and whatever be the exhibition of His justice, He is never too hard. "He delighteth in mercy" (Micah vii. 18). "He is a just God and a Saviour" (Isaiah xlv. 21). "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

III. THE GODHEAD AND MANHOOD OF CHRIST. The Holy Ghost joined these together in the womb of Mary, never to be divided. As God He sought and saved His lost ones here. As Man, He fills the throne of God up there! His brethren, the Father's children, are partakers of flesh and blood, therefore He also Himself likewise took part of the same. They were flesh and blood before Him. He was God before He could bring them to God. To bring them to God He must be made Man. Extremes meet.- They *did* when the divine and human met in the lowest parts of the earth. In the earth they must meet ere the members can meet the Head in heaven—in God. The one and only Mediator between God and elect men must be human and Divine—God and Man. "The Word was God" (John i. 1). "The Word was made flesh" (John i. 14). Why? Because His people must be saved by obedience and suffering. As God, He could not suffer, and there was none higher than Himself to obey. He willingly, voluntarily, eagerly "humbled Himself" to His people's level, "and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8). Here He perfectly obeyed the law which we had broken—satisfied the justice we had outraged—vindicated the holiness which we had dishonoured—put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself—presented Himself as our Law-fulfilling Righteousness to God, and us in Him. He is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS—we are THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM (Jer. xxiii. 6; 2 Cor. v. 21).

As the High Priest of His People, He offered Himself—His sinless humanity—upon the golden altar of His Divinity. The Godhead

giving eternal efficacy, infinite worth to all that He offered for us, and to us in the offering. It is sweet to notice the two extremes one. One in revelation where we might never expect to see them. Though a babe in Mary's womb, she acknowledged Him as God Her Saviour (Luke i. 47). As Man, He was weary at Jacob's well, yet He revealed Himself to the Samaritan harlot as the God of Jacob, the great I AM (John iv. 6 and 26). As Man, He slept, after a day's hard toil, in the ship on the sea of Tiberius, but when the winds roared and the waves lashed themselves in fury, as God, He silenced them with a word (Mark iv. 38, 39). As Man, He wept at Bethany. As God, He spoke life to His dead friend Lazarus (John xi. 35-44). As Man, He suffered upon the cursed cross, while the whole creation blushed at the barbarity of the creatures to their Creator. "As Man, He now fills the throne of God," while as God, He attends to the wants and necessities of His own in all places of His dominion, and as God and Man, one Christ, proves Himself Head of the Church, and Head over all things to it. This He has proved to my satisfaction, and I shall never be happy in the company of those who would, if they could, persuade me out of it. "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

IV. CHRIST AND THE CHURCH. This oneness is a glorious theme. It is blessed indeed, to know by the Spirit's teaching that "He that is joined to the Lord is *spiritually one with Him*" (1 Cor. vi. 17). In the marriage union Paul saw this oneness existing, eternally and unbroken, between Christ and His Church (Eph. v. 22, 33). It was from everlasting, in everlasting love, everlasting life, everlasting light, for there is no true love, no true life, no true light, apart from Christ. In the counsels of eternity the Church was in Christ more permanently and securely than the branch is in the tree, the member in the body, the stone in the building, or the wife in the affections of her husband. Her safety is everlastingly secured in the perfections of her Husband. In Christ her Head, wisdom profound abides, which can never be touched or baffled by the combined counsels and schemes of hell. In Christ her Life, all vitality, motion and fruit necessary for her wilderness wanderings and home rejoicings are

safely treasured. He is bound to her by the most solemn engagements, that He can never leave her nor forsake her. He has bound her to Him by covenant ties, and puts His faith and fear in her heart so that she shall never depart from Him.

For her, He is Prophet, Priest, and King, and these offices are inseparably united in Him on her behalf. His is an everlasting Priesthood, in which He has accomplished eternal redemption—ever lives to make intercession, and comes forth to crown her with eternal blessings. As a Prophet He teaches her never-to-be-forgotten lessons by the Eternal Spirit from the Word of unchanging truth. He will reign in her affections as her Everlasting King, until He has put all enemies under His feet. It is so blessed to see the harmony maintained in the mediatorial offices of Jesus Christ. And it is lamentable to notice how many who profess His Name sow discord on this ground. They will own Him as a Priest to save them, intercede for them, and bless them; but they despise His teaching as a Prophet, and hate His sovereignty as a King. Thousands, in their design, desire, and determination, rend asunder those covenant offices God has joined together. They blindly say He died for those whom He never teaches—who will not have Him to rule over them—the world for whom He never intercedes (John xvii. 9), and who are ever ignorant of Him as their Prophet and King. Nothing but grace can move the heart to say, “We two are so joined, He'll not be in glory and leave me behind.” “What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder.” Let us notice—

V. DOCTRINE, EXPERIENCE, AND PRACTICE. AS the Three in the Undivided Godhead are Essentially and Eternally One, so the teaching flowing from them is essentially threefold. They are joined together all through the Blessed Book. This characterises the ministry of every God-sent, Christ-made, and Spirit taught messenger of redeeming mercy. He delights to preach the preaching God gives to him. He glories in good doctrine (Prov. iv. 2); sound doctrine (Titus ii. 1); the doctrine which is according to godliness (1 Tim. vi. 3). This is simply God's teaching by His Word and Spirit.

God's doctrine, or His truth communicated to the heart by the Holy Ghost, is never contrary to His Book, the Scriptures of truth. By it, He teaches His own elect people their sinfulness, vileness, ignorance, emptiness, and helplessness. This teaching is in the light of His glorious perfections. In the light of His holiness they mourn their sinfulness—in the light of His purity they loath their vileness—in the light of His omniscience they lament their ignorance—in the light of His fulness they confess their emptiness—in the light of His almightiness they fall down helpless before Him. Here, His Good Spirit reveals to them, in the sacred Scriptures, or according to them, all the salvation, succour, supply, and strength they need, in Christ.

This is good teaching, and all taught of the Lord are blest with the proof of it, which is *experience*. Experience is heart-proof that God is true to His Word in all His teaching. Has He taught me that I am a sinner? He will not leave me destitute of His mercy and truth in covenant verities and salvation realities. As Jesus is revealed to my heart as my Saviour-God, and as I "see in His dear sacred face, ten thousand sins forgiven," He leaves me not in the filthy darkness insinuated in that Arminian lie, *continuing in sin that grace may abound*. Oh no! The grace of God that brings salvation teaches those to whom it is brought, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Titus ii. II, 12). As grace is exercised in the heart by the Holy Indweller, gracious practice is sure to be seen. These things God hath joined together, and none but devils and men of corrupt minds, who are reprobate concerning the faith, will try to put them asunder.

VI. THE CHILDREN OF GOD. In the time appointed by the Father, His sons and daughters are brought by the mediation of their Elder Brother, and the sweet witness of the Spirit of adoption, into the experience and enjoyment of union and communion with Him. The chief delight of Satan is to put them asunder and to keep them apart. He is the old whisperer who chuckles in separating chief friends (Prov. xvi. 28). One of the most odious characters in the judgment of the God of peace is "he that soweth discord among brethren" (Prov.

vi. 19). The apostle Paul emphasised his abhorrence of all such, and earnestly entreated the saints at Rome, to beware of them, saying, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions, and avoid them" (Rom. xvi. 17). Satan will divide and scatter. Christ will unite and gather together the loved ones of his heart. As members of the mystical body of Christ we were one in the counsel and covenant of peace—one as the purchase of His blood—one as the conquest of His Spirit. The desire and demand of the Covenant Surety is "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us" (John xvii. 21). This is all accomplished in His own time and way.

This oneness is elaborately and graphically set forth by the Holy Ghost under the figure of the human body in 1 Cor. xii. The body is one; so also is Christ, Head and members. By One Spirit we are all baptised into one body, and have been all made to drink into One Spirit. God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him. Though many members, yet they are one body. There should be no schism in the body, and the members should have the same care one of another—their suffering and rejoicing mutual. That is a sweet exhortation of Paul to the members of the one body at Corinth: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. i. 10). Exercised by the one faith—animated by the one hope—consecrated by the one baptism—we are blessed with the privilege of "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. iv. 3-6). In this matter we may glory in the injunction: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

VII. GRACE AND GLORY. These were joined together in covenant before all worlds. They are inseparable in the Scriptures of truth. They are ever united in the experience of the heirs of grace and glory. "The LORD will give grace and glory" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11). Lovingly He has bound Himself in covenant, by word, by promise,

and oath, not to give one without the other. "The God of Glory calls to the enjoyment of grace" (Acts vii 2, 3). "The God of all grace calls to the enjoyment of glory" (1 Peter v. 10). Electing grace can never be separated from elected glory. Grace is glory in the bud. Glory is secured in grace. Grace is enjoyed in all its fulness in glory. Electing grace binds the elect eternally to God. Redeeming grace delivers the redeemed eternally from the devil. Justifying grace effectually shuts the mouth of every accuser. Regenerating grace puts the favoured sinner among the children in the house of the Father. Forgiving grace brings the child to the footstool of favour. The God of grace gives the grace of faith by which the recipient lives in glory. He gives the grace of hope by which Christ the Hope of glory is a present Reality.

Doubters and dreamers would do well to consult that cluster of new covenant promises given in Jer. xxxii. 38-40. "And they shall be My people, and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from Me." This reminds one of the cable of covenant love which never can be broken, though the powers of hell rage horribly—"Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. viii. 30). Does He give grace?" He giveth more grace" (James iv. 6). Does He give life?" His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter i. 3). "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

"And when I'm to die,
Receive me! I'll cry.
For Jesus has lov'd me, I cannot tell why;

But this I do find,
We two are so join'd,
He'll not be in glory and leave me behind."

Amen and Amen.

THOMAS BRADBURY.

Grove Chapel, Camberwell,
June, 1902.

"Nothing Perfect."

"For the law made nothing- perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh unto God."

—Heb. vii. 19.

MOST blessed it is to have our spiritual minds stirred up by way of remembrance with those words of our Lord and Master, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John vi. 63). In these words we who are blessed with spiritual understandings, discover the secret of all Divine and heavenly instruction—the secret of that spiritual education which God imparts to all His chosen, redeemed and regenerate children, in fulfilment of His promise to the Zion of His heart, "All thy children shall be taught of the LORD" (Isa. liv. 13), quoted by Jesus in John vi. 45, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me." He who hears the Father's voice in covenant command must come and sit at the feet of the meek and lowly Jesus—the Brother born for adversity—the Friend who sticketh closer than any brother—the only One commissioned by the Father to teach and communicate His mind and will, according to His own words of mysterious import, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matt, xi. 25-27). All our approaches to the Father, and

all that we know of Him, is in, by, and with the Son. I love those words, "To Whom coming" (1 Pet. ii. 4) for fresh lessons in words of grace, salvation, life and glory. "To Whom coming" for refreshing in the old lessons received and forgotten, but not to be finally lost.

God is pleased to use the means He thinks fit and proper in bringing His children to a right understanding of His everlasting purpose of grace, of His good pleasure to bring to Himself, down here in communion, and up yonder in the consummation of bliss and blessedness, a definite number of Adam's lost race, whom He styles, "Mine elect"—"My redeemed"—"My people." These He distinguishes as His own by love, blood, and power. By love in His everlasting purpose. By blood in the sacrifice of His Own Dear Son. By power in the indwelling, witness and seal of His Blessed Spirit. You will notice in reading God's holy Word consecutively the great difference existing in the style of the writers thereof. Paul is not like John; John differs much from Luke; Jeremiah resembles not Isaiah; Isaiah appears to cast into the shade all the rest of the prophets. Here we see marvellous diversity. In it all exists wonderful unity. This is graphically set forth by Paul in 1 Cor. xii. 4-6, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God Which worketh all in all."

You will also notice how differently God works in one age from that of another. His works are seen in one and He teaches by His *creative* power. In another He works in gracious supply and teaches by His never-failing *providence*. In ages past He wrought by *type* and *shadow*, and then by *prophetic utterances*, until the more sure word of prophecy came shining clearly in the Person and work of the Son of His love. High in the heights of glory, clothed in His mediatorial and moral grandeur, the God-Man appears, while the Blessed Spirit glorifies Him in the heart's experience of His eternally loved people. He takes one of these and quickens him into spiritual life by the application of an exceeding great and precious promise, while He

awakens and startles another to a sense of damnation and despair by the thunder-peals of His righteous and holy law. He opens the heart of one like Lydia gently and gradually, while the heart of another is broken open instantaneously by the power of God in the convulsions of nature and the invincible energy of His truth. Mark the contrast between Lydia and the jailer (Acts xvi. 14 and 26-30).

In all this we see our weakness and folly in attempting to measure or gauge our experience or the teaching we have received from God by that of another. Mark you, the teaching He gives to another is not mine. Yet, we are taught by the same God—saved by the same grace—washed in the same blood—clothed in the same righteousness—heirs of the same inheritance—and bound for the same glory. The same Christ embraces all the election of grace. Spiritual comforts and consolations abound by the same Spirit. In God's garden trees of every growth are found—the stately cedar—the upright palm—“the hyssop that springeth out of the wall.” In His redeemed flock both lambs and sheep appear, “and to Him the weakest is dear as the strong.” The weakling is upheld by the strength of God, while the giant in spiritual knowledge and experience has only the same, and can boast of no more. “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength” (Isa. xl. 29). “When I am weak, then am I strong,” Paul could say, and that because his Gracious Saviour had said to him, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. xii. 9, 10).

Leaving preliminaries, let us look at the three prominent truths of the text—

- I. Failure.—“For the law made nothing perfect.”
- II. Success.—“The bringing in of a better hope.”
- III. Proof.—“By the which we draw nigh to God.”

I. Failure.—Let us read the whole verse—“For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope *did*, by the

which we draw nigh to God." Notice that word *did* is in italics, and causes confusion. In fact, nonsense. What do you make of this—"The bringing in of a better hope *did* make nothing perfect"? This is the truth of the text—"The law made nothing perfect; but it is by the bringing in of a better hope that we draw nigh to God," in Whom all perfection abounds to His dear children. Now let us notice the failure of the law to produce perfection. Law! What is it? A rule of action commanded by one who has a right to demand obedience. The law of God is the assertion of His authority and sovereignty. It is the declaration of His will demanding the obedience of His

creature man. 'When God created man He placed him under law to test his obedience. "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying: Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. ii. 16, 17). Man in his creature perfection was thus put to the test of his obedience, allegiance and love to his Creator; but he loved the creature more than the Creator. He stood not the test—he fell. From that day to this it has been quite sufficient for God to say to man, "Thou shalt not," and man would do the very thing forbidden. You see this illustrated in the case of the two sons in Matt. xxi. 28-30, "A certain man had two sons, and he came to the first, and said: Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered, and said: I will not; but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered, and said: I go, sir; and went not." In this we see the perversity of human nature all the world over.

But it is our delight to contemplate in striking contrast to this the glorious perfections of our Covenant. Surety—His willing and unwavering obedience—His filial faithfulness—His loving delight in doing His Father's will. Mark well His affectionate reproof to His mother, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke ii. 49). My heart often quivers with strange delight at the sight of His saying to His disciples, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (John iv. 34). It is sweet by the

eye of faith to see the heart of Christ in heaven with His Father, while He was toiling for us upon earth. There is an old saying which I love, "Tis home where the heart is." I love none the less the saying of the Master, "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also" (Luke xii. 34). The Son of the Father's love came forth from the Father to obey the Father's law; not as a servile slave, but as an affectionate Son, whose heart was purely one with the Father in all that the Father willed and determined concerning the eternal salvation and everlasting glorification of all in spiritual oneness with Himself. How differently we find ourselves in thought, feeling, look, word and act to the obedient Surety. Every motion of our old nature is enmity against God. Every volition of the carnal mind is hostile to the very Author of our existence.

This Epistle to the Hebrews has been given us to show the relative goodness of certain things contrasted with Him Who alone is good. In the first chapter we have the elect angels set before us—"Ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." These are all subservient to their Lord, the Son, to Whom the Father said, "Sit on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." This He said not to the angels. Their visits are few and far between. Their visits are good; but the abiding presence of the Angel of the Covenant is better. Listen! "God is our Refuge and Strength, a Very Present Help in trouble" (Ps. xlvi. 1). This Covenant Angel, Apostle and Messenger says to His loved ones, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt, xxviii. 20). "I am with you" to defend you from all your enemies—"I am with you to deliver you from all dangers—"I am with you" to bring you out of all your distresses—"I am with you" to save you from all your sins; for sins you will commit, feel, hate and confess to the end of your wilderness journey. Oh, my dear friends, I know to my sorrow that I have sinned to be saved—that I sin and am saved—that I shall sin as long as I am in this body of death. You who are saved from the power and dominion of sin know something of its plague and deceitful working, and as you have experienced the

all-cleansing efficacy of the blood of atonement, you will esteem it a blessed privilege to sing under the Anointing—

"Dear, Dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more.'

We come to the third chapter, and there we see Moses faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after. In contrast to this the Holy Ghost has One far better to set before us, "even Christ as a Son over His Own house; Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end." Here we have faithfulness unswerving—Incarnate Faithfulness—"Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him," aye, and faithful to all that the Father gave to Him. Do they sin? He saves them. Do they wander? He restores them. Do they waver? He confirms them. Do they faint? He recovers them. Do they fall? He lifts them up. Moses is lost to view in the glories of Jesus. In chapter four, Joshua is introduced to our notice, leading the elect and redeemed hosts into the promised land. But he could not give the rest they sighed for. He must retire when the Captain of the Lord's host appears leading His eternally loved ones into that rest abiding amidst the world's restlessness, and eventually into the glory which the Father has prepared and secured for all those who unfeignedly love and fear Him. In the next chapter, Aaron, that wonderful old man, commands our attention as God's high priest in Israel. Listen!" No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten Thee." "To-day"—referring to resurrection grace and power. A Greater than Aaron is here.

In the sixth chapter Abraham, and the Abrahamic covenant, are set before us. But One more glorious—One whose faith never failed, and a covenant, everlasting, ordered in all, and sure, are blessedly

revealed to us. Mark well: "When God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself, saying: Surely, blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil: whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest after the Order of Melchisedec." In the seventh chapter, Melchisedec, king and priest, appears; but only to show forth the superior glories of his great Antitype, Christ Jesus. It is said of Melchisedec, "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son; of God, abideth a priest continually." Look at that expression, "without descent," that is, "without *pedigree*." The pedigree of Melchisedec could not be found. Where was his father's name to be found in the family records? Where was his mother's name set down in the register of his progenitors? These are questions which have never been answered positively, and never will be down here. Yet this state of uncertainty leads to the contemplation of One greater and grander, even Jesus, who, as a Man, never had a human father, and, as God, knew nothing of a mother.

The Great and Glorious High Priest of our profession is set before us in the subsequent portion of the chapter. "For those priests were made without an oath ; but This with an oath by Him that said unto Him, The Lord swore and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. By so much was Jesus made a Surety of a better testament. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: but this

PRIEST, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." That is, an intransmissible priesthood—"which passeth not from one to another"—which He did not confer upon His apostles—which is not possessed by Romish presumers, nor by those who profanely ape them in the Establishment. No amount of sophistry can explain this away. The truth everlastingly holds good that the priesthood of Christ can never be scripturally assumed by mortal man. He abides an Eternal Priest. He officiates unceasingly for His worshipping people in His spiritual temple, at the Altar of covenant provision—His own glorious divinity. "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." In all this we see the weakness of everything apart from Jesus Christ.

"For the law made nothing perfect." Which law? Any. The assertion of God's sovereign authority upon tables of stone, or, written in a book, discovers unprofitableness and imperfection wherever mortal man is found. God's own truth reveals to those who proclaim it their weakness and impotency. It matters not what may be the qualifications, eloquence, or experience of a God-sent minister of Christ, though the world may think him a prodigy of spiritual knowledge, yet he is utterly unable to carry a single word home to the hearts of those to whom he ministers. The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus alone can receive of the things of Christ and show them to those who are spiritually interested in them. The words written upon the tables of stone by the finger of God were brought down by Moses to stiff-necked Israel. At that very moment Israel was worshipping the golden calf prepared by God's own appointed priest. Here you see the priest of God's appointing leading the people into base idolatry. At the sight, Moses in hot anger cast the tables of stone from his hands and smashed them to pieces. Afterwards when the words of the law were written again by the finger of God, what profit did Israel reap thereby? You will see what, by reading Psalms lxxviii. and cvi. There you may learn what the law did for Israel. It discovered Israel's weakness, defects, and deformity. It could only bring to light that which was opposed to the

mind, will, purpose and pleasure of God in those to whom that law was spoken.

See how Paul declares this in Acts xiii. 38, 39, "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." The law says, "Thou shalt have none other gods but Me." Does that suit you this morning? Have your hearts been wholly centred in Him? You know they have not. The trumpery, perishing things of this world engage too much of our attention, and only make for our spiritual distress and distraction. Go through all the "ten words ".—"Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image." We engrave too many for God's glory and for our peace upon our memories and our wills. "Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain." I have to bow my head in felt shame as I think of the numberless times I have taken His Name in vain when praying, singing and preaching. In our approach to God we must know Him according to the searching power of His Spirit by His holy law upon the heart. Here we know Him as a Holy God and ourselves as unholy sinners. The law demands holiness and righteousness, but cannot give either. The law demands perfect obedience, but it has been met with perfect disobedience by every son and daughter of Adam.

See how Paul sets forth this truth in Rom. Hi. 19, '•' Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God," or, "*subject to the judgment of God.*" "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." The design of the law is to detect and discover sin in every one of God's children, that they may know its weakness through the flesh to justify (Rom. viii. 3). The apostle continues, "But now the righteousness of God without the law is. manifested, being witnessed by the law arid the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which 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." This law demanding perfect obedience can do nothing but curse and condemn all who are under it. Listen !" If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law (Gal. hi. 21). But no law demanding an unbroken obedience from its subjects can produce a righteousness commensurate with the demand and requirements of a Just and Holy God. The law can do nothing but condemn. Is the law then unjust or unprofitable? No; the law is profitable to detect, discover, and bring to light our sin, weakness and vileness; and thus showing us up in our true colours, hemming us in on every side from every false hope to Christ, in Whom alone that perfection abounds by which we find acceptance with God, enjoy His favour and delight in the love of His heart.

"The law made nothing perfect." Here I learn that my righteousness—or, as I read that word in the plural in Isa. lxiv. 6, "our *righteousnesses* are as filthy rags." Mark you, chastity forbids my telling you what that means. Let each pure mind search this out for its own spiritual profit. It alludes to that which is only for the gaze of the one from whom it proceeds, and then only to be loathed and hidden from view. The law tells me how vile I am in my own will, works and ways. It reveals imperfection, but provides not perfection. It shuts out from God. "The law made nothing perfect." The law made no man perfect—no priest perfect—no prophet perfect—no prince perfect—no plebeian perfect—no person perfect—no performance perfect. Wherever mortal man is found the law pronounces imperfection upon him. Let us read the verse again, "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope *did*." That word "*did*," printed in italics, mars the fair beauty of truth in the text; indeed, it makes it speak nonsense. Look at it—"The bringing in of a better hope *did* make nothing perfect." That will not do. Leave out the word "*did*," and read according to the margin, and you will discover God's pure truth.

II. Success.—“But it was the bringing in of a better hope.” This Better Hope is our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in His Eternal Priesthood. It is not merely the grace of hope, for, as we read through Rom. viii. and Heb. xi. we see it as bright, clear, firm and strong in the Old Testament saints as it is in those of the New Testament. What saint of New Testament times could speak words expressing a brighter hope than that of Job in the midst of an excruciating experience ?—“I know that my Redeemer liveth—in my flesh shall I see God” (Job xix. 25, 26). Who can speak in words of firmer hope than that of David in Ps. xvii. 15 ?—“I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness.” The Hope spoken of here is objective, not subjective. It is “the Hope set before us” in the Gospel—that Blessed and Adorable One, Who, on the ground of His priestly office, and performance of the same, is our Salvation and Confidence. We see this in 1 Tim. i. 1, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, Which is our Hope.” See Col. i. 27, “Christ in you, the Hope of Glory.” Christ in Aaron—Christ in Zecharias—Christ in Ezekiel—Christ in Zephaniah—Christ our Great High Priest, Who has made full atonement for all our sins and transgressions—put them all away by the sacrifice of Himself—glorified His Father upon the earth—entered into heaven’s highest glory, there to appear in the presence of God for all His tried and tempted people, and prove there His ability “to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, saying, “Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me, for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world” (John xvii. 24; Heb. vii. 25).

It is by the bringing in of this Better Hope in the bright beams of Gospel grace—in the revelation of God’s Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures of truth, and the preaching of the Word by His own sent servants, that we draw nigh to God, and by which He draws nigh to us. What a blessed and glorious privilege! This very expression—“a Better Hope”—proves to us that God’s Christ in

His priestly office and character is revealed therein. It is not a hope hidden and dimly discerned in types and shadows, which in themselves are not the truth, and only contain truth in their relationship to. their Antitype, Christ, Who is the substance of every shadow—the Reality of every type. It is by Him alone that we draw nigh to God. That is God's own truth.

III. Proof.—“By the which we draw nigh to God.” Come with me to a few portions of His Holy Word. Turn to 1 Peter ii. 18, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He”—Christ, not angels—not Abraham—not Moses—not Aaron—not Joshua—not Melchisedec—not the sacrifices, ceremonies, rites, signs or symbols of a worn out and obsolete economy—but Christ Himself—“that He might bring us to God.” Let us now notice John x. 9, “I am the Door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” Here Christ declares Himself the Only Way *out of* the world *in to* the Father. The Only One by Whom the Father can be approached. In Whom alone salvation, succour and security are truly enjoyed. Going out for service and conflict, or going in for fellowship or communion, preservation and provision are certain to all in Him. Notice again John xiv. 6, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.” Christ is the Way of salvation from sin—the Way of holiness to God—the Way of life with God. He is the Truth by Whose direction the Way is walked, and the Life by Whom the Goal—the Father—is enjoyed. Dwell much upon Rom. v. 2, “By Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” By Christ we are introduced to His Father and ours. With His hand of love He takes us by the heart and brings us into the sweet experience of the abiding grace of the Father's house and kingdom. Christ by the power of His Spirit and the preciousness of His truth which the Father entrusted to Him for our spiritual education, brings us to God, while the heartfelt confession flows from our lips, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in Thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son” (Luke xv. 21). Well, whatever the conclusion of

the child may be, the Father's judgment is all right, and the grace enjoyed is certain and sure.

Now come with me to Eph. ii. 18, "For through Him we both have access by One Spirit unto the Father." That blessed Epistle to the Ephesians is unique in its testimony. It sets forth the Father's unceasing interest in His children, and His children's inalienable inheritance in Him. The will of the Father is wrought in the children. The work of the Son is the salvation and glory of His brethren. The way of the Spirit is the life and delight of all the children who by Him through the Son draw nigh to God. Again, that is a precious and charming portion in Eph. iii. 12, "In Whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him." Here we see the children of God graced in the Beloved, and we love to feel ourselves among them, blessed with spiritual liberty to speak all our mind to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in confession, entreaty, intercession and thanksgiving. We tell Him honestly what poor, vile sinners we are—how we come short in everything we attempt, and fail in everything we do. "The flesh profiteth nothing." Christ by His words of spirit and life is everything to us in our approach to the Father, and communion with Him.

Oh! what a glorious gospel! Though feelingly far off, near to the Father in Christ. Though falling, aye, and fallen, yet "upheld by the Father's sovereign, omnipotent hand"—standing in the matchless perfections of our Adorable Head—and, as assuredly as these are revealed to us by the Spirit of our God and of His Christ, through a never ending eternity it will be ours to sing—

"UNTO HIM THAT LOVETH US, AND WASHED US FROM OUR SINS IN HIS OWN BLOOD, AND HATH MADE US KINGS AND PRIESTS UNTO GOD AND HIS FATHER, TO HIM BE GLORY AND DOMINION FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN."

THOMAS BRADBURY.

Grove Chapel, Camberwell,
July, 1902.

Foreknowledge.

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father."

—I Peter i. 2.

ORDER and perfection characterise all God's works and ways. Wisdom and prudence are discovered by the faith of God's elect in all His gracious dealings with them. Our God can never be taken by surprise whatever may happen, or whatever may be wanting in man's puny judgment, for, "Known unto God are. all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts xv. 18). The deceitful devices of men and devils affect Him not, for, "With Him is strength and wisdom : the deceived and the deceiver are His" (Job xii. 16). His judgments are a great deep, and His ways are unsearchable, "while His eternal thought moves on His undisturbed affairs." In the deliverance of His eternally loved people from condemnation, guilt, and the wrath to come, He reveals the good pleasure of His will, His own purpose and grace, and His glorious plan of saving mercy in Christ Jesus. In the continued accomplishment of His own will He sees the agreement of all providences for good to everyone included in His gracious purpose.

This we see in the words of the Holy Ghost by Paul in Romans viii. 28-30. After the declaration of the knowledge of the beloved of God at Rome, and his own assurance of the fact that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose," he proceeds to state the cause, source, and foundation of it all. Listen !" For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren." Then he gives us

the order of God's plan of salvation from glory to glory—that is, from the glory Christ had with the Father before the world was, to the glory He will have with Him when this world is past and gone for ever. Look at God's order—Foreknown—Predestinated—Called—Justified—Glorified. Grace appears in every part. Glory shines resplendent from the whole.

Our text reveals election according to foreknowledge—“Whom He did *foreknow*.” This is the fount from whence salvation flows. This is the source of the redemption of the Church. This is the first step in the course of glorious grace which secures the certainty of all the rest. Those foreknown by God are His own elect. A definite number of the human family are here distinguished from the rest, and chosen to salvation, life, grace, and glory. The words “know” and “knowledge” frequently signify affection, choice, and delight. This we see in God's words to Moses, where one expression explains the other—“Thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name” (Exod. xxxiii. 17). This knowledge is something vastly more than clearly understanding, or recognising by recollection. It contains the admirable qualities of approval, affection and delight. This we gather from the words of Paul, “If any man love God, the same is known of Him” (1 Cor. viii. 3); also in Gal. iv. 9, “But now, after that ye have known God, or rather, are known of God.” In this is implied covenant relationship, gracious favour, and everlasting love, and all irrespective of anything acceptable, lovely, or worthy of praise in its objects. The spiritual mind embraces this truth without prejudice or demur, and delights in the revelation of a God so dear to them, and Who says to each of them by His word and Spirit, “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love” (Jer. xxxi. 3).

This truth is confirmed in the experience of the living children of God by its reiteration in the pages of Holy Scripture. Notice Psalm i. 6: “The LORD knoweth the way of the righteous;” Jer. i. 5: “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee ;” John x. 14: “I am the good Shepherd, and know My sheep;” Rom. xi. 2: “God hath not cast

away His people whom He foreknew;" and 2 Tim. ii. 19: "The Lord knoweth them that are His." Then we find this solemn truth confirmed and established in the declarations of our blessed Lord to those who knew Him not, but who professed a knowledge of Him. Turn to Matt. vii. 22, 23: "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name ? and in Thy Name have cast out devils? and in Thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." Notice also the Lord's rejection of the foolish virgins, "Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us. But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not" (Matt, xxv. 11, 12). He knows them not as the Father's covenant gift to Him. He knows them not as the fruit of His soul travail. He knows them not as the purchase of His blood. He knows them not as the conquest of His Spirit. He knows them not as the delight of His heart. He could never say to one of them, "I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art Mine" (Isa. xliii. i). How could He say in righteousness and truth to such, "I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away" (Isa.xli.g)?

The Father foreknew His Christ before the foundation of the world as the Head of His elect members, as the Husband of His elect bride, as the Surety of His elect people, and as the Saviour of His elect church. This is most blessedly revealed to us in 1 Peter i. 20, as is also the precious truth of our fore-ordination in Him, which is manifested to His own in the times appointed and best known to the Father. The foreknowledge of the elect by the Father simply means that His heart of love was fixed upon them from everlasting, and that His determination is to have them as His friends and companions to the eternal ages. His foreknowledge is one of sovereign love and distinguishing goodness. In conformity to the image of His dear Son He predestinated them to heirship with Christ, of Himself and all the blessings, privileges and immunities of His everlasting covenant and glorious kingdom. Though they would fall from their state of creature perfection in Adam, into sin, enmity and rebellion, yet out of all, predestinating mercy must bring them, and loving

foreknowledge secure them from deserved wrath and condemnation. With a holy, heavenly and high calling they are called and carried from sin and the love of it—from hell and the dread of it—from self and the conceit of it, to God Himself and the loving enjoyment of Him. In this effectual call they delight in their clearance from all guilt, and justification, "from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts xiii. 39). In this foreknown and predestined call and justification they stand all glorious in the sight and estimation of their Elector, Caller, Justifier and Judge, and when His purposes of grace toward them are accomplished, they shall enjoy with Him the glory He gave to Christ for them, and to them in Christ, before the world was.

Election to life, salvation and glory is a glorious doctrine discovered in the teaching of the God of truth, yet the children of the father of lies deny it as detestable. It is a heavenly and wholesome doctrine, yet proud pietists, whose guilt-stricken consciences prove them destitute of its wholesomeness, dare to pronounce it damnable and destructive. Everything associated with it is substantial, enduring, eternal, yet bombastic babblers declare it to be only superficial and transitory. Holy Scripture openly declares it, yet religious sentimentalists will insist that it is a truth only for the experienced—a secret for the family. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. viii. 20). To the Scriptures of truth, the Word of the living God, the testimony of Christ, and the writings of the Apostles I appeal. In all these we find this truth not hid in a corner, not wrapt up in a napkin, not put under a bed; not declared destructive, nor abused as pernicious. In the Scriptures of truth it shines as clear as light. In the Word of God it abides firm as the Rock of Ages. In the testimony of Christ it is sweeter than honey. In the Epistles of the Apostles it ever appears as an essential truth of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. To shirk or to shelve this God-glorifying and creature-humbling truth is to accuse God with want of prudence, Christ with lack of wisdom, the Holy Ghost with defect in judgment.

"He who is perfect in knowledge respecteth not any that are wise of heart" (Job xxxvii. 16, 24). He in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, reveals to babes in grace, who sit at His feet, the truth of sovereign election which He hides from the wise and prudent (Matt. xi. 25, 26). They know that it respects some of all mankind. "There is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. xi. 5). Concerning the righteousness in which the predestinated and called are justified, the Holy Ghost says, "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (Rom. xi. 7). The clear distinction between the elect and non-elect is maintained all through the Scriptures of truth. These members of the spiritual body of Christ were personally elected when the Father gave them to Christ their Head before the foundation of the world. Quibblers and tricksters will have it that election is only of qualifications and not of persons. What a funny god their's must be! The blessed Book plainly reveals an election of persons. Seven times in John xvii., Jesus speaks of them to the Father in their individuality and number, thus, "As many as Thou hast given Me." Paul says, "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate" (Rom. viii. 29). Again, Phil. iv. 3, he speaks of "Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the Book of life." And in the Book of Revelation we read that all shall worship the beast and go into perdition "whose names were not written in the Book of life from the foundation of the world" {chap. xiii. 8; xvii. 8}.

Election to life and glory fails not in its accomplishment. The means ensuring freedom from failure were secured in the decree of election which excludes all conditional uncertainties. Definite objects are by one determinate decree appointed to obtain that salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory (2 Tim. ii. 10). This was the joy and rejoicing of Paul's heart as he wrote to the beloved Thessalonians: ". But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto He called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. ii. 13, 14). Notice those

words, "from the beginning." This clearly denotes that election to salvation is from the ages of eternity, and that all who are blessed by the Father in Christ Jesus, or ever will be experimentally, were "chosen before the foundation of the world" (Eph. i. 4). The purpose of God according to election was "in the beginning of His way, before His works of old—from everlasting—from the beginning, or ever the earth was" (Prov. viii. 22, 23). The purpose never fails of accomplishment, and in the time appointed of the Father, grace distinguishes God's elect from the common mass, and is demonstrated in their call and spiritual regeneration.

Election is a sovereign act of God. His choice of some as the objects of His love to make them the subjects of His reigning grace, and His passing by the rest, is the outcome of His sovereign will and good pleasure. To the proclamation of a truth so great, grand, and glorious, proud puny mortals take exception; and disdain to stoop or bow before One Who doeth what He pleases throughout the regions of infinite space. But here the faith of God's elect bows in adoring gratitude with Paul, saying, "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid! For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy . . . Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" In all this God is not influenced in the election of His people by faith foreseen in them. Because He would, and not because of faith and obedience, He elected them, therefore anything that He foresaw could not be the cause of His foreknowing, or electing. His foreknowledge is included in His purpose, and His purpose, which is according to His election, "not of works but of Him that calleth," therefore must eternally stand.

The God of the Bible is no changeling. As the objectors to His election of whom He will, represent Him, He must be whimsical—freakish—capricious. A fanciful, fantastic god can never satisfy the “faith of God's elect.” Our God says, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure” (Isa. xlvi. 10). His election is certain, eternal, irrevocable, permanent. A changeable God would be a comfortless thing to an exercised people. But we can say with the patient patriarch, “He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth” (Job xxiii. 13). “He will not, cannot change His mind.” Nothing can affect His love in election. His knowledge is so perfect that He can never be surprised at any sinful change in His people. He foresaw their aggravated offences, yet He chose them for His own; how then can their foreseen sins keep them out of glory? He planned and performs all things for them and in them, and by His grace, to glory He will bring them. In Christ they were elected, therefore can never be rejected. Their election was of unmingled, real grace, not for any inducement in themselves or elsewhere. He needed no inducement. He loved them because He would. He chose them because He is Unchanging Love to them. As elect members they were given to their Elect Head. As chosen sheep they were given to their Chosen Shepherd. In the irrevocable decree of election, Christ, Head and members, one glorious whole, appears in the admiring eyes of the Father.

Thus the whole election of grace will eternally stand. Election is for the display of JEHOVAH'S glory in the everlasting salvation of a definite number of mankind. An all-wise God could not design anything short of the display of His glory. “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things, to Whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom. xi. 36). In His Word He has clearly revealed, to seeing eyes, His wrath and His mercy. “What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory” (Rom. ix. 22, 23). His design in election is the display of His sovereign, discriminating and

distinguishing grace. This Paul asserted in language unmistakable—
“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to THE PRAISE OF THE GLORY OF HIS GRACE” (Eph. i. 5, 6).

The doctrine of election shines like a silver stream flowing through the pages of divine inspiration. In every page it appears to the enraptured view of Godwrought faith. The carnal mind hates it with a cordial hatred. The spiritual mind hails it with unfeigned delight. Though the natural ear, eye, and heart cannot receive "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him, yet He hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10).

Election is one of God's deep things, hidden in the Scriptures until revealed to God's elect by the Holy Ghost. Now, what saith the Scripture ?" Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John iv. 1; Rom. iv. 3). In the first place I would direct your attention to many Scriptures which prove that God chose certain persons long before they were born to peculiar privileges, special honours, and signal services in this world. Many of these were subjects of God's eternal election to salvation, life and glory. And some were not. Abraham was God's elect as the founder and father of Israel, a nation distinct and distinguished from all the nations of the world, and as an illustrious progenitor of Christ according to the flesh. Turn with me to Gen. xii. 1-3: "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." This was sovereign selection to distinguished honour, yet he was chosen to blessings far more precious.

"Chosen to faith and hope,
 To purity and love,
To all the life of God,
 To all the things above;
Chosen to prove salvation sure,
Chosen to reign for evermore."

"Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 3). In the faith of God's elect he was assured of his covenant relationship to God. In this faith God called him, "My friend" (Isa. xli. 8), and the Holy Ghost styled him "the friend of God" (James ii. 23).

Why should God thus prefer and promote Abram above the rest of his kindred? Simply because He would of His most gracious favour. Abram was an idolator, and lived far from God in idolatrous practices. Yet God by His own sovereign prerogative brought him to Himself as a monument of mercy, and a miracle of grace. See how God Himself declared this to assembled Israel at Shechem—"Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood" (Josh. xxiv. 2, 3). Long years after this, the children of Israel in solemn assembly adored the God of election, saying, "Thou art the LORD the God, Who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham" (Neh. ix. 7). When the prophet reminded Israel of their origin, he said, "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him: and increased him" (Isa. li. 2). Sovereign choice appears in the acceptance of Isaac and the rejection of Ishmael. When Abraham prayed, "O, that Ishmael might live before Thee!" God answered him thus, "My covenant will I establish with Isaac" (Gen. xvii. 18, 21).

No spirit that is of God can close its eyes to the revelation of sovereign election in the history of Jacob and Esau. They were twin sons of Isaac by Rebekah, but pre-arranged difference characterised them before they came into the world. Both lay struggling in their mother's womb, when the LORD said unto her, "Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people: and the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. xxv. 22, 23). Now Isaac was bent on the younger serving the elder, but when deceived into blessing Jacob, and convinced of God's sovereign will in the matter, he vehemently confirmed the purpose of God, saying, "I have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed" (Gen. xxvii. 33). Jacob, true to his name and nature, acted a thoroughly deceitful and dishonest part, yet Isaac in confirming the blessing, was under the grace and guidance of the Holy Ghost. See how Jacob is placed before Esau, and the younger serves the elder, in Heb. xi. 20, "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come." In this strange eventful history Jacob takes and keeps the precedence, "that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth" (Rom. ix. 11). Comment is needless here, only for those who prize their comments before infallible truth.

Now notice the descendants of Jacob, a people pitched upon by the Lord in Abraham long years before He claimed them publicly as His own. They are distinguished from the peoples of the world as an *elect nation, an holy, special, peculiar people*. "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD'S portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance" (Deut. xxxii. 8, 9). He is the God of the whole earth, yet He would choose a people to Himself for the glory of His Name. These people elect were the objects of His peculiar love and special care. For their sakes He shook off Egypt into the depths of the sea, and treated Ethiopia and Seba as the dirt of the streets. Why? Not because of Israel's greatness, grandeur, or goodness. Listen !" The LORD did not set His love upon you, nor

choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But Because the LORD loved you" (Deut. vii. 7, 8). As to their character let Moses who knew them well bear witness—"For I know thy rebellion and thy stiff neck; behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the LORD; and how much more after my death?" (Deut. xxxi. 8, 9). Israel's election was of God's free favour to display His sovereignty, according to His own declaration, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy" (Exod. xxxiii. 19).

Discriminating choice is seen in the preference of David before the rest of his elder brethren to be king over Israel (1 Sam. xvi. 12; Ps. lxxviii. 70, 71). In the predestination of Cyrus to subjugate a vast monarchy, bring Israel out of captivity, and rebuild the city of Jerusalem, all this was predicted over a hundred years before his birth, and his name given in the prediction. This was not because of grace seen or foreseen in him, for God he did not know (Isa. xlv. 28; xlv. 1-4). To the prophetic office Jeremiah was appointed before his birth, as said the LORD to Him, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou earnest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jer. i. 5). Of Paul, the Lord said to Ananias, "Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My Name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake" (Acts ix. 15, 16). Paul himself ascribes his call and apostleship to God's preordination, "But when it pleased God, Who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace" (Gal. i. 15). In all these cases we see God's foreknowledge to be the secret and source of election to temporal offices and to eternal favours.

With the latter we have now to do. This is personal election in Christ to full salvation, efficacious grace, and eternal glory. In the New Testament we have "the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began," and that from the lips of Incarnate

Wisdom. Christ taught the doctrine of sovereign election in the synagogue at Nazareth, and illustrated it by referring to a favoured widow in the days of Elijah, and a distinguished leper whom Elisha blessed with health and cure. This was to teach that He came not with a design to seek and to save everybody, but a select number of Jews and Gentiles well known to Him by name. The sectaries then hated Him for His exposition of a doctrine so dear to His heart, and would have further fouled their filthy hands with His all-cleansing blood, but for His restraining power (Luke iv. 25-30). That tribe is not extinct. In the face of all this, and continued demonstrations against a truth so glorious, nothing could move Him to exclude it from His preaching and prayers. When He upbraided the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, for their impenitence and unbelief, He comforted Himself with the fact that saving power identical with the will of the Father had accompanied His teaching to the hearts of those for whom it was designed. In this sovereign distribution of favours He heartily and joyfully agrees. See !—"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Luke x. 21).

Wherever He went He taught this doctrine in parables and preaching. When His disciples asked Him for an explanation why He spake parables to the multitude without explanations, He said, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (Matt. xiii. 11). When men questioned the justice of sovereign and discriminating bestowments, He vindicated His right to dispose of His favours as He saw fit, because He was Lord Proprietor of all things, and they had not the right to claim what He saw not fit to give. Even now men hate Him for His saying, "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with Mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good? So the last shall be first and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen" (Matt. xx. 15, 16). In this same chapter we read that the mother of Zebedee's children asked for her sons James and John that they might sit on

His right hand and on His left in His kingdom. Mark well His answer, "To sit on My right hand, and on My left, is not Mine to give, but for whom it is prepared of My Father" (Matt. xx. 20-23). Gracious donations are according to eternal ordination. He taught that gracious preservation in the midst of, and from, perils, is according to election—"For the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt, xxiv. 22). He declares that immunity from final deception is circumscribed by election—"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders: insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matt. xxiv. 24). He preached the certainty of heaven being inhabited by God's elect (Matt. xxiv. 31). Election is seen in all the given ones coming to Him (John vi. 37). God's election and Christ's redemption are equal in John x. 26-29. Christ prays for His seven times mentioned *given ones*, and with Himself in glory He must have them (John xvii. *passim*).

Now listen to dear Paul the aged, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect" (Rom. viii. 33). "The purpose of God according to election might stand" (Rom. ix. 11). "There is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. xi. 5). "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (Rom. xi. 7). God hath chosen foolish, weak, base, despised, ignored things (1 Cor. 1. 27, 28). "Chosen in Him" (Eph. i. 4). "Knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election of God" (1 Thess. i. 4). "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation" (2 Thess. ii. 13). "I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. ii. 10).

NO ELECTION, NO SALVATION.

All fulness dwells in Thee, Lord,
Thy rich and glorious grace
Thou hast bestowed on me, Lord,
A sinner vile and base.
All fulness of affection

Thou hast so sweetly shown,
For sovereign, free election
Has made me Thine alone.

THOMAS BRADBURY.

Grove Chapel, Camberwell.
August, 1902.

Election.

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ?"

—Rom. viii. 33.

"PAUL'S preaching is very perplexing." Yes, it is very perplexing to "men of corrupt minds," who are "reprobate concerning the faith." Christ's preaching was exasperating to the haters of God's sovereignty. Peter's advice to the elect strangers, to make their calling and election sure will ever be disregarded by those who are not called to the enjoyment of so high and heavenly a benefit. But God's election is most precious to those who "are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Rev. xvii. 14). God's election was Paul's delight. God's elect were dear to him. For them he wrote, preached, prayed, and endured unparalleled persecutions. With them he was saved from every sin, solaced in every sorrow, succoured in every temptation, and secured from every evil. He failed not to proclaim election by grace because he was upheld by the grace of election. Writing to his friends and brethren in Christ in the city of the Caesars he distinguishes them thus, "Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ. To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called saints" (Rom. i. 6, 7). In my last tract, at the close I mentioned several of Paul's sayings on this truth which lay so deep in his affections. Now, with "the called of Jesus Christ, the beloved of God," the separated church of the Firstborn, I would linger in spiritual meditation on the various phases of this precious and profitable subject flowing from Paul's master-mind.

Foundation truths he clearly lays down in "that glorious Eighth of Romans." He is most minute in describing the ground on which the

faith and hope of God's living people are built. In another place he says they are grounded in love (Eph. iii. 17). This is covenant love, electing love, predestinating love (Eph. i. 4, 5). It is blessedly operative in its communications. Its designs are ever demonstrative. Here we see it is so—"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." In this revelation of the glories of election we cannot discover the tricks of diplomacy on the part of our God. He says what He means and He means what He says. He does not descend to political or pulpit dexterity, neither is He dependent upon anything beneath Him for the realisation of His purpose. His will is His work. His work is His will. He predestinates and performs. He elects and executes. He foreknows, and folly cannot be attributed to Him therein.. Glory is the outcome of every purpose of His grace. Whom He loves, He loves for ever.

Electing love is immutable, because an Immutable God is the ELECTOR. Mutability belongs to man. It belongs not to God. "With Him is no variableness neither shadow of turning" (James- i. 17). In love He elects to Himself whom He will, blesses them with His grace, and brings them to the full enjoyment of His glory. "He will rest in His love" (Zeph. iii. 17). Incarnate Love covered all Zion's sins with the Red Sea of His own blood. Electing love for ever hides them all from view, and brings the chosen of God, the redeemed of the Lord, into full possession of the blessedness to which they were fore-ordained. This is set before us most gloriously in Paul's bold challenge, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" A Justifying God silences all charges. A-Crucified, Risen, Reigning and Interceding .Christ secures the elect from all condemnation. Knowing this we presume not in saying, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution,

or-famine or nakedness, of peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted- as sheep for the slaughter. Nay,- in all these things we . are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither-death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 33-39).

The' sovereignty of God's election is mentioned all through the ninth chapter of the Romans. It is demonstrated in the -case of the twin sons of Isaac and Rebecca. Let us read—"When Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac: (For the children being not yet born, neither having done £any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand,- not of works, but of Him that calleth ;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy On whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show My power in thee, and that My Name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will? Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" I have heard objectors to personal election declare that all this merely sets forth the national and temporal distinctions between the Israelites and Edomites, and is brought forth by the apostle to answer the complaints of the Jews at their being cast off and the Gentiles preferred- But why should not Jacob and Esau be personally

considered, since the Holy Ghost singles out Pharaoh as an instance of divine sovereignty? Spiritual simplicity discerns something more than the temporal and superficial in the reasoning of the apostle. Faith enters into spiritual and eternal verities, and questions the cavillings of carnal controversialists, saying, "What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles" (Rom. ix. 10-24). God's call is not to the superficial which is calculated to raise undue expectation, but to riches of glory, and to afore prepared and eternal realities, which disappoint not, but secure their favoured recipients from everlasting destruction.

Paul never grew weary of the God-glorifying, sinner-saving, and soul-securing doctrine of election. Whatever vile things might be said of it, he was ever to the forefront in its praises and defence. He maintains God's justice in casting off the Jews from their national preference and privileges, and proves the harmony of His righteous dealings therein with His gracious promises of eternal good to His people. He declares that there was an election of grace among the people of the Jews secured from rejection. The casting off was not universal. The Jews were rejected, but not all of them. There was a chosen number among them who enjoyed their allotment of grace in Christ Jesus, while the bulk of the people was left in unbelief and hostile to JEHOVAH'S sovereign will. Paul gloried in being one of the elect remnant, and suggests that their number was larger than that admitted in the reckoning of many. Listen to him, "I say, then, Hath God cast away His people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew. Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? How he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed Thy prophets, and digged down Thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto Him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand

men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present .time THERE IS A REMNANT ACCORDING TO THE ELECTION OF GRACE. And if by grace, then. is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more;:, grace: otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath , not obtained that which he . seeketh for; but THE ELECTION HATH OBTAINED IT, AND THE REST WERE 'BLINDED" (Rom. xi. I-7).

In the light of a revelation so vast and overwhelming our hearts cry out in adoring wonder, "O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and know-; ledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out" (Rom. xi. 33).

The freedom of God's elect from every charge, brought against them by law, conscience, men, or devils, is sweetly discovered in Paul's eulogy of God for the source and spring of all spiritual and. eternal blessedness. He traces this up to God Himself, from Whom alone all good things do flow, -i—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of. His will" (Eph. i. 3-5). In the face of all this men tell me that this is merely appointment to outward means and church, privileges. But, are all those who are brought to the enjoyment of outward privileges "blessed with *all* spiritual blessings in Christ?" Certainly not. The Apostle! leaves us- not to the tossings of the sea of uncertainty in this matter. He styles these very persons who were blessed according to God's choice of them, *saints, faithful* in Christ Jesus, *children, accepted,* in' the Beloved, *redeemed, forgiven, sealed, the purchased possession.* They were blessed in Christ from the ages of. eternity—are blessed all through their time-state here upon earth—shall be blessed to all future ages, and all according to God's election of them in their Head and Husband before all worlds. "The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to

everlasting upon them that fear Him” (Ps. ciii. 17). Who believes this? None but God's elect.

It is deeply humbling for God's elect to be taught that they, with all their blessedness, cannot believe this without the grace and power of the Holy Ghost, in the times appointed of the Father. Paul knew the humbling and exalting power of this eternal fact in his communion with the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father elect, in the Lord Jesus Christ redeemed, and in the Holy Ghost regenerate. How did he know it? He hesitates not to tell you. See !" Knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election. For our gospel came not to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (1 Thess. i. 4, 5). Those who live and die hearing the Gospel "in word only" know nothing of God's election, simply because they are neither beloved nor elected of God. Spiritual blessings with which God's chosen are blessed are nothing in their way. The chosen Apostle was bent upon the establishment of his beloved Thessalonians in this God glorifying doctrine, and delighted to see their advancement in spiritual realities and covenant verities thereby. He proves that election is not enervating in its influence .upon those Who yield to God His sovereign right to work out His own all wise appointments. Ponder over these sweet words of commendation, “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you,, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. ii. 13, 14). The Gospel of election is God's discovery of spiritual blessing to those beloved of Him.

Election is not confined to nations, communities, and churches, but is as real in the case of each individual member of the body of Christ as it is of the whole. It must have been delightful for Paul to write concerning Clement and others of his fellow labourers, "whose names are in the book of life" (Phil. iv. 3). The elect are here singled out by name. In writing to Timothy he enjoins upon him the

necessity of holding fast the form of sound words of which election formed a prominent part. He directed him to the prayerful and earnest consideration of the spring and source of salvation—"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Jesus Christ, before the world began" (2 Tim. i. 9). To encourage him in the difficulties which must attend him as a faithful minister of Christ, he reminded Timothy of the sufferings he experienced for the truth's sake, "Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elects' sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. ii. 9, 10). Look at that! Election, allotment, salvation, glory. He also assured him that in the midst of abounding error, God's own truth and His own elect should be preserved from all evil, "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure,; having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. ii. 19). Paul owned himself an apostle of Jesus Christ "according to the faith of God's elect," and his hope was based upon the promise of eternal life, given before the world began (Titus i. 1, 2).

Election was a foundation truth with all the writers of the New Testament Scriptures. James is one with Paul in setting forth this glorious doctrine. He associates it with regeneration, for verily, regeneration is the fruit of election. Notice, "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (James i. 18). The apostle knew that "His own will" was "His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself"—"the counsel of His will"—"the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"—"the purpose of God according to election" (Rom. ix. 11; Eph. i. 9; Hi. 11). When James counsels the saints to impartiality in the gathering together of the rich and poor, he sets forth God's liberal care of the poor in election—"Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?" (James ii. 5). Peter's testimony abounds with

sovereign election, and is redolent with distinguishing grace. He proclaimed it on the day of Pentecost in his remarkable discourse which was followed by the call and regeneration of three thousand elect souls (Acts ii. 23). He wrapt it not up when James could say concerning his testimony, "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His Name" (Acts xv. 14). He addresses his first epistle to "the strangers . . . elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," and in the second chapter he styles them, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people," while in his second epistle he counsels his brethren to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (i. 10). He meant,; sure in their own comfortable knowledge of their election, because it was eternally sure in God's counsels of old which are faithfulness and truth.

Election was a delightful theme with John the beloved disciple. He knew well Who began in salvation matters, and traced all the blessings we enjoy by the grace of the Spirit right up to the electing love of the Father. He declares that the love of God was antecedent to us and is the source and spring of our love to Him—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. . . . We love Him, because He first loved us" (i John iv. 10-19). He thrusts signal honour upon a godly matron in his second epistle in styling her "the elect lady." Not simply a choice one by the grace and, power of the Holy Ghost, but one chosen of the Father to all the grace and dignity of the Son, and to the enjoyment of that salvation which is- in Him with eternal glory. The Book of the Revelation is full of this much abused truth. Yet much as men and devils abuse it they prove themselves silly for their pains. Look at that terrible declaration in, chap. xiii. 8: "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him (the beast), whose names ;are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Then we are led to notice the companions of the All-conquering Jesus* as the "CALLED and CHOSEN and FAITHFUL" (chap.; xvii. 14). John shirked not the company of God's; elect with whom he is now safely housed in glory. See how he

excludes the non-elect from the Father's; house, from the great and glorious city above: "And there shall in no wise enter, into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or *maketh* a, lie; but **THEY WHICH ARE WRITTEN IN THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE:**" (chap. xxi. 27). Thus, under the metaphor of enrolling and registration, the Holy Ghost is pleased to set forth the glorious truth of personal, eternal, irrevocable election. Is not he who denies and hates it, the maker of a lie against the God of truth? Such cannot honestly look for an entrance into "the home of God's elect."

The Scriptures of truth are full of election. It is no isolated dogma hidden beneath vague terms and mysterious expressions, but clearly revealed in God's broad sunlight as a silvery stream flowing along through the whole course of divine revelation. It is the pregnant truth of the Book of Genesis. Its undiminished glory appears throughout the Book of Revelation. To "the faith of God's elect" it appears not as "a drop of a bucket," but as "the sound of many waters" discoursing heavenly music to those whom the Good Shepherd makes to lie down in these green pastures, and leads beside the tranquilizing waters of covenant truth. To elect is to select, prefer, choose. To choose is to pick out—to make choice of—to prefer—to elect. This is the undisguised meaning of the term election all through God's Book, and if the portions! have quoted bear not this meaning, to my mind they mean nothing. But, they mean what they say, and they say what they mean, thus conveying the mind of the Eternal Elector to the hearts of all those included in His eternal election, and to none else. Those who deny this, fight against God -- contend with Christ—and question the authority of Holy Scripture.

God's election is hated, all the world over, and God's elect are persecuted wherever a son of the bond-woman is to be found. Our Blessed Master fortified the minds of His disciples with His mind concerning this: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but **I HAVE CHOSEN YOU OUT OF THE WORLD**, therefore the world hateth you" (John xv. 19).

Yet with all this, God's elect are more than conquerors through Him Who loves them. Mark well the bold challenge in our text, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Who can? Men and devils will attempt. Many charges, false and true, are hurled against the living children of God. They are said to be vain and visionary, deluded and doting, conceited and crotchety, moping and miserable. These false charges cut deep, but there are those which cut deeper and deeper. *The law* in its spiritual operations convinces of sin, while the convicted one with a heavy heart confesses, "I have sinned against the Lord." *Indwelling sin* tells its sad tale upon an awakened conscience, while the sensitive spirit sighs, "I know that in me—that is, in my flesh—dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom. vii. 18). *Total depravity and inability* are prolific in their accusations against an exercised child of God. *Satan*, "the accuser of the brethren," is not backward with his charges against the weak and weary, tried and tempted traveler in tribulation's track. He works upon his own vile injections and drags down his victims to despondency and despair. But, blessed be God, they are not left in his cruel hands, nor to his infernal designs.

God the Justifier of His own elect is never far away when He is most needed. He will appear to their joy, and strike their adversaries with confusion. Look at those glorious words—"IT IS GOD THAT JUSTIFIETH." It is utterly impossible for any charge or accusation to prevail against those whom God has justified. Their sins are put away by the sufferings and death of the God-provided Surety, and He Who justifies cannot receive charges against those whom He beholds righteous in the righteousness of Emmanuel. Oh, what a glorious state and standing—"justified from all things"—"accepted in the Beloved." What is justification? It is something far beyond pardon, forgiveness, or acquittance. It is something more than pardon for a criminal forgiveness for a sinner—acquittance for a culprit. It is the perfect removal of all guilt—the complete dismissal of all sin—the thorough clearance of all condemnation. A lively illustration of this we read in Zech. iii. 1-5: "And He showed me

Joshua the high priest standing before the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee. Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And He answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him He said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head; so they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments." Satan accusing, the LORD defending. Notice the Lord's weapon—Sovereign choice. "The LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee." Sin, filth and guilt gone. Righteousness, purity and perfection sure. In Jesus righteous, perfect, complete.

"Who is he that condemneth?" To condemn is something more than to charge, or to accuse. It is to sustain the charge, prove the accusation, and bring the criminal in guilty, leaving him to the curse and sentence of the law. Those for whom Christ was condemned can say with Paul, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a CURSE FOR US; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. iii. 13). The faith of God's elect boldly sends forth the challenge, "Who is he that condemneth?" It knows full well that none can effectually condemn the justified of God. It knows also that accusers will crowd in from all quarters save one—the court of heaven. The world, and even our own mother's children, will be ever ready to condemn our narrow-mindedness, our hateful doctrines, our fanciful experience, and our exclusiveness. At almost every turn we are,

For these too bad, for those too good,
Condemned and shunned by all." .;

Yet here our Justifier "will maintain the cause -of the afflicted, and the right of the poor" (Ps. Cxi. 12). Does the law prosecute? Faith

cries, "Christ died." Does death seek to terrify? . Faith cries, "Christ lives." Does Satan roar and assault? Faith cries, "Christ reigns." Does our heart condemn us ?" God is greater than our heart,, and knoweth all things" (1 John iii. 20).

"It is Christ that died." This is the answer of the faith of God's elect to all those who condemn God's election of grace. In the court of conscience it silences every accuser. Here the covenant promise holds good: "Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn" (Isa.- liv. 17}. This is all because of the worth and dignity of the Covenant Surety, and the infinite value of His most precious blood. The law declares, "It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul" (Lev. xvii. *it*). The Gospel proclaims, "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22). "Christ died for .us" (Rom. v. 8) is the confession and confidence: of every follower of the Lamb. His bloodshedding removes all guilt and filth and shame. His life, forfeited by death, perfects for ever them that are sanctified—His own elect. In life and death, in obedience and suffering, the Willing Surety-accomplished all His Father's will in the removal of all the sins of His people, 'and by that-will' they are .sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus once, never to be repeated. "It is' finished," from His own lips, satisfied the claims of Deity, and now I soothes the troubled spirit by silencing every accuser. 1 Can the *law* condemn one for whom Christ died? No, for He 'has magnified the law and made it 'honourable (Isa. xlii. 21). Can justice condemn one for whom Christ shed' His precious blood? No, for justice is satisfied, and God is just, and the Justifier of every believer in Jesus (Rom. in. 26). Can Satan, or any enemy, condemn? No, for all the enemies of Zion are turned back, fall, and perish at the presence of the Surety of the covenant (Ps. ix. 3).

"Yea, rather that is risen again." "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that He should be holden of it" (Acts ii. 24), Christ, though laid in the grave, was not left there. God raised Him up, and thus proved Him to be no deceiver (Matt, xxvii. 63). The resurrection of Christ is God the

Father's solemn and open testimony to the genuineness of Christ's work, the sufficiency of His sacrifice, the perfection of His righteousness, the completeness of His salvation, and the dignity of His Person. He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. i. 4). "He was raised again for our justification" (Rom. iv. 25). He was thus proved to be the Righteous Saviour of a people righteously saved and everlastingly justified.

It was not possible for Him to be held in the regions and embrace of death. He was God, death had no power over Him. He was righteous—the Righteous Head of a righteous people—the Elect Husband of His elect bride. "Christ the First Fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Cor. xv. 23). The Head liberated, all the members are free. The Husband accepted, the bride is accepted in her Beloved. "Who is even at the right hand of God," "angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him" (1 Peter iii. 22). These all know, by His appearance there, that God hath accepted Him in all the glory of His Person, God and Man one Christ, in all the perfection of His sacrifice, in all the preciousness of His blood, in all the power of His resurrection, and all for His elect people, and His elect people in Him. Oh, how blessed it is to see Him and know Him there as a Man, with a heart truly humane.

"That human heart He still retains,
 Though thron'd in highest bliss;
And feels each tempted member's pains:
 For our affliction's His."

This secures the power and prevalency of His intercession for us. Oh, the preciousness of that word, "Who also maketh intercession for us." "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. vii. 25).

"WHO SHALL LAY ANYTHING TO THE CHARGE OF GOD'S ELECT?"

THOMAS BRADBURY.

Grove Chapel, Camberwell,
September, 1902.

Affirmation

"One shall say, I am the LORD'S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

—Isaiah xliv. 5.

SEVERAL times of late I have endeavoured to direct your minds into the consideration of the truths contained in the preceding context—a portion containing “exceeding great and precious promises”—promises in God's own good time, verified in the heart's experience of all those interested therein. These promises are made life and power in the judgment, knowledge and enjoyment of those characters so graphically and minutely described therein. Let us notice these highly favoured persons and the blessings promised to them. They are described as “thirsty,” and are set before us as “the dry ground.” They are also opened up to faith's view as the “seed” of Zion—the “offspring” of the church. They “spring up amongst the grass.” See Psalm xcii. 7, “The wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish it is that they shall be destroyed for ever.” Here we find a people amongst a people—a people whom God has eternally blessed—a people from whom God has everlastingly removed all curse—a people redeemed by precious atoning blood—a people regenerated in God's good time by the indwelling and grace of His Blessed Spirit—a people brought to know, feel and confess that without the Anointing not one good thought, word or act can they produce before Him. All good in them is by the Holy Ghost.

"And every virtue we possess,
And every vict'ry won,
And ev'ry thought of holiness
Are His alone"

Have I faith? It is by the revelation of the Lord in my heart by the Holy Ghost. Faith is His fruit—His exercise in me. Have I hope? It is the longing for home and the company of my Best Friend created in my heart by the Abiding Comforter. Do I pray? Prayer is the hidden movement of God the Ever-blessed Spirit. I desire never to forget that graphic description of true prayer which once fell on my ears from the anointed lips of one now in glory—William Parks, the late Rector of Openshaw—"What is prayer? Prayer is the hidden movement of God the Ever-blessed Spirit in the hearts of elect vessels of mercy, producing desires and longings for those benefits and blessings a Covenant God afore designed to give." Do I sing? I sing in the Spirit. It is by the Spirit alone that I make melody in my heart to the Lord in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Do I show kindness to the poor and needy whom the Lord sends in my way? I should do no such thing but for the Blessed Holy Ghost in me. It is "the kindness of God" shown through me to whom He will. It is all through the Spirit bearing witness with my spirit to the liberality of the Father and of His Son Jesus Christ.

"They shall spring up among the grass." Among the wicked, God's righteous ones are found down here. Christ sends forth His sheep and lambs in the midst of wolves. They are

"A little flock, amidst a host
Of lions, dogs, and swine;
Distinguish'd by the Holy Ghost;
And Jesus says, THEY'RE MINE."

Among these, while contrary to their wish and will, the elect of God do "spring up" as plants of His own right hand planting, to bud, bloom, and bear fruit to the glory of His Name. This is beautifully

set before us in Gal. v. 22, 23, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Look there at the way God is pleased to state His own truth. God's truth is never opposed to itself, but ever consistent with itself, as revealed in His most Holy Word. Am I blessed with love? It is the fruit of the Spirit. It is "because the love of God is shed abroad in MY heart by the Holy Ghost, Who is given unto ME." It is this alone which causes God's redeemed ones to say, "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John iv. 19). Have I joy? It is the joy of God—the very boundings of His heart experienced in mine—according to that blessed declaration in Neh. viii. 10, "The joy of the LORD is your strength." Oh, to think that God is everlastingly rejoicing over me, though by the indwelling of His Spirit I am frequently mourning over my sins—my follies—my failures—my departures—my forgetfulness of the lessons He has taught me, and His gracious visitations by which He has preserved, refreshed, and cheered my spirit. Have I peace? It is "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" that keeps the heart and mind of His child in the knowledge and love of Him. So, as I go forward in contemplating this rich cluster of "the fruit of the Spirit," I am assured that everything spiritually good is *of* God—everything is *in* God—everything is *by* God. Outside God I have no enjoyment of any blessing promised in His everlasting covenant of grace, revealed in His glorious gospel and conveyed to the hearts of His own elect by the power of His Indwelling Spirit.

"As willows by the water courses." How blessedly this is set before us in the description given of the righteous in the first Psalm. "Blessed is the Man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." That Man is Christ, and all blessed in Him. "But His delight is in the law of the LORD." This law is the declaration of Divine Sovereignty to me, and the assertion of Divine Authority in me by the power of God's Blessed Spirit. That was the delight of "the Man Christ Jesus." That is my delight as a man in Christ. "And in His law doth He meditate day and night." The contemplation of

the Father's sovereignty was no spasmodic affair with the "Man of sorrows." It is not a matter of fits and starts to those truly taught of God, blessed with the companionship of Christ, and the abiding seal of His Good Spirit. He reigns over all things with sovereign authority—over His own in purest grace—over all else in righteous judgment. The revelation of His sovereignty is the joy of the heart, and the theme of the tongue of every one who has enjoyed the sweets of covenant mercy.

"And He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; His leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever He doeth shall prosper." Jeremiah leads our minds to the contemplation of the same precious truth in his xviith chapter and 7th verse, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose Hope the LORD is." Not whose hope is in the LORD; but the LORD, JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, is the Hope of His people. He is the Object upon which the grace of hope lives and thrives. A sight of Him inspires the heart with thoughts of home and longings for the enjoyment of it. "For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Turn to Psalm xli. 4, "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." Streams of grace—streams of truth—streams of salvation—streams of mercy flowing from "the throne of God and the Lamb." These are for the watering and refreshing of the plants of God's right hand planting. Here we see them as "willows by the water courses" of God's own forming and supplying. But mark! There are streams, and streams. At times God is pleased to lead His people by the dark streams of suffering and sorrow, trial and temptation, to teach them lessons of grace not to be learned elsewhere. Yes, here they learn the blessed truth, "that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. viii. 28).

"As willows by the water courses." The willow grows not in dry and arid soil. It flourishes only where it receives abundance of moisture. How blessed it is for us to know that we are God's willows—God's planting—God's care—God's culture. Yes, it is blessed to have the proof by the witness of the Spirit that we are planted according to divine arrangement and that we grow according to unerring care. A few years ago I saw what I had never seen the like before—the beauty, gracefulness and grandeur of the willows on the banks of the Hudson River, between Piermont and Nyack. They were huge, yet beautiful and graceful—towering high, yet bending low—receiving moisture from the river, yet apparently bowing in grateful acknowledgment of refreshment received. Oh, what a beautiful picture of grace in exercise. Grace exalting the true-born child of God who manifests his possession of grace in grateful humility. Do I grow in grace? I know of no growing but that which springs from the Root, Christ, and grows up into Him in all things (Eph. iv. 15). In growing up into a fuller acquaintance with Him I am humbled to the dust, sensible of my utter unworthiness apart from communication and communion with Him.

In the words of our text we have the abiding fruits of the Indwelling Spirit, witnessing to the truth of the Father's word concerning His Christ. Mark well this fact—God never acts graciously in the hearts of His people, even by the grace of His Spirit, but by "the word of the truth of the gospel" (Col. i. 5). It may not be the gospel preached by one of His sent servants, yet it will be the Word brought home to the heart by the Abiding Quickener and Comforter. A sense and understanding of this will ever take away conceit from the occupant of the pulpit. I know full well that God can do His gracious work of calling sinners and comforting saints, if He wills, without me. He knows how to manage His own affairs. When I am gone His kingdom will progress—the subjects thereof will increase—its blessings will abound—its King will reign all glorious without my aid or assistance. The children of grace will be begotten from above—quickened into spiritual life—"born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which

liveth and abideth for ever (1 Peter i. 23). Am I begotten again? It is by God and His Word (Jas. i. 18), Am I quickened? I am compelled to say, "Thy Word hath quickened me" (Ps. cxix. 50). Am I born again? It is by the Word of God. Do I live? It is by the Word of God's mouth (Matt. iv. 4). Do I grow? It is by the sincere milk of the Word (1 Peter ii. 2). In all these we see the fruit of God's Good Spirit given to the seed and offspring of Zion. Notice the text.

I. "One shall say, I am the LORD'S."

II. "Another shall call himself by the name of JACOB."

III. "Another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD."

IV. "And surname himself by the name of ISRAEL."

I. "One shall say, I am the LORD'S." That is taking high ground, some may say. Well, yes: that is ground of holy confidence; but not one whit too high for those who occupy it by the witness and seal of the Holy Ghost. It is a holy, heavenly, and high calling. Let us see how Paul describes it. Turn to 2 Tim. i. 9, "Who hath saved us, and called us with A HOLY CALLING." That is God's calling according to election, predestination, and eternal appointment. See Heb. iii. j, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of THE HEAVENLY CALLING." This is the apostle's deduction from the lucid description he had given of the sacred humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ in covenant oneness with His people—"members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." He thus became their Sin-bearer and Sin-destroyer—their Succourer in temptation—their Solace in sorrow—their Sympathy (all they need of it) in suffering. "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling"—ye, who are called by the same Father from earthly to "heavenly places"—ye, who are indwelt by the same Blessed Spirit—ye, who are interested in the same covenant promises—ye, who are heirs of the same grace and glory—ye, who are blessed with the witness of the Spirit with your spirit that you are the children of God—ye, with such a calling, are entitled in the Son to use the words of the children's prayer, "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name." Heavenly Father, we claim Thee as our own—Thou hast given us the blessed evidences that we are Thy

children, and our brightest evidence is love to the Son of Thy love, "Our Brother and our God in One." We cannot live without Him—we cannot believe without Him—we cannot pray without Him—we have not a desire after Thee in Thy heavenly home apart from Him. Gracious Saviour, we fall before Thy searching word, "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John xv. 5). By Jesus we come to His Father and our Father, while His Spirit raises the "ABBA" in the midst of our many doubts and tremblings, and it may be that with holy diffidence and awe we cry, Our Father in heaven our home. What a mighty thought! Heaven ours in the mind of God from the ages of eternity. Our home by gift—by inheritance—in hope. "Our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven" (Phil. iii. 20).

This holy and heavenly calling is also styled "THE HIGH CALLING of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 14). How high is this calling? High as the heavens, say some. Higher still, say I—Excelsior! Notice, this calling is "in Christ Jesus." "He ascended into heaven," says the creed. He "ascended up far above all heavens," says Paul by the Holy Ghost (Eph. iv. 10). Not only to the heights of heaven, but to the heights of glory and of God, to fulfil all things. To the heights of Deity as revealed in the Son of God's love, all the children of the Father are called. Being called with "a holy calling"—holy they are in Christ Jesus. Called with "the heavenly calling"—heavenly they find themselves to be when their affection is set where true joys alone are to be found. By the high calling of God they are exalted in the righteousness of their Risen and Glorified Head. Moved and energised by His Blessed Spirit they are brought up from regions of darkness to realms of light—from the depths of spiritual deadness to the heights of heavenly life—from grovelling in sin to glorying in salvation—from the slavery of Satan to the service of God—from the very gates of hell to the throne of glory. Thus brought through the witness of the Spirit to know something of our high calling, we are taught by Him to consider, admire, and adore the beauty of our Covenant Surety—the Father's Righteous Servant—the Father's Everlasting Delight. Listen to the Father's call, "Behold My Servant, Whom I uphold, Mine Elect, in Whom My soul delighteth" (Isa. xlii.

1). Here we are introduced to the most glorious sight in all God's vast universe. Sinners saved shining in the spotless splendour of their Risen and Exalted Head.

This is the spirit breathed all through "that glorious eighth of Romans." It is glorious to know and feel that in Christ we are everlastingly delivered and secured from all condemnation (Rom. viii. 1, 2); This is brought to light by the law of the Spirit of Life, Who makes free from the law of sin and death. Then we have a graphic description of the Spirit wrought experience of all those in vital oneness with our Lord Jesus Christ. Then comes a bold challenge to hell, earth and heaven, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "God that justifieth"? A justifying God cannot condemn. Mark you, Paul does not direct the attention of those to whom he wrote to their feelings, frames, emotions, or enjoyments. On the sacred ground he occupied, self, in every phase and feature, is not allowed. *Sinful* self is left out of consideration. *Righteous* self is not acknowledged. *Experimental* self is ignored. "Christ that died"? I am not directed to my fickle faith, but to Him Who died for me, Who has not one word to say against me. "Christ risen again"? That can never be, for He "was raised again for our justification" (Rom. iv. 25). Christ Who is seated at the right hand of God? No, that will never do. He is there because He had by Himself purged our sins (Heb. i. 3). Christ, "Who also maketh intercession for us"? That can never be, because by His intercession we are saved to the uttermost—have access to God. This is the vantage ground of every one in Christ. Listen!" Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or sword?" No! Not all these things combined with death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth, or "any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Oh, how blessed to find ourselves by precious faith on such hallowed ground. It is only here one can honestly say, "I am the LORD'S."

I cannot leave this "glorious eighth of Romans" without directing your attention to two verses which seem more related to the seventh chapter than to this. Read the 23rd verse: "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." Also the 26th verse, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit HIMSELF maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Who are these groaners? The very persons who can say honestly from the heart, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Those highly privileged ones who are taught by the Spirit that there is nothing in heaven, earth, or hell, permanently against the elect, redeemed and regenerate children of God. These are saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation, yet they sigh and cry, "Oh, visit me with Thy salvation" (Ps. cvi. 4[^]). They are eternally redeemed, yet they wail and groan for complete deliverance from the corruption which daily burdens them. They pray in the Spirit, yet conclude oftentimes that they know not how to pray or what to pray for. They groan, and inward intercessions are experienced. Their's are the groanings. The intercession is the Holy Ghost's. Loaded with infirmities we sigh,

"Bowed down beneath a load of sin,
By Satan sorely press'd;
Fightings without, and fears within,
I come to Thee for rest."

Yet with all this the privilege of His company is not denied us. And in His own times we are blessed with felt nearness to Him, and the trembling joy of saying, "I am the LORD'S."

Let us look at three portions where this relationship and possession appear. Turn to Ps. cxix. 94, "I am Thine, save me." There is something so blessed and precious in this to me, and has been for many a long year. "I am Thine." No uncertainty in this statement.

No hesitation in the announcement of the fact. Yet the cry of anxiety is, "Save me." Did you notice the concluding part of the text this morning ?—"It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. i, 21). Salvation in the case of every living child of God is an every-day matter—it is daily, hourly, continuous. Salvation is the constant experience or expectation of every soul in spiritual association with Jesus Christ. This the psalmist knew full well when he breathed out these words of assurance and anxiety, "I am Thine, save me." That experience is mine. Though I am God's own property—though I may have the assurance that my name is in the Lamb's Book of Life—though I may be privileged to confess boldly that I am redeemed eternally by the precious blood of Christ—yet, as a redeemed son of the Father, I am hunted and hounded by the devil, hated by the world, burdened by the flesh, and harassed by ten thousand cares. I know that while I am in the world tribulation must be mine. Yet it is most blessed for me to know that in the midst of all my conflicts, through the things which He has spoken to me, I have peace with God—peace unknown to the world—and conflict is mine to which the world is a stranger.

Turn now to Solomon's Song vii. 10, "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me." I love to read and enjoy this in the words of that sweet paraphrase upon it which we sing at times:

"Oh! I am my Beloved's,
And my Belov'd is mine;
He brings a poor vile sinner
Into His HOUSE OF WINE."

Who does He bring ? "A poor vile sinner." That I daily find and feel myself to be. Here I have preached for years salvation by grace for poor vile sinners and feel to-day as vile as ever—aye, viler than ever. At times I wonder how a God of purity, with all His grace and patience, can have to do with one so forgetful—so wavering—so wandering. Aye, one who at times—I speak deliberately and

advisedly—cares not one straw for Him or for His salvation. Yet, in the face of all this, He claims me as His own—redeemed by His blood—graced by His Spirit—His special treasure. Here!—

"I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

And oh, how blessed to anticipate the home of one's heart, where

"The bride eyes not her garment,
But her Dear Bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory,
But on my King of Grace—
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand—
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's land."

As you experience the ABBA welling up in your heart by the witness of His Blessed Spirit so will the foretaste of heavenly glory be sweet to you. Is Christ precious to you by the revelation of Himself to your heart by His Glorifier? That, and that alone, is your right to stand with the seed of Zion and say, "I am the LORD'S."

Come with me to another blessed portion of God's Word, which God has endeared to my heart again and again. When I was a lad—a lad! In the thought of this I feel the overwhelming power of His love to sing,

"Thy mercy is more than a match for my heart,
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart;
Dissolv'd by Thy goodness I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I found."

I am taken back in spirit half a century to old St. Jude's, Manchester. O'Leary was preaching from Acts xxvii. 25, "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." Did God ever tell you anything? If not, why are you here? Ah, say you, I am here that the Lord may speak pardon and peace to my soul. Then the Lord has said something to you. Look at the preceding context which, with the verse I have read, formed my first text in mid-Atlantic in June, 1888, "For there stood by me this night the Angel of God, Whose I am, and Whom I serve" (ver. 23). Paul was in no doubting mood. "Whose I am." He knew he belonged to Christ as the Father's gift to Him in covenant. He knew that his name was in the Lamb's book of Life as the Lamb's purchased property. He gloried in the fact that his name was cut deep in the heart of the Covenant Surety, and that the Name of Jesus lay deeply endeared in his heart's affections. So do I.

"My name from the palms of His hands
Eternity will not erase,
Impress'd on His heart it remains
In marks of indelible grace.
Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the Earnest is given, •
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heav'n."

Oh, what a mercy to know that "I am the LORD'S" by sovereign *election*—"I am the LORD'S" by free *donation*—"I am the LORD'S" by eternal *redemption*—"I am the LORD'S" by spiritual *regeneration*. See Isa. xliii. 1, "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art MINE." If God is pleased to say to any of us, "Thou art MINE," we shall acknowledge it in His words, "THOU art mine." If in the fierce fires of temptation He declare we are His own, saying, "It is My people," the response will be sure to ascend, "The LORD is my God" (Zech. xiii. g). *My God*, I know it because I am redeemed by the blood of

God Incarnate. *My God, I am the travail of His soul—the fruit of His agony and bloody sweat. "I am the LORD'S" because He sought and saved me—wooed and won me in the day of His power, and brought me in the beauties of holiness to enjoy Himself as revealed in His glorious sanctuary. Yet these high places are not the experimental privilege of every child of God. This we see in the next character introduced to our notice.*

II. "Another shall call himself by the name of Jacob." In this character we discover the waverer—the deceiver—the supplanter—the pleader—the wrestler. The Covenant Angel wrestled with Jacob, which begat a wrestling spirit in Jacob. Jacob wrestled with the Angel; but, mark you, the JEHOVAH Angel was first in that affair. It may be there are those here present who cannot rise one hair's-breadth higher than the experience of the poor patriarch when he said, "*I am less than all the mercies and of all the truth which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant*" (Gen. xxxii. 10, margin). While all things are working together for good to such, all they can say is, "All these things are against me" (Gen. xlii. 36). There may be some poor son of Jacob here now, whose spiritual interest is in Jacob's God—a God taking care of him—looking well after him—attending to him night and day lest any hurt him—yet he can say nothing more cheerful than that of the patient patriarch, "Mine eye shall no more see good" (Job vii. 7). Cheer up, old friend! All things are for you—not against you—and by grace you shall know it.

III. "Another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD." This is one who sets to his seal that God is true. He asserts that whatever God's people may be or do He is ever the same. Do they appear most unworthy? He continues "the God of all grace." Are they deep in misery? He proves Himself to them "the Father of mercies." Are they swallowed up with sorrow? He is "the God of all comfort." Do they flatter Him? Do they lie unto Him? Are their hearts not right with Him? Are they not steadfast in His covenant? Is He wrathful? Never !" But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned He His anger

away, and did not stir up all His wrath" (Ps. lxxviii. 38). The time is gone. Another word—

IV. "And surname Himself by the name of Israel." Have I *pleaded* with God? A *prevailer* I must be. As surely as He has prevailed, and made me feel my helplessness, so will He strengthen me with His "all might," so that I* can say with prevailing and princely Israel, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." Thus blessed I am one with His own spiritual Israel in singing, "Unto Him that LOVETH us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

THOMAS BRADBURY.

Grove Chapel, Camberwell,
October, 1902.

Antichrist

"For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist."

—2 John 7.

A DECIDED difference exists between the writings of Paul and those of John. The prevailing theme in Paul's epistles is *righteousness* revealed in *justification*. The prominent feature of John's writings is *life* manifested in *love*. Paul's epistles lack not the prominent feature of John's writings, for this discovers itself in every epistle and all through the written effusions of his loving heart. John ignores not the master-theme of Paul, for it was the delight of his heart and the ground of his standing before God. Paul delighted in a God Who was righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works. John's delight was in the Very Same God, for righteousness he hides not when bringing to light the love of the Father in the Person and work of the Son of His love. John describes Jesus as sent in love with life to the objects of the Father's concern and care. Love and life He brings to those who were given to Him before the foundation of the world, according to His own words to the Father—"As Thou hast given Him power *{authority}* over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to AS MANY AS THOU HAST GIVEN HIM" (John xvii. 2). The given ones are those loved by the Father with an everlasting love, chosen to life, salvation and glory, redeemed by the blood of the Covenant Surety, made willing in the day of His power, who appear before the Father in the beauties of holiness, and worship Him in His glorious sanctuary.

These are the delightful themes of John's gospel and three epistles. In his opening of the Apocalypse he joins in the flood of praise flowing from adoring hearts, "Unto Him that LOVETH us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Yes, love and life are the prevailing themes of John's writings, and of Christ's revelation of the Father. By love He came. With life He quickens His loved ones into new-creation existence—bringing them into living oneness with Himself—leading them to the full free fountain of His rich atoning blood—washing them from all sin and uncleanness, and as bloodwashed ones without a vestige of sin in the Father's eye He clothes them with the garments of salvation, and the spotless robe of His own right-doing for them. Yea, further, He clothes them with His incomparable humility. He adorns them with His varied and manifold graces. He beautifies them with Himself. By "the faith of the operation of God" they grasp and ever hold fast the situation in which they stand everlastingly justified and accepted in the presence of the Father.

"The Spirit wrought my faith and love,
And hope, and ev'ry grace;
And Jesus spent His life to work
The robe of righteousness."

Every chapter of John's Gospel of gospels reveals some of the unrivalled beauties of the Sent One. It is blessed to dwell upon the Father sending the Son, and the Son's willingness to come at the Father's bidding. He was just as eager to come as His Father was to send Him. Jesus came not by compulsion or restraint. Blessed be His Holy Name, He came, and He comes—mark the past and the present—by the sweet compulsion of His own loving desire and determination—by gracious and glorious covenant constraint. It was love that constrained Him to come down to a cold world that did not want Him—to a cruel world that murdered Him. His love constrains His own to love Him. Without the love of Christ there is no inward

movement homeward or Godward. It is only as a Willing Saviour endears Himself to our hearts that we are drawn near to Him to enjoy our place in His Father's heart. Look at that blessed description of Christ and His own in Psalm cxlviii. 14, "He also exalteth the Horn of His people, the praise of all His saints; even of the children of Israel, A PEOPLE NEAR UNTO HIM." How near?

"So near, so very near to God,
I cannot nearer be;
For in the Person of His Son
I am as near as He."

Life is brought to light in every chapter of John's gospel. Love abounds all through his epistles. He might well be styled "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (ch. xxi. 20). Why? Because he was privileged to nestle in the bosom of Incarnate Love. He drank deeply of the spirit of his Loving Lord. Hence love was his prevailing theme. Love was the prominent feature of his life. When a very old man, according to ecclesiastical history, he was carried into the assembly at Ephesus, in feeble accents .would say, "Little children, love one another."

This spirit pervades the whole of his effusions. We delight to see the Father's love to His children and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ to the objects of the Father's loving choice—those brought into the sweet experience of this, who can say honestly and mutually as members of the one body, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." As sure as the love of the Father has taken possession of our hearts, eyes, ears, and lips, the world will not love us—will not acknowledge us. The world that has no love to the Father can never know or regard His living, loving children.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God." Our separation from the world in the wicked one is distinct and complete. Love, blood and

power have brought us out of darkness and death. Our redemption is an accomplished fact—an experimental reality. Our election life is seen and hated by the world. Because of our election by the Father, our redemption by the Son, and our regeneration by the Holy Ghost, the world looks upon us as very queer, strange, unaccountable characters. All right! Let them look! May the Lord grant that they may see nothing but His own handiwork upon us. Look however long they may, and judge as cruelly as they will, we have One Who judges for us, and, blessed be His Holy Name, He has judged us in the Person of Jesus, therefore freedom from all condemnation is our blessed lot. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS." That is just what we desire. The longing of our hearts is to see and enjoy Him in His house of prayer this morning. We long to be like Him—desire to be with Him—sit at His sacred feet—be lost in His love, or go forth to service at His command.

Notice those blessed words I read for our instruction, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect." Not mine! say you. And so say I. Let us read this according to the margin—"Herein is *love with us* made perfect." This is the love of the Father, the love of the Son, and the love of the Holy Ghost. It is the mutual love of the Eternal Three in One. It is the love by which faith works, and without which faith is not exercised. It is the love which caused the Father to send the Son—the love which brought the Son to suffer, bleed and die—the love which moves the Blessed Holy Ghost to dwell in a poor vile sinner such as I find and feel myself to be. We hear, nowadays, much of the love of the Father—more of the love of the Son—but little, very little, of the love of the Holy Ghost. I delight to dwell upon the love of the Holy Ghost. At times my spirit dwells with unfeigned delight upon the complaint of a sister now in glory. She would say, "How little we think of the love of the Blessed

Holy Ghost. What should we know of the Father, or of the love of Jesus, if it were not for the dear love of the Indwelling Spirit?" I rarely sing or think of that blessed verse of the Redeemed Atheist, but my thoughts ascend to her just and perfect spirit before the throne,

"And Thou, Eternal Spirit Vast—
What love can Thine transcend;
Since Thou Thy lot with me hath cast,
Indwelling God and Friend?"

It is marvellous to think that the poor sinner who is now talking to you is a temple of the Holy Ghost / Oh, to think that you who have thought so little of Him during the past week, wandering into forbidden paths known nowhere but in the sorrowing heart that grieves its sinful divergences—you who are troubled because of sinful, foolish and filthy thoughts—who groan under the sense of indwelling corruption and the surgings of carnality, yet with all these ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost. Can this be true? True as God is true. As the Christ of God has been endeared to you, what is there in earth or hell to stand between that glorious fact and your heart's experience of it? Nothing, when the Glorifier of the Father's Christ exalts Him in your spiritual understanding—when He delights the memory with His beauties—when He exercises the will with the endearing charms of the Bleeding Lamb, "love with us is made perfect, we have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is so are we in this world."

"On Him shall Zion place
Her only hope of heaven,
And see in His dear, sacred face,
Ten thousand sins forgiven."

But I am spending too much time in preliminaries. Let us hasten to the text. This short epistle is addressed by John, styling himself "The Elder." Not the Father—the Governor—the Priest. Gospel simplicity

knows nothing of titles so empty, vain and unscriptural. John, who had grown in grace and humility attaches no flaunting title to his name. John, brother and companion, not "THE DIVINE," as we have in our Protestant Bibles. "The elder unto the elect lady and her children." Critics there are who would have us believe that the title "the elect lady" means a church with its members. I do not believe them. It means a godly matron lying deep in John's spiritual affections. "Whom I love in the truth." He is particular in describing the persons whom he loves—"in the truth." No love apart from the truth. As it is in nature so it is in grace—like loves like. "I dwell among mine own people," said the Shunammite woman to the prophet's servant (2 Kings iv. 13). "And being let go, they went to their own company," is written of the liberated Apostles (Acts iv. 23), which was as natural as the needle to point to the pole. "Whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth." These are they who not only recognise and acknowledge the truth, but who love and delight in it "For the truth's sake which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever." Truth with the regenerated people of God is not a lodger. Its residence is not leasehold. It abides in its own freehold to all future ages. Mark well those few words—"and shall be with us for ever."

"Grace be with you." Look at the margin—"Grace *shall be* with you." And so it shall, with "mercy and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love." Now I will tell you why I disagree with those who say "the elect lady" was a church and not a woman. I thoroughly believe she was a graceful individual. Why? Look through all the epistles and you will see when a church is addressed, grace and peace is desired for its members. Look at those written to an individual. Mercy is also added. "Grace, mercy and peace." Why should mercy be added to a person and not to a community? Because lonely persons need mercy. A community indicates communion and loving service. In the communities where a loving Jesus is the Centre of attraction and the life of the whole—there, "mutual faith" is exercised—mutual help is extended—mutual encouragement is enjoyed. There, woes

are mutual—prayers blend—hopes harmonise—aims concentrate—and refreshing tears fall into the same bottle (Ps.lvi. 8). As I retrace the past, frequently tears of true sympathy flow at the thought of those whom I knew in adversity and affliction when I was unable to help them. Well, God knew they required not my help, or it would have been there. Yet my sympathy was none the less for my inability.

"I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth." Walking! The dead walk not. "Walking in truth." Lying spirits hate the truth. Wherever truth is communicated by the Spirit of Truth it is accompanied by eternal life and everlasting love. Loving the truth with those who are brought into living oneness with Incarnate Truth is evidence substantial and clear that His prayer has been answered on our account—"Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth" (John xvii. 17); and that His testimony has been brought home by the power of the Holy Ghost—"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John viii. 32). Such walk in simplicity—guileless. "As we have received a commandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another." How sweet! How homely! How familiar! "And this is love, that we walk after His commandments." And what are His commandments? Believe and love (1 John iii. 23). "This is the commandment, that, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it."

Look at the text—"For many deceivers are entered into the world." From the writings of John we learn that love divinely communicated ever preserves from discord, deception, and every evil work.

This is proved and enjoyed by "the faith of the operation of God," in the reception of the truth concerning Christ Jesus our Lord. This is passive reception, but none the less a reception for all that. It is not by creature energy or exercise, but is wholly of God from first to last. It is the reception of the truth of Christ associating Himself with

us in His sacred humanity in the womb of the virgin—in His life of suffering obedience for us—in His sacrifice for sin on the accursed cross—in His precious humanity perfuming the grave—in His forty days' residence among His loved ones previous to ascension—in His appearance with the marks of His sufferings before His Father's throne. There He pleads with and commands the Father to send down covenant bounties to the needy members of His spiritual body, which are conveyed with infallible certainty to those for whom they were designed. Oh, what a glorious Christ!" The God shines gracious through the Man." Here we can feelingly say,

"As Man, A MAN OF SORROWS. Thou
Hast suffer'd ev'ry human woe,
And thus enthron'd in glory now
Canst pity all Thy saints below."

He forgets not, neglects not, those who are passing through the valley of the death-shade. Glory shines in the departure of a jewel of the Father's election love—one whom the Son has redeemed with His most precious blood—one whom the Spirit has honoured with His abiding presence. Now the nonconfession of the coming of the Son of the Father to our hearts imperils the enjoyment of love among God's gathered ones. It is well to be on the lookout, "for many deceivers are entered into the world." Deceivers, seducers, wanderers. Paul speaks of such as "seducing spirits" (1 Tim. iv. 1). Jude styles them, "wandering stars" (ver. 13). The religious firmament flares with them. They guide to delude. They lead to error and destruction. They are very subtle in leading to things not sinful in themselves, but which unsettle the mind and fix it upon the uncertain and unreliable. They prefer the shadow to the substance—the sign to the thing signified—the hypothetical to the genuine.

Deceivers entered into the world, does not fully describe the Apostle's communication to this dear "elect lady." His meaning—his very words are, "many deceivers went out into the world." They left our company for that of the world, from which they had professed to

be separated. They associated with the saints for a time and then went out for ever. Paul warned the Ephesian elders against such characters—"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts xx. 29, 30). John's counsel is good, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John iv. 1). These wandering stars flashed in their own light and then sank into obscure darkness. These enter the Church to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect. This they cannot do.

Mark well this salutary caution—"Who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." It is not enough that the children of God should simply acknowledge the truths of divine inspiration. A spirit of fleshly ease and mock humility possesses the minds of so many who profess the truth of the gospel in these degenerate days. The zeal which ate up the Master is lacking in His followers. "Oh," I hear again and again, "I creep in and out, and desire not to be noticed." Such expressions spring from the flesh, and contain just as much truth as can be expected from the flesh. But the truth of God as set forth in His Holy Word and communicated by His Blessed Spirit to the hearts of His children is characterised by unselfishness. They not only acknowledge the truth but confess it. See !" For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. x. 10). He who finds Christ in his heart the Hope of glory, cannot help, in God's own time, by the preciousness of God's own truth, and the power of God's own Spirit—cannot help but confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is not the confession that Jesus Christ did come, or will come to take His redeemed home to glory. The present tense characterises John's thoughts in all his utterances of this glorious truth. "We know that the Son of God is come" (1 John v. 20), Look at this—"Hereby know ye the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh

is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world” (1 John iv. 2, 3). Antichrist is in the world, but "Greater is He that is in you."

Antichrist is a deceiver. A deceiver is antichrist. Read 1 John ii. 18, 19, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us they would have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an Unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." The Anointing is God's infallible security against all the designs of antichrist. "He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son." Such is against the Father's Christ—the Anointed King on Zion, the hill of God's holiness. One Anointing—one Spirit. Notice the oneness set forth in Eph. iv. 3-6, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism." The dying robber, who was never sprinkled at a font, nor dipped in a pool, was blessed with this one baptism of the Spirit. "One God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all." To this one church covenant gifts are bestowed "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Here we see that antichrists are many. Christ is one. We read also of "false christs." The Christ of God said, "For there shall arise false christs" {Matt. xxiv. 24). There is a marked distinction between a false christ and an antichrist. A false christ is one who professes to be the true Messiah, and false christs have appeared in profusion. Antichrist, wherever such appears, is always hostile to God's Christ—God's Anointed, and the Anointing. Now, we cannot point

to any one person in the world's history in whom the marks of antichrist are more clearly seen than in the old bachelor priest of Rome. The craft and subtlety of the devil appears in every title he assumes—every proclamation of his official dignity—every assertion of his right to rule the church with the rod of a despot. In all these he professes to be *for* and not *against* the Lord of light and glory. There is not a truth concerning Christ but you will find the same amid the lying records of Rome. What is infamously styled, "The Unanimous Consent of the Fathers," is a marvellous mass of ecclesiastical controversies and corrections. The so-called fathers agreed not in matters of faith, doctrine, or discipline.

The Pope pretends to be the supreme head of the church. In this he resembles Diotrephes who loved to have the pre-eminence (3 John 9) and is distant from Jesus Who "made Himself of no reputation" (Phil. ii. 7). Look at that glorious description given of Him in Col. i. 18, "And He is the Head of the body, the church: Who is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence." Christ is the Head, not of a denomination, sect, or clique, but of the church of the Living God, and He is the Saviour and life of His own body. It is from the head that all motive and motion proceed. My head regulates every movement of my body. My head thinks for the whole body—sees for the whole body—speaks for the whole body—hears for the whole body—smells for the whole body. Take away the head and the body is dead. Whatever you might substitute for it secures not the body from disease and disintegration. Let Christ be removed from His rightful position as the Head of any church, and that church becomes a sepulchre of souls. Let Christ be wanting in a sermon and the preaching is a godless effusion—rank presumption. Let Christ be wanting in praise, and praise is daring profanity. Christ is the Head of God's church. He thinks for His Whole Body—the Church. He looks well after the whole of His Redeemed Flock. He speaks to the Father for all His Living Members. He turns not a deaf ear to the Sorrowful sighing of His Afflicted Brethren. He has a quick scent

for every want of every one whom His love and blood has saved. Leo is useless in all these things.

The Pope discovers the brand of antichrist in his claim to infallibility. Christ is the Only Infallible Man that ever lived. Infallibility cuts a wretched figure in the history of Peter. Trace his conduct all along his history. He was a pretty head to guide and govern a church. He was ever liable to mistakes. He trusted in self—He erred. His fleshly part determined to be something to the last. Look at Him after the loving reproofs recorded in John xxi. 15, 17. His flesh would still meddle. "Lord, what shall this man do?" Mark well the Lord's answer—"If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou Me." Jesus did not speak thus to John. Jesus had a place of love in John's heart. John had a place of rest at Jesus' feet, learning God's righteous will, and drinking deeply of His love. These are not learned nor enjoyed in the deceitful declarations of tradition, but in the clear enunciations of Holy Scripture according to the last verse of the previous chapter, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life."

Another evidence of the Pope proclaiming himself to be antichrist, is the prerogative he arrogates to himself to hear the confessions of his fellow sinners, and pronouncing upon them the absolution and remission of their sins, and bestow upon them indulgencies to sin again. Is that Christ's mind and will? Not at all. A Papist once said to me, "Cannot you find confession and absolution in your Bible?" "Yes," said I, "three cases come to my mind, Pharaoh (Exod. x. 16, 17). Saul (1 Sam. xv. 24, 25). Judas (Matt, xxvii. 3, 4). Pharaoh was answered with destruction. Saul was recompensed with degradation. Judas was rewarded with damnation, Notice Saul's desire and disappointment—"I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God" That is the spirit reigning all through the religion of Rome. She seeks supreme and universal honour and to be excused for sinning. When I hear of the

world's great ones entering Rome's bewildering maze, I say at once, Rome's religion is one of convenience. There is something morally wrong in all who seek shelter in her dark shades. Such may boast of their sanctity, but they will find it to be earthy, sensual, devilish. They may sing, "Lead, kindly light," only to wander into the mists, fogs and quagmires of error, idolatry and superstition. In that wretched hymn, disgracing many so-called Protestant hymn books, you cannot find a word concerning Christ's atoning blood, justifying righteousness, or saving intercession. Gospel truth is hidden from the view of Rome's devotees, who cling to their tradition, and ignore the revealed will of God. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. viii. 20). Law—the assertion of God's sovereign will. Testimony—God's will revealed in the heart by the Holy Ghost. They who are destitute of these, have no *morning* in them (margin). There has been no end to their night—no dawn to them of spiritual day.

Antichrist asserts his right to institute and abrogate rites and ceremonies at will. None but Christ has a right to such authority. The Pope pretends to hold the keys of the kingdom of heaven. What are they? GOD'S WRITTEN WORD—GOD'S BLESSED SPIRIT. "Except a man be born of water"—the truth of God—"and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John iii. 5). Listen again. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in OBEYING THE TRUTH THROUGH THE SPIRIT" (i Peter i. 22). Christ charged the wretched sacramentalists of His day with taking away of the key of knowledge (Luke xi. 52). That is, they ignored the Holy Ghost in the work of regeneration and revelation, and believed in the ability of man to regenerate himself. Then again, we see the Pope and his party dead set against the spiritual kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "My kingdom is not of this world" (John xviii. 36), said Jesus. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17). The kingdom of God is not earthly, worldly, fleshly. It is spiritual, heavenly, divine. Its subjects "are redeemed by Christ out of every

kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." What a blessed privilege to know that we are spiritual subjects of a kingdom which cannot be moved. Christ's kingdom is heavenly. Antichrist's is earthly. God's kingdom is pure and simple. That of Rome is muddle and mystery. The kingdom of God is holy. Corruption and filth characterise the gaudy glories of the scarlet harlot. Those who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh are deceivers and possessed by the spirit of antichrist. He who by the Holy Ghost confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, knows that He will come to all whom the Father gave unto Him, and predestined to enjoy His company and consolations in His everlasting kingdom and glory. THY KINGDOM COME. Amen.

THOMAS BRADBURY.

Grove Chapel, Camberwell,
November, 1902.

"Thy Salvation."

"I have waited for Thy salvation, O LORD"

-- Gen. xlix. 18.

THESE are the words of the dying patriarch Jacob, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O LORD." They are apparently incoherent—not in keeping with the subject occupying his mind when addressing his son Dan. It appears as though a sudden inspiration diverted him to the contemplation of the theme dearest to his heart—God's salvation. Out of the abundance of his heart his mouth spoke these precious words, which have proved a healing balm to the weary spirit of many a tried pilgrim in the steep and thorny pathway to the saints' perfection above. There is something exceedingly interesting and instructive to the spiritual mind in the remembrance of the last words of those near and dear to us, and near and dear to our covenant God and Father in Christ. We notice this in the words of Jacob now before us, and in the last words of David, king of Israel. He was filled with disappointment and sorrow in reflecting upon the unenviable state of his surroundings, while his heartbeat with joyful hope in the contemplation of God's well-ordered, sure, and everlasting covenant, and his tongue exclaimed, "Although my house be not so with God, yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all *things* and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow" (2 Sam. xxiii. 5).

We will now come to the New Testament and notice the last utterances of two who were precious to the Master. There is true sublimity and guileless simplicity in the spirit of Stephen as he cries

in the midst of a murderous shower of stones, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep" (Acts vii. 54-60). A wonderful statement! Stephen's body battered with stones, yet his spirit was sweetly reposing in the arms of Incarnate Love. We pass on to notice a little of the latest language of the very person at whose feet the clothes of the witnesses were laid when Stephen was stoned. Toward the close of his earthly pilgrimage he thus counsels his son Timothy—"Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Tim. iv. 5-8). This last sentence is very encouraging to those who write bitter things against themselves because of their fancied want of grace, and judging themselves lacking consistency and circumspection in the ways of the Lord. The sentence in itself appears sufficient to cheer the gracious heart drooping with despondency under a sense of distance from the One Object of its spiritual love.

For many months past my mind has been deeply interested in the conduct of the Master, our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in respect to the characters of those whom He brought into close communication and blessed communion with Himself. How different was His way from that of the world! His requirements were so different from those of the Christian systems of the present day. He was the very opposite to those pastors who demand that the experience of their people must correspond exactly with their own.

O Jesus, what forbearing love is Thine! Did He draw His eleven disciples around Him because they had a deep experience of the things He taught? No! for their experience of Divine grace was very shallow. Was it because they had a right apprehension of their Father's mind and will? No! for they did not comprehend the nature of their Master's mission—they understood not the worth of His sacrifice—the fulness of His salvation—the need of His righteousness, nor the spiritual character of His kingdom. They were full of mistakes, and were subject to frequent failures and falls. They were sinners. Why, then, did He draw them around Him? It was because of the love which He Himself had begotten in their hearts to His Adorable Person that caused Him to draw them around Him at His table and dispense to them the bread and wine. He gave them real bread and real wine. Bread to eat—wine to drink. Flesh and blood were not there. Yet the flesh and blood of Jesus were spiritually there, but, mark you, spiritually fed upon in the heart by faith. Not masticated with the teeth—not digested in the stomach. The body and blood of Christ form spiritual nourishment for spiritual faculties, and for these alone.

But notice the characters of those who first received the bread and wine as emblems of our Lord's sufferings and death, and tokens of His love. They could say little as to their consistency and circumspection. Look at three of them shortly after in Gethsemane, who, instead of watching and praying, were fast asleep. And look again at the three introduced to us in that sweet Fourteenth of John—Thomas, Philip, and Judas—not Iscariot. They displayed great ignorance of their Master's mission, yet they were filled with love to His adorable Person. For these He prayed, as we read in that precious Seventeenth of John; but there He mentioned not their sins, their failures, nor their falls. He kept their imperfections out of sight, and brought His mediatorial perfections for them into the unclouded view of His Father. For them He prayed—He demanded—He commanded—with covenant authority He said—“Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that

they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world” (John xvii. 24).

But, for a little while, we have to do with dying Jacob. He called his twelve sons around him, and as they gathered themselves together, the dying patriarch blessed them according to their dispositions and doings. You will notice a marked difference between the blessings of Moses as recorded in Deuteronomy xxxiii. and those of Jacob in the chapter before us. Jacob intersperses his blessings with curses. Moses' blessings confirm the truth of God, that there is no curse to the Israel of God for whom the God of Israel was made a Curse upon Calvary. The book of Deuteronomy may well be styled the Gospel according to Moses. Concerning Israel's God and God's Israel, Moses cried in holy rapture: "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in His excellency on the sky. The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy *them*. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also His heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the Shield of thy help, and Who is the Sword of thy excellency! and thy enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places" (Deut. xxxiii. 27-29).

But here we find Jacob addressing each of his sons by name, and strong expressions, no doubt, startle the ears of first one and then another. Reuben is reminded of his honourable birth, instability, and filthy folly. Simeon and Levi are not left unmindful of their treachery and cruelty in slaughtering the Shechemites. Dan hears ominous words relative to his natural dispositions and future destiny. He would lie in the dust and in the dirt to gain a cruel advantage over an opponent—he would bite like a serpent and sting like an adder, to the destruction of both horse and rider. Jacob having thus far addressed his sons, appeared to lose sight of them and of their fleshly failings, and of everything that embittered his

last moments upon earth, and raising his failing eyes to heaven, ejaculated, "*I have waited for Thy salvation, O LORD.*" In the midst of the painful reminiscences distracting the heart of the dying patriarch, and distressing the ears of his sons—in the midst of a whirlwind of words which filled their minds with perplexity—he is graciously reminded of that salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory—of that solace which never fails the heirs of grace in their seasons of sorrow—and of that sympathy flowing from a heart-untainted by selfishness.

"I have waited." All God's living people are taught to wait for Him, and to abide His time. Whence the source and secret of all this? The Blessed Spirit informs us in Isaiah xxx. 18, "And therefore will the LORD wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him." One of the most precious declarations inspiring hope in my heart is contained in these words. A waiting God begets a waiting people. There is something blessedly mutual between the heart of Israel's covenant God and those whom He draws to Himself with the bands of love and the cords of the Man Christ Jesus. Aged Simeon waited for the Consolation of Israel, and that widow indeed, Anna, spake of Him to all that looked and waited for redemption in Israel (Luke ii. 25, 38). The prophet Isaiah describes the experience of the waiters during the period of the Lord's waiting for them, and their blessedness in waiting for Him. He empties them to fill them with His fulness of grace and compassion. He strips them that He may clothe them with His own righteousness, and adorn them with the graces of His Spirit. He weakens their strength by the way, and when it is all gone He strengthens them with all might according to His glorious power (Col. i. 11).

We will now turn to a most important portion of Divine inspiration—the Psalms—which is the devotional part of God's Blessed Book, where we find sweet evidence of God's great goodness to us in keeping our souls waiting upon Him. David said,

"I waited patiently, or, *In waiting I waited* for the LORD, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry" (Ps. xl. i). Again he said, "Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from Him cometh my salvation" (Ps. lxii. i). And again, "I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the LORD more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning" (Ps. cxxx. 5, 6). Jacob belonged to this waiting family. He waited daily upon God for daily salvation. How long did he wait? From the first moment God inspired his heart with a spirit of prayer to the moment he was safe with his God in glory, Jacob was the waiter. He was graciously taught to wait God's time, and that covenant mercies could come only in God's time. God will not be hurried. He cannot be forestalled. There is a dangerous precipitancy in our restless anxious nature, frequently manifesting itself in outbursts of unbecoming impatience. We wish to run before we are sent. We would fight when it is ours to stand still and see God fighting for us. We would exhibit our fancied prowess, when as weaklings, our strength is to sit still. We will frequently talk with our fellows, when our wisdom would be to lie still and commune with God. We would be something, but we must be nothing and bow before the command—"Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. xlvi. 10; Exod. xiv. 13; Isa. xxx. 7; Ps. iv. 4).

"Thy salvation, O LORD." With this salvation we have to do continually. Jacob waited for the salvation of the LORD. Jacob had nothing to do in the plan, performance, or perfecting of this salvation. He had nothing to do with it in its origin, for that was the *will* of the Father before all worlds—it was the *work* of the Son from Bethlehem to Calvary—it is the *way* of the Holy Ghost in the experience of all the heirs of grace and glory. We read it in God's message of peace to all those whose names are in the Book of Life—for whom Christ died, and who are destined to spend an eternity of bliss in the home appointed for them up yonder. We see the Glorious Three-in-One in council before the worlds were framed. I do, and God having given me spiritual eyesight, and revealed the same to me in His Blessed Book, I cannot close my

eyes to the beauty and glory thereof. It is my daily delight and the comfort of my heart to seek out of His Holy Word my own personal interest in a salvation which God has made eternally mine. The revelation of this salvation is the perfection of eternal truth.

You will notice this in one of the Psalms read in every parish in this country to-day. I refer you to Psalm lxxxix—"I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known Thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said mercy shall be built up for ever: Thy faithfulness shalt Thou establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with My Chosen, I have sworn unto David My servant. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up Thy throne to all generations." Then notice lower down in the Psalm how the blessings of the covenant are secured in Christ to the people of God—"His seed, also, will I make to endure for ever, and His throne as the days of heaven. If His children forsake my law, and walk not in My judgments: if they break My statutes, and keep not My commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, My lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips. Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and His throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven."

Here we behold a glorious superstructure of grace rising from its immovable foundation, the Rock of Ages. Each stone in this marvellous building is designed in everlasting love—sculptured by Infinite Wisdom—adjusted with consummate skill—fixed by Eternal Omnipotence.

"Jesus, the Living Corner-stone,
Sustains the fabric rare;
For such a work were vainly done
If Jesus was not there.

"And if each stone be filled complete
By the Eternal Three;
When all the stones in glory meet,
What will the temple be?

"Unrivalled will the temple stand,
Unrivalled every stone,
And glory circle Him Who planned
And wrought that work alone."

Here the eye of faith beholds the building of mercy and God's covenant salvation as they appear in God's eye. Here we can discover no defect, no deformity, no decay, no death. But carnal reason may object to this, saying, Are we not assembled to hear something of the death of one of these living stones? To which I answer, We are here to commemorate the departure to the home of everlasting light and love of our dear friend and brother, whom we love in the Lord. The world calls this, Death.

Let us see how it is described in the Scriptures of truth. "When Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and *was gathered unto his people*" (Gen. xlix. 33). As wheat is gathered into the garner. "As a shock of corn coming in in his season" (Job v. 26). When Stephen was stoned he prayed for his murderers, saying, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, *he fell asleep*" (Acts vii. 60). Paul says, "The time of *my departure* is at hand" (2 Tim. iv. 6). To him it was the close of a visit away from home. The passing from one room to another in his Father's many-mansioned house. It is home, it is heaven, wherever the Lord is pleased to manifest Himself to His children as the God of peace and love. Here we see no depravity, no death, but the redeemed spirit dropping its burden of filth and corruption, and entering into the unfettered enjoyment of its Master's joy. This is joy eternally separated from sorrow—life

infinitely distant from death—the perfection of rest with no fear of disturbance.

"Thy salvation, O LORD." Jacob's eye was fixed upon his Gracious Deliverer, Whom he styled, "The Angel Which redeemed me from all evil" (Gen. xlviii. 16). By faith he knew and felt that salvation by the will of the Father was the sole work of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Yes, it was His work all through His life of suffering and sorrow here below, from the first sigh in Bethlehem to the last groan on Calvary. With His last breathings for his people He cried, "It is finished." What was finished? Listen! "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do" (John xvii. 4; xix. 30). Jesus, as the Last Adam, for He is never styled the *second* Adam in Holy Scripture, God never intending a third—Jesus succeeded where Adam failed. God placed Adam in Eden to obey Him and live. In every point he failed and was driven out of the garden dead to God. Yet Adam "is the figure of Him that was to come" (Rom. v. 14). The Last Adam came and obeyed where Adam sinned. Where Adam was overcome Jesus overcame. He was obedient unto death (Phil. ii. 7), and proved Himself for His Father's glory and His people's salvation, "righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works."

Here we see Him as the Head of His body—the Husband of His bride the Church—the Covenant Surety of His covenant people and the Church in eternal relationship with Him. And here I would have you notice that apart from covenant relationship to Christ, His obedience and blood have no saving efficacy. If we stand not in God's account as the members of His body, and His brethren in the family of the Father's love, His sacrifice and death avails not for us. But it does avail for us, and has come *even to us* by His precious testimony and Powerful Spirit. Thus we know that we are the children and chosen of the Father—the brethren and redeemed of the Son—the habitation and beloved of the Spirit. For all that the Father gave to Christ as a body and bride, all that Jesus did—all that Jesus is as the Mediator of the new covenant—all the virtue of His work

and all the value of His Name, avails for them in the High Court of Heaven. On this ground, though we may cry with a broken heart and contrite spirit, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son," yet, the Kinsman Redeemer ever lives, making intercession for us—saving us to the uttermost—bringing us to God by Himself. In bringing us to His Father and ours He never fails to succour us in all our temptations, and in our sufferings the sympathy of His tender heart is never lacking.

"Thy salvation, O LORD." This embraces all that we can need in the way of grace. Though saved from the curse, death, hell and sin, O how we mourn our want of wisdom. Yet God Who made Christ our Salvation has made Him Wisdom also. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are secured in Him for all those who are taught by the Spirit that they can do nothing aright without Him. They know that without holiness they shall never see the Lord, and lament their inability ever to find it in themselves. Yet here He is not wanting, for He has made Christ unto us all the Holiness we need for the enjoyment of God—heaven—glory. How blessed it is for me to know that in the fulness of time God sent His own Son to be a Man for me, to do all that I ought to have done as a man, and to suffer all that I deserved as a sinner. And then, His Own Sweet Spirit comes with the words of life and love, whispering in my heart that hallowed, everlasting Name, ABBA, FATHER.

Here let us look at this glorious salvation which is in Christ Jesus, and brought to light by God the Ever-Blessed Spirit. It appears throughout the whole range of divine revelation. It is the inheritance of all the chosen and redeemed people of God. Its first publication in the teeth of the serpent must have inspired the hearts of Adam and Eve with trembling wonder—"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel" (Gen. iii. 15). The serpent's head—his designs against the people of God—have been rendered ineffectual by the death of the Surety of the covenant upon Calvary,

while the serpent will continue his opposition to the seed of the woman as long as one of the members of Christ's mystical body is found in the wilderness. A knowledge of this, and the enjoyment of God's salvation, knit the children of God together in love, and although distance in time and space may exist, neither distance nor death can cut a Spirit-wrought acquaintance. No never! That is true as God is true.

"Thy salvation, O LORD." This is the accomplishment of every purpose of grace, in the full and everlasting deliverance of elect sinners from all evil. It is the fulfilment of every promise of life in the living experience of the heirs of grace and glory. It is the performance of every precept of the law by the Covenant Surety for every sinner whose cause He undertook. It is the truth and substance of every type and shadow in Old Testament Scripture, showing forth the redeeming work of Jesus. Salvation is the subject of every inspired spirit—the solicitude of every living soul—the longing of every repentant sinner—the delight of every accepted saint—a haven of rest to the storm-tossed mariner—the never-ending song of the glorified in the many mansions home of the Father above. The non-enjoyment of God's salvation is darkness, dreariness and distress to His living children—it is everlasting damnation and destruction to all who die apart from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

"Salvation is of God alone,
The glorious plan is all His own;
In love He formed the great design,
And here His grace and wisdom shine."

Thy salvation, O LORD." Of this salvation "The New Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ" is full. We read of it in the words of the angel to Joseph—"Thou shalt call His Name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21). This is full deliverance by the love, blood and power of Jesus from Satan, sin and self. It is infinite distance through eternal ages from the penal consequences of

original and actual disobedience. To the earnest entreaty of the awakened and anxious jailer at Philippi, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul briefly answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 30-31). Look at the characters for whom this salvation was wrought—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. i. 15). Here was Paul and all the election of grace saved from the world's filth and follies—from the lusts and depravity of the flesh—from the authority and service of Satan—from the curse and condemnation of the law—from the pains and miseries of hell. This salvation is perfect translation from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. And I can tell you with a feeling heart that is deliverance from accursed self—from sinful self—from righteous self—from self in every form and feature, that the saved may, and must, stand justified and accepted before God in the glorious righteousness of His own providing.

"Thy salvation, O LORD." This salvation is our title to our heavenly inheritance and our qualification to enjoy fellowship with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. When the grace of God brings salvation home to our hearts we are born again. Without this new birth we cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Without this salvation heaven itself would be a desolation—it would be misery to the unsaved. But it is a marvellous mercy to know that we are saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation, and blessed in communion with God our Father in Christ by the indwelling, witness and seal of the Holy Ghost. This is by the revelation of Christ to our heart, and our heart's response to God's revelation. "For whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. x. 13). He has all the dignity, worth, and glory of the Name of Jesus associated with him in the eye and heart of the Father. David knew this, and even in the shade could say, "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all *things* and sure, this is all my salvation and all my desire" (2 Sam. xxiii. 5). How blessed the season when His heart told itself forth in holy joy—"The LORD is my Light and my

Salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the Strength of my Life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. xxvii. 1). In the words we have been considering we rejoice in the confidence of the dying patriarch—"I have waited for Thy salvation, O LORD." And how blessed to live with a good hope through grace in anticipation of the full enjoyment of the bliss revealed in the words of the last portion read this morning for our instruction and profit—"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, SALVATION TO OUR GOD WHICH SITTETH UPON THE THRONE, AND UNTO THE LAMB" (Rev. vii. 9, 10).

You came to hear a funeral sermon. I am not a funeral sermon preacher. I fear I fail in this matter. But we are here this morning to think of the honour which God thrust upon one spiritually near and dear to me during the last twenty years. I first became knit to the redeemed spirit of our dear friend and brother, George Whitlock, when he was brought in God's unerring providence to find an abiding spiritual home within these walls, under the ministry of grace from my heart and tongue. For many years previous to this it was his gracious privilege to sit under the faithful ministry of James Wells, at the Surrey Tabernacle, where he drank in the words of life, light, love and liberty. Here we were brought into spiritual association, and our acquaintance has been intimate in public and private life. I observed him as a husband, and oftentimes felt ashamed of myself. I knew him as a father, and have seen the kiss of pure filial affection given by every one of his twelve children. I noticed him as a worshipper, and there I loved him. His manner was free from pomp or parade. He would walk to his seat in all humility, and when the service was over he would retire as he entered. Not frequently he would greet me with a few words in the vestry, which I always appreciated.

In business he was a man of sterling integrity. Grace made him all that, and it could not be hid, for God made it to shine forth before

his fellow men. Salvation by grace cannot come to any sinner without its evidences appearing to those round about him. He lives in my spiritual affections, and blessed be God's Holy Name for giving me the good hope that the redeemed spirit of George Whitlock is now freed from every clog, and rejoicing before the throne of God and the Lamb. May it be our lot daily to enjoy the companionship and council of that precious Saviour and Master Whom he loved to worship and adore, and without Whom sin's bondage and slavery is a woeful lot here, and everlasting condemnation hereafter. The good Lord bless us all. Amen.

THOMAS BRADBURY.

Grove Chapel, Camberwell,
December, 1902.